

Lessing and tolerance and the magic ring

Lessing told the parable of a man who has one magic ring. A man promises the magic ring to each of his three sons who he loves equally. As he was dying he knew he could only give it to one son so he has two copies made. Each son gets a ring and thinks he got the magic ring. A legal dispute arises about who has the magic ring but the judge says, "Go and believe each of you that you have the magic ring."

The lesson of the parable is, "Let people believe what they want about magic and the supernatural."

So the brothers are told not to care if they have the right ring.

They are told to believe they do.

They are told to be tolerant and stop looking for the real ring.

The message is that it is okay to believe your religion is the only true one even if you are wrong and as long as you let others think their religion is better than yours or the best and as long as you live a good life.

But it does not change the fact that the father is an irresponsible fool and a liar and his love for his sons is nothing to boast about when he lied to them.

But it does not change the fact that the brothers were justified in having their dispute.

For those who argue that God is like the Father that accuses God of being untrustworthy.

And if each brother thinks the ring does work or is not working then clearly the argument is an argument for a placebo or no-cebo. The person with the magic ring does not know the difference between having it and one of his brother's fakes.

The parable is an attempt to endorse a form of bigotry where religious differences and even religious fraud is regarded as unimportant. That is bigotry for it is unsupportive to religions and to people who care about being right or what is best to believe. If religious beliefs matter so little then a religion that says they matter is being called bigoted.

It is a sign of what many people are like when they pretend that a dose of soft bigotry and hypocrisy is to be applauded as tolerance.

Tolerance is seen as not caring about things that do not matter. But in fact you have the right to care about things that seem unimportant. And sometime what matters little now can matter a lot in the big picture.

There are only two options: tyranny or tolerance. Having the wrong view of truth or erring about what the truth is the only thing that decides which one will triumph.

Religion may condemn relativism and still be like today's disciples of fake tolerance. It has a fake tolerance of its own. God based relativism is the worst kind for it is more ingrained and it is covered up by the notion, "God knows best so we follow his rules even if we think they are wrong."