
Dimensions of Tolerance: Defining Contemporary Attitudes and Practices in a Diverse World

Iecietības dimensijas: mūsdienu attieksmes un rīcības noteikšana atšķirīgajā pasaulē

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Many modern scholars claim that we are living in the midst of a culture war, one that pits secular humanists against intolerant Christians. This is not true. The conflict is actually between two opposing views of tolerance. One view is relativistic. This view assumes that all behavior is culturally based, subject to individual choice, and, therefore, moral judgments are not necessary. The Christian view, on the other hand, insists that because we live in a fallen world moral judgments regarding good and evil are imperative to avoid moral chaos in a civilized society. The tension for the Christian lies in how we make these moral judgments. Christians must seek the middle ground between discrimination and exclusion on one hand, and moral neutrality and total acceptance on the other. The guiding principle for Christians in interacting with those with whom we disagree can be nothing less than choosing to reflect the tolerant love of God shown to us when we were outcasts.

Key words: boundaries, exclusion, embrace, inclusive, love relativism, morality, toleration.

Introduction

Johann Kasper Lavater (1741-1801), a Swiss philosopher and theologian said: “Mistrust the man who finds everything good, the man who finds everything evil, and still more the man who is indifferent to everything.”

While some thoughts and words lose their potency over a period of time, Lavater’s words, although written 250 years ago, are significant for today’s cultural climate. But most have forgotten the truth expressed: that moral judgments are necessary in a civilized society. Instead, today we have moral relativism. Moral relativism is the view that ethical standards, morality, and positions of right and wrong are culturally based and therefore subject to individual choice. In other words all behavior is acceptable because life is ultimately without meaning.

Moral relativism is widely accepted today but few really grasp its consequences. Given our culture’s impatience with serious thought we tend to use clichés and sound bites to express various worldviews and rarely go into deeper thought. Clichés and sound bites are brief expressions that tries expressing a major thought, i.e. “there is no absolute truth” or “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” The problem with clichés, and even sound bites, is although they have little substance, they do have power. “They tend to intimidate, coerce and divide people, and they can be incomplete and dangerous” (Gaede, 1998, p. 9).

Many clichés are expressed by words; these words become condensed ideologies that can be profound and difficult to grasp: *multi-culturalism*, *diversity*, *pluralism*, *change*, *choice*, *political correctness*, and *tolerance*. These words have seeped into our cultural vocabulary and are readily adopted without intellectual examination. Yet in these words we confront the larger ethical question of how we are to relate to one another as we interact in today’s diverse world. One of these words, *tolerance*, requires a more in-depth inquiry, because the advocates of moral relativism use this word to justify their thinking regarding right and wrong.

Everyone, it seems, agrees that tolerance is important if we are to live peaceably in a diverse world. At the same time understanding what it means to be tolerant eludes us. Does tolerance mean that we must accept all views on a given subject as true? As Christians, does tolerance mean that we should no longer say that Jesus Christ is the only way to God, the Father? Must we be neutral in regards to moral behavior? Can a person be tolerant and still believe in objective truth about religion, ethics, and politics? Are there limits to toleration?

The goal of this article is to find answers to these questions and identify the middle ground between the two extremes of absolute tolerance and intolerance. Either extreme can be destructive. For example, the extreme of absolute tolerance as expressed by moral relativism can bring moral chaos, where right and wrong have no meaning, where all behavior is accepted, on the other hand, absolute intolerance can lead to totalitarianism, which brings atrocities such as the holocaust, ethnic cleansing, and persecution of those who hold opposite beliefs.

The Meaning of Tolerance

The English words tolerate, toleration, and tolerance, imply enduring, suffering, bearing, and forbearance. Today, when we say that someone has a “high tolerance for pain” we mean that he or she is able to endure pain. It would be strange if a person spoke of ‘a high tolerance for pleasure’; we do not endure pleasure. Toleration is usu-

ally directed toward something seen as negative. We tolerate what we do not agree with, that is, we display patience toward a practice or ideology that is different than our own. This, of course, is contrary to modern thinking. In today's moral relativism we are told that the meaning of tolerance is ethical neutrality – neutrality about moral behavior; but tolerance cannot be neutral about what is good or evil. Its purpose is to guard what is good and to prevent evil. With this definition in mind we can say that toleration involves three conditions. First, we tolerate something when we hold a negative judgment about something. Second, we have the power to suppress this thing; and, third, we deliberately refrain from this suppression.

