

Truth and Tolerance

Written by Chris Tiegreen

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Yesterday I saw a car with the “coexist” bumper sticker—the one where each letter is made out of a symbol of a different religion—and then, right next to the message to “coexist,” another bumper sticker poking fun at the phrase “born again.” This fascinates me—a message of tolerance juxtaposed with a slam against a core Christian belief. It’s just another indicator that the “tolerance” message is, for many people, a thin disguise. The real sentiment often behind it is, “I’m anti-Christian and pro-everything-else.”

What amazes me most is that people think that if you say your beliefs are true and others aren’t, you’re being intolerant. But that’s the case with *every* truth claim. Everyone who says something is true—“Buddha was a good teacher,” “Mohammed knew the true God,” etc.—is saying that the opposite is untrue. *Every* truth claim is intolerant of its contradictions. Even the person who says, very tolerantly, “there are many paths to God” is being intolerant of the belief that there aren’t. That’s how truth works. Embracing it means to reject something else. And everyone does this. In fact, there’s no way to have a discussion without doing this. Anytime you assert that something is true, you’re asserting that something else isn’t.

Anyway, I was amused by the hypocrisy of the bumper stickers yesterday, but it reminded me of a key dynamic in our discussions of faith: It’s admirable in our world to say you seek truth but offensive to say you’ve found it. But Jesus made extravagant truth claims anyway. And we, if we call Him “Lord,” are compelled to do the same.