

The Christian and Pluralism?

In January, a university in North Carolina that was founded on Christian principles decided to begin broadcasting the traditional Muslim call to prayer from the bell tower of the chapel. Muslim students at the university hold a public prayer at 1 p.m. each Friday in the chapel basement. Someone decided that the university, in the name of inclusion or pluralism, should broadcast the call to prayer from the bell tower.

The associate dean for religious life at the university said that religious pluralism is at the heart of the school's mission. Needless to say, this move brought opposition from a wide variety of people. Why wouldn't the university broadcast a Jewish call to worship or a reading of the Lord's Prayer from the bell tower? The attempt of the university to encourage Muslim worship did not sit well with many people in an era when there have been many attempts to remove Christian symbols in public places or copies of the Ten Commandments displayed in courtrooms. University officials reversed the decision concerning the call to prayer.

Traditionally, western countries have promoted freedom of religion. Religious groups have been given the liberty to practice their beliefs and even to promote their beliefs as long as they are not forcing these beliefs on other people. The state has attempted to be careful not to promote one religion over another or to discriminate against certain religions among its people.

However, pluralism is a growing movement in our society. Pluralism is the belief that there is more than one kind of reality and more than one way that is right. In the government, it has become "politically correct" to make policies that would actually promote certain systems of belief or religion. But to promote one religion while severely restricting another is not in harmony with the concept of religious freedom. Pluralism becomes even more serious when it enters schools and churches.

Pluralism is not just respecting different religions or allowing people of different religions to practice their beliefs. Pluralism within the "Christian" church promotes the idea that many, or maybe even all, religions are seeking God and that there are many ways to God. And so not only schools, but also churches start emphasizing the areas where we agree with other religions, even holding ecumenical or joint religious services to show that we are together in many things.

While true Christians should be kind toward those of other religions and not persecute them in any way, it is also true that Christianity is an exclusive religion. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father [God], but by me"* (John 14:6). The early church preached: "Neither is there salvation in any other [than Jesus Christ]: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

For this reason, Christians need not be ashamed of their faith or of being identified as Christians. As the early church leader, the Apostle Paul, said, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Romans 1:16). Neither should we be ashamed to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people of other religions or of no religion. We cannot force, nor should we try to force, Jesus Christ on other people. However, because the Bible teaches that the way of Christ is the only way to God, we need to let others know how they can find the God we serve. The choice will be theirs to make.

Jesus and the early church did not crusade to try to force the government to tolerate them and give them their “rights.” They simply preached the truth and the way to God. Christians today should not become involved in political lobbying to try to force their beliefs on society or to force toleration for Christian beliefs. The call of the Christian church is rather to proclaim the message of salvation through Jesus Christ to all who will hear the message. Christians also need to live out the teachings of Jesus and of the Bible in a world that needs to *see how Jesus can transform lives and bring peace in men’s hearts in a troubled world*. Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth”* (John 14:27).

~Roger Berry