The Paradox of Tolerance

People may not agree about what is good and evil. They may call good *evil* and evil *good*. When we find ourselves confronting people whose attitudes and behavior we think are wrong, harmful, and offensive, it is normal to want to suppress them. J. Budziszewski, in his article, *The Illusion of Moral Neutrality*, said, "Every time a person wants to suppress something, it is an attempt to prevent what one thinks, rightly or wrongly, to be evil; or, on the other hand, to protect what is thought to be good." Here is the paradox of suppressing evil. The act of suppression may lead to greater evils. Budziszewski goes on to say, "because of this we must always put the two evils, the evil that suppression engenders and the evil it prevents, on a scale. When the evil that suppression engenders is equal or exceeds the evil that it prevents, we ought to put up with the thin in question instead of suppressing it" (Budziszewski, 1993).

This leads us to Aristotle's famous doctrine of *the golden mean*. According to Aristotle, every virtue is the midway point between two extremes, each extreme being a vice. One side was an excess of quality, and the other side a defect, and in between was the quality that was exactly right. Thus generosity is the mean between reckless extravagance and meanness, courage between foolhardiness and cowardice, self-respect between vanity and self-abasement, modesty between shamelessness and shyness. The aim is to always be a balanced personality (Magee, 1998, p. 38). The location of the mean is discovered in the case-by-case exercise of practical wisdom.

The Limits of Toleration

We live in a world that says we should not speak out what we believe because it might offend someone who has a different worldview – we must be tolerant of all views. But tolerance must have limits. Any claim that tolerance should always be practiced can be an invitation to human brutality and usually leads to moral relativism (Stetson & Conti, 2005, p. 143). Those who advocate a society without moral limitations or boundaries do so on the theory that boundaries are arbitrary and bring about oppression. Yet without boundaries or limitations there would be moral chaos. If we eliminate all boundaries you will have aimless drifting and haphazard behavior instead of moral engagement and accountability. The logic of the modern worldview suggests that "keeping out" is bad, and "taking in" is good. Miraslov Volf, in his book *Exclusion and Embrace*, speaks of the need for boundaries by stating that this "consistent drive toward inclusion (taking in) seeks to level all the boundaries that divide and to neutralize all outside powers that form and shape the self." He also said "without boundaries we will be able to know only what we are fighting against but not what we are fighting for... The absence of boundaries creates non-order and non-order is not the end of exclusion but the end of life" (Volf, 1996, p. 63).

Volf proposes the idea of *embrace* as a theological response to the problem of *exclusion*. Instead of tolerance he rather uses the words *exclusion* and *embrace*. Today, according to Volf, exclusion has become “the primary sin, twisting our perceptions of reality and causing us to react out of fear and anger to all those who are not within our circle.” He says we should embrace rather than exclude our enemies as God has embraced us in Christ. In defining *exclusion* Volf makes a distinction between *differentiation* and *exclusion* by describing the creative activity of “separating and binding” found in Genesis. In the beginning there is a “formless void” but God did some creative separating: light from darkness, day from night... At the same time God bound things together, he bound humans to the rest of creation as stewards and caretakers of it; he defined mankind as the bearer of his image, thus binding humans to himself.” Separation by itself would result in ‘self-enclosed, isolated, and self-identical beings’ (Volf, 1996, pp. 65-67). We stay within our own circle, our culture, our church, not just for protection, but also for the purpose of exclusion. In essence, Volf is saying that we may be different from others, but that does not warrant separation from them.

Exclusion of the other, as defined by Volf, has three components; *first*, exclusion is cutting the bonds that connect. The other person becomes the enemy that must be pushed away and driven out as a nonentity; a superfluous being that can be disregarded and abandoned. A *second* part of exclusion, according to Volf, is that the other “emerges as an inferior being who must either be assimilated by being made like the self or be subjected to the self. You can survive, even thrive, among us, if you become like us” *Third*, exclusion results in judgment. In popular culture passing a judgment is seen as an act of exclusion. When we strongly disagree with a lifestyle, religious belief-system, or any course of action, it is said to be exclusionary. Thus using words such as “wrong, mistaken,” or “erroneous” are considered a sign of exclusion, even though they are personal expressions or preferences of the individual or community (Volf, 1996, p. 67). Volf claims we need a more adequate judgment based on the distinction between *differentiation*, which is legitimate, and *exclusion*, which is illegitimate.

The Genesis of Toleration

There is widespread consensus among those who advocate absolute tolerance that the Bible looms as the deadly enemy of tolerance, that tolerance is a modern-day construct. However, the real history of toleration goes back to biblical times. When God, in his divine wisdom and providence, called Abraham to be the father of the Jewish people, “he gave a humble and struggling people a way of living, a vision of life, and order of things, that would eventually have incalculable effect in Western civilization” (Stetson & Conti, 2005, p. 23). Two Jewish ethicists eloquently capture the magnitude of early Jewish history, “A tiny group of uncultured and homeless slaves gave the world God, ethical monotheism, the concept of universal moral responsibility, the notion of human sanctity (human creation of in the image of God), messianism, the Prophets, the Bible and the Ten Commandments” (Prager & Telushkin, 1986, p. 30). The literature of the Old Testament portrays two sides of God. He is shown as a tolerant God; he is depicted as patient, long-suffering, forgiving, and slow to anger – all qualities associated with tolerance. The Old Testament is a testament of his grace toward his chosen people. On the other hand when Israel sinned or drifted away from his purpose, God took corrective action without compromising his love and grace. In this sense he is not tolerant toward sin and idolatry. In our culture, his corrective actions would label him as being intolerant. The Old Testament is full of stories and images of God that emphasize a balance between love, grace, and judgment.

