

The Church And Pluralism - How does the Church survive in a multi-religious society?

The 911 tragedy and the recent war against terrorism have made the issues of religious toleration and harmony a vital one. By fostering a tolerant society, we create a community where different religious faith can co-exist together and work together. In a pluralistic society such as ours, the lack of tolerance can potentially cause bitter conflicts between faiths and races.

As Christians, we desire peace. The Bible teaches us that we should pray for governments so that peace and order will prevail in society. (1 Tim 2v1-3). However, as a religion with an exclusive message, we must not pursue peace at all cost. The question we face is "how do we Christians, holding to an exclusive message of salvation, respond to this current agenda to live in harmony with other faiths?"

We need to affirm our uniqueness

Our saving message is exclusive, for it asserts that Christ alone has the power to bring sinners to God. But there is an inclusive element in the Christian faith as well. When one looks at the Church, he sees a spiritual kingdom that is made up of people from all sorts of racial and cultural backgrounds. Christianity is not a racist religion, in which only a particular ethnic group may belong to the eternal kingdom. The Church is made up of peoples from all nations, tongues and tribes. Christianity is truly inclusive. The body of Christ includes people from every nation, tongue and tribe. But still, the method of reconciliation presented in the Christian faith is exclusive. There is no other way to the one true God except through Jesus. Jesus said, 'No one comes to the Father except by me.'

One essential difference

We do not deny the fact that all religions teach a high degree of human morality and virtues. But the acid test of a true religion is whether or not it saves me from my sins and presents me as one righteous before God. We can appreciate the morals promoted by other religions, but we must affirm that only Christianity save us fro

There is only one true God

It is easy to deny this under the pressure of religious pluralism and tolerance. The Bible makes the assertion in the first commandment that we must not worship any other gods. Anyone who transgresses this law is guilty of the sin of idolatry. Christians condemns arrogance and violence in propagating its message

It needs to be said that Christianity is never conceited when it proclaims the message that Chris is the only way. Biblical Christianity condemns arrogance, and any militant attitude that terrorizes and thumbs down another religion. The way of Christ is humility and meekness. And the exclusive claims of Christ must be presented in such a spirit. Christ takes a non-violent approach in establishing his kingdom. Christ told Peter to put the sword away when he tried to

prevent his arrest.

Christianity is not against religious tolerance

Historically, Protestant churches have fostered the concept of the liberty of conscience which provided the platform for Christianity to be practiced in a secular society. According to this liberty of conscience, Christianity pleads freedom to proclaim its message. At the same time, it also admits that other religions possess the same liberty to plead for the right to proclaim and practice their faiths. Our liberty in a secular state does not give us the freedom to eradicate idolatry by the sword. We need to learn how to coexist together in peace, yet without surrendering our unique identity and claims. We need to bring others to Christ and fulfill this missionary mandate, and perform this task in such a way that does not provoke religious wars. Our non-violent faith demands from us a peace-loving approach in winning converts for Christ. When our faith perpetuates blood, we deny the victory that comes through grace alone. Jesus warned his disciples that those who draw the sword will perish by the sword.

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