

“How Can I Respond to the Argument that Christ as the Only Way is Too Intolerant?”

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An issue that often comes up in talks about Christianity is tolerance. Can you help me respond to the argument, “Christ as the only way to Heaven is too intolerant”? Is Islam tolerant? Do Muslims believe Christians will go to heaven?

Concerning the claim that it is intolerant to assert that Jesus is the only way to Heaven, I think we must first point out that this is what Jesus Himself actually claimed in John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.” In other words, Christians are merely telling people what Jesus claimed; we are not asserting this simply on our own authority.

Second, we must try to help people to view Jesus’ claim as something which is either true or false. By focusing on the issue of truth, we help to dispel some of the negative emotional baggage which such a claim has for many people in our pluralistic society.

Third, we may want to use an analogy. For instance, is it intolerant to claim that $2+2=4$? Is it narrow-minded, or naive, not to believe that (at least for some people) $2+2$ may equal 3? Or 5? Or is it rather the case that $2+2=4$ regardless of whether anyone believes this or not? See my point? Jesus’ claim to be the only way is either true or false. If it’s true, it is no more intolerant to assert its truthfulness than it is to assert that $2+2=4$. Sometimes there really is only ONE correct answer, after all.

Concerning the Islamic position on Christians in the afterlife, I doubt whether one

can be completely dogmatic here. Suffice it to say that the general Islamic view regarding one's final judgment before God can NEVER be known with certainty before it takes place. Even the most devout Muslims will acknowledge that they cannot be sure of their own entrance into Paradise (dying in a *Jihad*, a holy war, notwithstanding). And if they are not sure about themselves, I imagine they are even less sure about Christians. In fact, the Qur'an offers no forgiveness for one who commits the sin of *shirk*, which is to associate any partner with God. Thus, many Muslims would equate the Christian view of Jesus with *shirk*, in which case they would hold that Christians could never be admitted into Paradise. Having said that, however, there are probably some Muslims who would acknowledge the possibility of Christians being admitted into Paradise. But they would likely be quick to add that Christians would greatly improve their chances by converting to Islam!

Shalom,

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