Jesus and the Gospel of Tolerance

The teachings of Jesus also show two aspects of toleration, responsibility and acceptance. Jesus demonstrated balance between moral responsibility and humility by his actions. On the one hand, he said, "Love your enemies" but on the other hand, in anger, he refused to tolerate the mercenary activity of religious rulers by driving them out of the temple. He embraced and forgave the woman taken in adultery, while her accusers wanted to exclude and stone her. He also placed a responsibility on her when he said, "Go and sin no more." In another narrative, Jesus described the Pharisees as hypocritical and whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean (Matthew 23:27) and yet justified the publican as he confessed his sinfulness (Luke 18: 9-14). In his parable of the weeds, (Matthew 13:24-29) the workers wanted to pull out the weeds but the farmer said no, you might pull up the wheat – it will be done at the harvest. What a parable for today. We often want to move against those who are not one of us: to pull and cast them out. The teachings of Jesus reveal to us that the practice of tolerance involves being aware of our own inner attitudes, motives, and failings as we look at the behavior and beliefs of others. This is not easy or simple; the discernment required for the practice of tolerance makes it difficult and painful.

John Locke and the Politics of Toleration

Two figures, John Locke (1632-1704) and John Stuart Mills (1806-1873), separated by more than a century, were prominent in the development of the modern idea of toleration. Both appear to defend tolerance, but it appears that these two champions of tolerance are at either end of Aristotle's golden mean.

John Locke is the philosopher most prominently associated with the doctrine and practice of toleration. He was provoked to write his Letter Concerning Toleration during the reign of Charles II. His main theme is the distinction he makes between the church and the state. He wrote not as a secularist but as a Christian and he frequently used the New Testament to justify his position. In his essay Locke convincingly rebukes the Church of England's efforts in controlling the conscience of the dissenters (Locke, 1952, pp. 3-5). We can summarize Locke's thesis by the following five principles:

First, he writes that the care of souls is not the responsibility of civil governments, "It is the duty of the civil magistrate, by the impartial execution of equal laws, to secure unto all the people in general and to every one of his subjects in particular the just possession of these things belonging to this life." He emphasizes that the responsibility of civil government is limited and confined to the care of things related to this life, and is not extended to spiritual and eternal issues.

Second, Christians must be tolerant to the beliefs of others. Locke states "I must needs answer you freely that I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristic mark of the true Church." Toleration of others who differ in matters of religion is very agreeable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to mankind in general. This is critical in today's world. We live so close to each other and we need to find ways to share and understand each other's values in a positive way rather than to hate and fight against.

Third, religious faith is a matter of individual choice. People have a right to choose to believe or not to believe. Locke claims that "no man can so far abandon the care of his own salvation as blindly to leave to the choice of any other, whether prince

or subject, to prescribe to him what faith or worship he shall embrace. For no man can, if he would, conform his faith to the dictates of another.” According to Locke true religion comes from the inward persuasion of the mind of the individual. The decision to believe or not believe is our own.

Fourth, Christians have a responsibility to share what we believe with others, yet we cannot force anyone to believe. “Every man has commission to admonish, exhort, convince another of error, and, by reasoning, to draw him into truth.” But whether he or she believes is a matter of individual choice. The moral relativist today disagrees with Locke on this point; Christians are intolerant if they try to persuade others.

Fifth, there is no place for intolerance, persecution, discrimination or deprivation of others who do not believe as we do. “The Gospel frequently declares that the true disciples of Christ must suffer persecution; but that the Church of Christ should not persecute others, and force others by fire and sword to embrace her faith and doctrine.” If Locke were in Riga this summer he would not approve of throwing human waste on homosexuals during the Gay Pride Parade. Nor should we.

Some believe that Locke relegated religion to private life and left social and moral issues to the state, thus reducing opportunities for the Church to influence the public sphere. However, Locke’s principle of toleration is not one of public versus private. He does not say religion should remain in the private realm. It is public in its aim; it results in public worship and public practices. In essence, instead of dividing the role of church and state, both have a public role in civil society. A. J. Conyers, in his book, *The Long Truce* said, “The genius of Locke is not that he strictly divided the public and the private between the state and religion; the real effectiveness of his argument lies in the idea that the respective interest of the church and the state differ in their point of origin, one private and the other public” (Conyers, 2001, p. 130). Even though Locke states that churches must not force sacred doctrine on citizens, he views the church as the principle protector of morality.

John Stuart Mill and Liberty of the Individual

Locke’s letter on toleration sought to restrain political and religious intolerance, but Mill’s work expanded the meaning of intolerance to include such things as social pressure, ostracism, and stigma. He argued for a wide experimentation of lifestyles, opinions, and the minimizing of behavioral traditions. Established morality, according to Mill, was suspect because it was established by what he called “despotism of custom” and he believed that should be resisted (Stetson & Conti, 2005, p. 52). His purpose in writing *On Liberty* is not liberty of the will but civil or social liberty; the limits of power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual (Mill, 1952, p. 267). He claimed that what he writes is far from being new and is “likely soon to make itself recognized as the vital question of the future.” The future that Mill refers to is today. The main principle advocated by Mills is the “harm principle.” He states that, “the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self protection. The only reason, for which power can be rightfully exercised over any members of a civilized community against his will, is to prevent harm to others” (Mill, 1952, p. 272). The basis for Mill’s *harm principle* is that truth may exist in all opinions and by silencing contrary opinions of a person is robbing the human race. In fact he says that if only one person were of a contrary opinion ‘mankind would be no more justified in silenc-

ing that one person, than he, if he had power, would be justified in silencing mankind” (Mill, 1952, p. 274). Basically, Mill is saying that there is no absolute truth; no right or wrong; opposing opinions may also be true and they should not be suppressed.

The problem with the premise of Mill’s *harm principle* is that he does not tell us which things to count as harms and which are not. For example, J. Budziszewski shows there are many different kinds of harm principle that compete; each gives a different answer to this question. He speaks of a dispute that Mill had with Lord Stanley over the prohibition of traffic in strong liquor. Both men argued in terms of harm. Lord Stanley argued that strong liquor harmed him in four ways: (a) by endangering his security; (b) by creating a misery that he was taxed to support; (c) by tempting him to what would threaten his moral and intellectual development; and (d) by weakening and demoralizing society. Mill’s response was that Lord Stanley was not speaking of harms at all; that he was merely demanding the right “that every other individual act in every respect exactly as he ought (Budziszewski, 2000, p. 20).

The dispute between Mill and Lord Stanley shows that the practice of tolerance is not easy. To balance the risk and harms to which society might be exposed by a specific kind of conduct against the risks of prohibition can be a great burden and requires dialogue and wisdom. Mill’s doctrine of liberty seems to give the illusion of simplicity. *First* he ignores the fact that the degree of harm that comes from a particular line of conduct is likely to bring depend on the context in which it takes place (Budziszewski, 2000, p. 20). For example, in June 2006, a prominent American football player was riding his motorcycle without a helmet. His reason for doing so was that in the event of an accident it would not harm anyone but himself. This kind of thinking is the harm principle advocated by Mill. Yet, with the accident, others experienced considerable harm as a result of the accident. His family experienced fear, anguish, and the possible loss of financial support in the event he will be unable to continue his football career. The owners of the football team may face considerable financial harm if his injuries keep him off the field. We can take it to an extreme and say that football fans may be harmed emotionally if the team does not perform as it has in the past because of the injury.

The *second* way Mill produces the illusion of simplicity is that he assumes that there is a large class of moral behavior that simply has no any effect on other people at all. According to Mill, almost all individual conduct belongs in this category. Mill claims that harms to moral customs which we regard as essential to the security of human good is not a harm; that seduction to evil is not harm; that harm to which a person consents is not harm; harm that destroys his abilities to fulfill his or her obligations to others is not harm. Thus sometimes Mill says that harms are trivial and at other times he speaks of harms that are genuine (Budziszewski, 2000, p. 21).

Basically, Mill’s masterful work *On Liberty* relegates moral issues and social toleration to that of practical usefulness; whatever brings the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. Thus “he exalts the renegade and the reformer but trivializing the traditionalist” (Stetson & Conti, 2005, p. 54). In expressing his *harm principle* Mill is opposed to any moral system that critiques human character. He insists that society has no business deciding any individual behavior as morally wrong. To do so, he claims, is social intolerance. The guiding philosophy in Mill’s thesis is that society itself usually avoids self-centered behavior and is naturally inclined to unselfishness and concern for the welfare of others. This view is contrary not only to human nature and biblical theology, but also to human experience (Stetson & Conti, 2005, p. 55).

In one sense moral relativism has twisted some of the principles that Mill expressed in his work *On Liberty*. He speaks of “the tyranny of the majority” as the evil against which society must avoid. He states, “There needs to be protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose... its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them” (Mill, 1952, p. 269). Today moral relativism now is the “tyranny of the majority.” Thus to take a stand for moral behavior or religious dogma is now considered to be intolerance. Would Mill agree with the modern interpretation of social or religious tolerance? Would he write that the prevailing opinion of society does not have the right to impose its secular humanism ideology on individuals or communities?

George Weigel, a contemporary Roman Catholic theologian, makes a similar claim as Locke that the church is the principle protector of morality. He disagrees with Europe’s cultural leaders who believe that it is necessary to abandon the God of the Bible in order to achieve human liberation. Weigel asks a series of challenging questions, which he calls European puzzles, that focus on Europe’s experience of the twentieth century. The key and deeper question he asks is, “Why did Europe have the twentieth century it did? Why did a century that began with optimistic predictions about a maturing humanity reaching new heights of civilizational accomplishments produce in Europe... two world wars, three totalitarian systems, a Cold War threatening global catastrophe, oceans of blood, Auschwitz and the Gulag?” (Weigel, 2005, p. 23) He disagrees with those who continually insist that a public square devoid of religiously informed moral principles is safe for human rights and democracy. Weigel claims the opposite is true. He makes the claim that the people of “the cathedral” can give a compelling account of their commitment to everyone’s freedom, the people of the “cube” cannot¹.

The Uniqueness of Christianity

We can continually debate the pros and cons of tolerance or intolerance without settling the issues. But the key question for Christians today is how are we to act in a diverse world. Nancy Pearcey, in her book *Total Truth* states that every philosophy or ideology has to answer the same fundamental questions: 1. Creation: How did it all begin? Where did we come from? 2. Fall: What went wrong? What is the source of evil and suffering? 3. Redemption: What can we do about it? How can the world be set right again? (Pearcey, 2004, p. 25) The Christian message does not begin with “accept Christ as your Savior” it begins with “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Christianity is distinctively different from all other religions and ideologies. Its foundation is based on the truth God entered the stream of human history in the person of Jesus Christ to redeem fallen humanity that deviated from the original creation. Believing in Jesus Christ does not mean that we receive an external moral code that governs behavior; it means that we become a new person in Christ. We no longer live as we used to live because we are no longer the same persons. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

This truth runs up against the moral relativism ideology that is prevalent in today’s society. Evolution and moral relativism go hand-in-hand for evolution teaches that life is accidental, without meaning or purpose. Speaking the Christian truth of creation, human sin, and redemption through Jesus Christ with confidence brings the charge of intolerance. It is not politically correct to present Jesus Christ as the only way to God, the Father, because other religions have different views that may be true. This

has produced a dilemma for some Christians – a tension between what they believe as truth and how they are to relate to those who do not accept the truth. Some wrongly believe that Christians should be intolerant to those who do not accept the truth. Others would not think of imposing their truth on anyone else. Adding to this tension is the powerful secularist ideology that interprets separation of church and state to mean the separation of moral discourse from public life. Those who advocate this secularist ideology fail to admit that they themselves are imposing their own moral judgments upon others.

Application of the Biblical View of Tolerance

The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans offers the solution to the problems of pluralism and the demand for tolerance. The last five chapters of Romans deal with relationships – the Christian’s relationship to God, self, to other Christians, enemies, the state, neighbors, and to the weak (Stott, 1994). Robert Jewett states that Romans guides us in “the relation between the ethic of mutual tolerance and problems of conscience, mission, congregational relations, and the setting of limits.” Jewett’s thesis is, “tolerance is the expression of authentic faith in the God who transcends race and creed, but who calls conservatives and liberals, Jews and Greeks, men and women into the service of righteousness” (Jewett, 1982, p. 10).

Nestled in these last chapters of Romans are the words: “Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ as welcomed you, for the glory of God” (15:7). This verse gives the true meaning of tolerance from a Christian perspective. It is not the “live and let live” view of tolerance advocated by Locke, Mills, and modern liberalism. Paul is advocating an actual positive tolerance. To “welcome one another means to reach out actively to include others in one’s circle, not simply to respect them and allow them to stand outside” (Jewett, 1982, p. 35). True tolerance becomes apparent only when there is openness between persons and a readiness for relationships.

The second clause in Romans 15:7 is pivotal, “Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you...” The clause obviously invites the question, “How did Christ welcome us?” This clause summarizes the entire book of Romans, that is, God, through Christ, accepts all human beings, sinners, Jews, Gentiles, Muslims, and people of all other ideologies. In his climactic summary of human sin, Paul says, “there is no distinction, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (3:23). His love reached down welcomed us when we were powerless, ungodly, active sinners, even his enemies, (5:6-10). He also speaks of this in Ephesians where states that we as Christians were once spiritually dead, alienated from God, and without hope. Yet he accepted us.

Welcoming one another as Christ as welcomed us requires us to pass on the same unconditional acceptance to others that we ourselves have received. Thus true tolerance is connected with faith; it is grounded in the love of God, which is completely inclusive and non-discriminating; it comes to those who least deserve it. The tolerance expressed in Romans goes far beyond civil politeness. It is not lukewarm or a lack of commitment; it is a strenuous virtue that is revealed, only because God, through Jesus Christ has treated us tolerantly, even though we were sinners and enemies. In this verse we have the courage of true tolerance in a pluralistic world. We are to encounter each other’s belief and values. He does not say to accept and agree with all other opinions; we are to hold on to what we believe, but in doing so welcome others as Christ

as welcomed us. We can do so because of the confidence we have in biblical truth and the doctrine handed down to us in the past 2000 years. The Christian view of tolerance does not come from a weak superficial faith, but from the tolerant love of God, which St. Paul says the Holy Spirit pours out this same love into our lives. (Romans 5:5)

Miraslov Volf, in defining Romans 15:7, uses the word embrace to describe the process of welcoming. He speaks of the drama of embrace by giving four elements in the movement of embrace: opening the arms, waiting, closing the arms, and opening them again. In doing so, he brings together three themes. 1. The mutuality of self-giving love in the Trinity, (the doctrine of God.). 2. The outstretched arms of Christ on the cross for the “godless.” (the doctrine of Christ). 3. The open arms of the Father receiving the prodigal, (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit). We are to embrace others as God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have embraced us. The open arms create space in ourselves for the other and are a gesture of invitation as well as a soft knock on the other’s door (Volf, 1996, pp. 140-142).

The Risk of Embrace

When we open our arms to make a movement of embrace to those with whom we disagree or our enemy, we do not know how they will respond. We may be misunderstood, despised, and even violated. We do not know if our offer will be appreciated, supported, and reciprocated. Volf says, we can become a savior or a victim—possibly both. Embrace is a display of grace, and grace is always a risk (Volf, 1996, p. 147).

The admonishment of Jesus to “love your enemies” is not a casual, easy, superficial, or simple thing, but a difficult practice. It involves sacrifice; God loved us but he sent His Son to be our Savior; Christ loved us, but he bore our sins on the cross. Let’s not be naïve here. Jesus is not saying that the enemy will always love you in return; in fact, history shows the reverse to be true. Some will respond to our love, but the majority will not. Jesus said to the disciples that they would be hated as he was hated, persecuted as he, because of their faith. Most, if not all, of the disciples were martyred.

Believing and practicing the teachings of Jesus will run contrary to the opinions of the world and this may invite some form of persecution. This has been true throughout the history of the church. The uniqueness of Christianity requires a steadfast faith in the doctrines and traditions handed down to us. St. Paul told Timothy several times to “guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit. (2 Timothy 2:14) At the same time, however, sharing the faith must be done without malice or intolerance to those who hold different ideologies or religions. We must speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Peter, in his first epistle said, “Always be prepared to give and answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). The question is, why would anyone ask? They will ask because they see the fruit of our faith in every day life – our love, peace, joy, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 6:22). Our love to our neighbor allows the Word of God to do its work. This is how we are to live in a multi-cultural and intolerant world.

NOTE

1. The word “Cube” used by Weigel in his title refers to the *La Grande Arche de la Defense* built by François Mitterand. *La Grande Arche* is a colossal cube 40 stories tall that was intended as a monument to human rights. Weigel contrasts the ideology represented by Cube with the *Notre Dame Cathedral* and the teachings of the Christian Church.

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Iecietības dimensijas: mūsdienu attieksmes un rīcības noteikšana atšķirīgajā pasaulē

Kopsavilkums

Autors savā rakstā aplūko jautājumu par *ieciētību* mūsdienu pasaulē, kurā kultūru un viedokļu dažādība prasa pieņemt arī morālus spriedumus. Daudzi modernie zinātnieki apgalvo, ka mēs dzīvojam kultūras konfliktu vidē – vienā pusē atrodas pasaulīgie humānisti, bet otrajā, neieciētīgie kristieši; bet tā tas nav. Konflikts patiesībā ir starp diviem pretējiem uzskatiem par ieciētību. Viens uzskats balstās relatīvismā. Tas ir pieņēmums, ka mūsu uzvedība sakņojas kultūrā, pakļauta individuālai izvēlei un tādēļ morāli spriedumi nav nepieciešami. Kristīgais viedoklis, savukārt, norāda uz to, ka mēs dzīvojam grēkā kritušajā pasaulē un morāliem spriedumiem par labo un ļauno ir priekšnoteikums, lai aizvairītos no morāla haosa civilizētā sabiedrībā. Vis-svarīgākais kristietim ir tas, kā mēs izdarām šos morālos spriedumus.

Morāles relatīvisms ir plaši izplatīts šodienas pasaulē, bet tikai retais ierauga tā konsekvences. Šāda dzīves uztvere uzskata, ka ētikas standarti, morāle un izpratne par ļauno un labo ir atrodami kultūrā, līdz ar to jebkura uzvedība ir pieņemama. Tas nozīmē arī to, ka “nav absolūtas patiesības”, kas noved pie atziņas par dzīvi bez jēgas.

Šķiet, ikviens piekrīt, ka tolerance ir svarīga, ja vēlamies dzīvot mierīgi atšķirīgajā pasaulē. Tomēr šāda izpratne ved mūs pie vēl dziļāka un nopietnāka ētiska jautājuma – kā mums izturēties vienam pret otru dažādību pilnajā pasaulē. Vai ieciētība nozīmē, ka mums ir jāpieņem visus viedokļus par kādu noteiktu lietu kā patiesību? Kā kristiešiem, vai tolerance nozīmē to, ka mums vairs nevajadzētu teikt, ka Jēzus Kristus ir vienīgais ceļš pie Dieva Tēva? Vai mums būtu jābūt vienaldzīgiem saskarsmē ar morāles normām un uzvedību? Vai persona var būt ieciētīga un tajā pašā laikā ticēt pamatotai patiesībai reliģijas, ētikas un politikas jomās? Vai mūsu ieciētībai ir arī robežas?

Autors savā darbā nopietni apskata šos jautājumus, norādot arī uz divām ekstrēmām parādībām – absolūtu ieciētību un galēju neieciētību. Abi šie novirzieni ir vienlīdz bīstami un var būt graužoši sabiedrībai. Absolūta ieciētība noved pie morāla haosa, galēja neieciētība – pie totalitārisma. Kā redzams, abi viedokļi ir iznīcinoši civilizētai sabiedrībai

Autors iepazīstina ar *ieciētības definīciju*, kā arī vairākiem aspektiem šajā jautājumā, kā, piemēram, *ieciētības nozīme*, *ieciētības paradokss*, *ieciētības robežas*, *ieciētības izcelsme un attīstība*, *Jēzus un ieciētības Evaņģēlijs* un *Bībeles atziņu pielietojums ieciētībā*.

Kad mēs tiekam konfrontēti ar ļaudīm, kuru atziņu un uzvedību mēs uzskatām par nepareizu, tas ir pilnīgi normāli, ja cenšamies viņus ierobežot. Šajā kontekstā autors lieto arī terminu “apspiest” un citē citu autoru viedokļus, (kā, piem., *Budziszewski*, 1993), ka “šeit ir paradokss apspiežot ļaunumu – jo vairāk apspiežam, jo lielāks ļaunums rodas”. Šī doma ved pie Aristoteļa doktrīnas par “*zelta vidusceļu*”. Pēc Aristoteļa domām katra tikumiska lieta ir viduspunkts starp diviem ekstrēmiem poliemi, kur katrs no tiem ir ļaunums. Vienā galā ir pārspīlēta kvalitāte, otrajā galā – pilnīgs “brāķis”... Tikai pa vidu būs atrodams īstais labums un kvalitāte. No šīs teorijas izriet, ka jautājumā par toleranci mūsu mērķis ir panākt sabalansētu personību, attālinātu no iepriekš pieminētajiem divām pretējām galējībām.

Turpinājumā tiek aplūkots būtiskais jautājums par to, vai iecietībai ir robežas. Mēs dzīvojam pasaulē, kur bieži baidāmie izteikt to, ko domājam, lai neaizvainotu citus. Bet iecietībai, kā raksta autors, ir savas robežas. No jauna šajā darbā tiek uzsvērts, ka iecietība bez robežām (rāmjiem) noved civilizētu sabiedrību pie morāla haosa. Tiek minēts Miroslavs Volfs, kurš piedāvā interesantu un, autoraprāt, ļoti vērtīgu atziņu, proti, – “*iekļaušana*”, ar to domājot sabalansētu pieeju katram viedoklim, cilvēkam, neizslēdzot un neizgrūžot viņu ārpus diskusiju loka. Volfs piedāvā “*iekļaušanu*” kā pretpolu “izstumšanai” ārpusē, ņemot par pamatu Bībeles patiesību. Viņš uzsver, ka “mēs esam reiz bijuši tālu prom no Dieva godības un žēlastības, bet caur Jēzu Kristu tagad esam *iekļauti* Viņa valstībā”. Patiešām jāatzīst, ka ne vienmēr kristieši atceras šo svarīgo patiesību. Faktiski Volfs vēlas pateikt, ka “mēs esam atšķirīgi šajā pasaulē, bet tas nedod mums tiesības nošķirties, nodalīties no pārējiem”.

Autors ievada mūs arī vēsturē, lai rādītu iecietības attīstību un ceļu pie mums modernajā pasaulē. Aizsākumi meklējami jau Vecajā Derībā, kur Dievs cilvēkiem atklājas divos veidos – kā pacietīgs, tolerants, mīlošs, piedodošs un lēns savās dusmās. Tātad, visas īpašības un kvalitātes iecietības paraugam. No otras puses, kad Israēls nepaklausa un grēko, – Dievs lieto līdzekļus, lai labotu šos pārkāpumus, bez kompromisa, tomēr nepārkāpjot Savu mīlestību un dotos apsolījumus.

Vēl jo vairāk šī iekļaušana Dieva žēlastībā un mīlestībā parādās Jēzus Kristus, kā autors saka, “*Iecietības Evanģēlijā*”. Kristus vārdi, “mīliet savus ienaidniekus”, “ej un negrēko vairs”, kā arī līdzība par kviešiem un nezālēm īpaši raksturo iecietības mēru un plašumu. Reizē Kristus arī bargi vērsās pret farizejiem un rakstu mācītājiem, pret tirgoņiem templī, kas tikai norāda uz to, ka iecietībai ir robežas.

Tālāk autors iepazīstina ar iecietības politiku, minot šajā sakarā tādus autorus kā Džons Loks, Džons Stjuarts Mils, Lords Stenlijs un citi. Šajā sadaļā notiek diskusija starp to, vai, aizliedzot un uzspiežot indivīdam (sabiedrībai) kādu viedokli, tas būtu kvalificējams kā “ideju terors”, “kaitējums” cilvēka brīvībai. Tomēr visā šajā diskusiju jūklī mēs nevaram skaidri saskatīt “kaitējumu” vai “teroru” indivīda brīvībai. Šo autoru izteiktie spriedumi izriet no viņu sekulārās dzīves veida un pieredzes.

Nobeigumā autors pievēršas, kā pats izsakās “unikālajai kristietībai”, kas ir tik atšķirīga no visām citām reliģijām un pasaulē esošajām ideoloģijām. Kristietības pamats ir balstīts patiesībā, ka cilvēce ir kritusi grēkā, ka tā ir samaitāta un ļauna. Bet Dievs ienāca (iejaucās) šajā atkritušajā sabiedrībā caur Cilvēku, Jēzu Kristu, lai radītu “jaunu cilvēku” (2. Korintiešiem 5:17). Šī patiesība nostājas pret šodienas valdošo evolūcijas un iecietības relatīvismu, kas apgalvo, ka viss ir tikai negadījums, radies nejaušības veidā, ka nav nekādas morālas atbildības un atskaites punkta. Ja kristieši runā ar stingru pārliecību par pasaules radīšanu un to, ka pasaulē ir ienācis grēks, ka tikai caur Jēzu Kristu cilvēks var tikt salīdzināts ar Dievu (ka nav neviena cita ceļa!), tad nonākam dilemmas priekšā. Citas reliģijas, dzirdot šādus argumentus, var tikt apvainotas, pazemotas un izraisīt konfliktus. Kā tad rīkoties?

Bībeles skats uz šiem jautājumiem dod mums atbildes. Apustulis Pāvils savā vēstulē romiešiem sniedz mums skaidras norādes un vērtīgas atziņas. “Visi ir grēkojoši un visiem trūkst Dieva godības atziņa”, norāda apustulis 3. nodaļā. Viņš saka, lai mēs “mīlam viens otru, kā Kristus mūs ir mīlējis”, kas nozīmē “iekļaušanu”, nevis atstumšanu (15:7). Skaidri tiek norādīts, ka arī mēs reiz bijām tālu prom no Dieva godības, *neiekļauti*, bet tagad *iekļauti*. Līdz ar to ir pamudinājums izturēties ar iecietību pret citiem, neatkarīgi no personas uzskatiem, ādas krāsas, sociālās izcelšanās un citām lietām. Tas nenozīmē, ka kristietis nedrīkst paust savu viedokli, izpratni un

redzējumu par morāles un sabiedrības uzvedības jautājumiem. Bet veidam, kā to mēs darām, jābūt balstītam Jēzus Kristus “ieciētības un mīlestības evaņģēlijā”.

Autors noslēgumā izsaka brīdinājumu, ka ne vienmēr kristieša attieksme ar “iekļaušanu” var būt sekmīga. Mēs nekad nezinām, kā reaģēs cilvēks, kuru vēlamies saņemt un pieņemt. Iespējams, ka saņemsim pamatīgus uzbrukumus un sitienus; autors aicina mūs būt uz to gataviem.



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