

NO OTHER GODS

Pt. II

1. Aim: to show that pluralism is wrong just like syncretism.
2. Ex. 20:3 "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."
 - a. God does not tolerate worship of other gods - It is called idolatry
 - b. Israel did not follow this command and often worshiped other gods
 - c. Jesus also taught us that we should worship no other gods when he told Satan: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matt. 4:10
3. In our day there many ways in which men worship other gods - syncretism, pluralism
 - a. Syncretism is the combination of many different religious beliefs
 - b. Pluralism is the belief that there are many different ways of serving God and Christianity is just one of many.
4. In this lesson we will study the errors of this doctrine of pluralism

DISCUSSION

I. WHAT IS PLURALISM ?

- A. This is the belief that there should be universal acceptance of all thoughts, beliefs and actions.
- B. They insist that we must be tolerant of all religious groups and teachings. There is nothing wrong with having many different ways of religion.
- C. These people would insist that there is no universal truth, but every person or culture develops their own way of religious thinking, and it is acceptable.
- D. Therefore this theory would say that any religious system is equally valid.

II. EXAMPLE OF PLURALISM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. Solomon is an example of a man who practiced pluralism
1. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines - 1 Kings 11:1-3
 2. God had warned about worshipping other gods - 1 Kings 9:6-9
 3. Solomon wanted to please all 1,000 of these women so — he set up shrines to other gods that they may worship them in Israel.
 4. 1 Kings 11:5-8
 5. Therefore God was angry with Him - 1 Kings 11:9-13
- B. This is pluralism - he did not stop worshipping God, but added the worship of all these idol gods - worshiped all of them.
1. Not only did he desire to please his wives, and allow them to worship freely, but a disdain towards this would have placed him in a precarious political situation.
 - a. For instance, Solomon married the princess of Egypt.
 - b. If he were to deny his new wife the ability to continue to worship the gods of Egypt, this could cause an animosity between Israel and Egypt.
 - c. There is no doubt that Solomon would have had to take, by necessity, these things into consideration.
 - d. It may be that he justified the abomination of setting up idols under the mask of political expediency, but the end never justifies the means.
 2. Solomon could attend a service to Ra with an Egyptian wife, while moments later, he could pray with his Hebrew wife to the invisible God of the universe.
 - a. This is synchronizing the religious flavor of the day.
 - b. They are viewed as equally acceptable and tolerated avenues of worship.

- c. In other words, they thought that though Ra, Dagon, or God be worshiped, they will ultimately lead the worshiper to the same place.
- d. In our day and age this is called Religious Pluralism.

III. INCONSISTENT WITH THE BIBLE

A. The Bible teaches: ¹

1. Jesus said "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).
2. Echoing these sentiments, Peter said to the religious rulers of the Jews, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12
3. John 8:32

B. These verses conflict with the teachings of pluralism:

1. They believed in objective truth - truth was something that had been delivered to them and it does not change - John 8:32
2. Jesus was not presented as one among many, equally valid means of salvation.
 - a. Jesus is the truth
 - b. Jesus is the way
 - c. He is the only way to have salvation
 - d. There is no other way of being saved, except through Jesus.
3. This is not the teaching of pluralism which says there are many ways and all are acceptable!

¹What has Happened to Truth? By Garry K. Brantley Apologetics Press 1996

- C. In N.T. times the Christians were persecuted. Why?
1. They worshiped God and him alone !
 2. They were unwilling to accept all other gods and religions.
 3. They taught that Christ was the one and only way to heaven !
 4. They did not accept pluralism.

IV. PITFALLS OF PLURALISM

A. "Tolerance or intolerance ?"²

1. They claim to be tolerant of all views in religion, But this is not true.
2. Pluralism does not tolerate the following views:
 - a. Baptism is necessary for salvation (Mark 16:16);
 - b. Few will be saved (7:13-14);
 - c. There is an eternal hell (25:46);
 - d. Homosexuality is a sin (1 Cor. 6:9);
 - e. Drunkenness is a sin (1 Cor. 6:10);
 - f. The man is the head of the house (Eph. 5:23);
 - g. Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6);
 - h. You can lose your salvation (Heb. 10:26ff),
3. All these views and many others will not be tolerated in churches that adopt the doctrine of pluralism. In fact, many would consider that you are in sin, or very close to it, if you hold to any of the above doctrines.

²Pluralism by Mark Dunagan - Beaverton Church of Christ - 11/21/93

B. **'Pluralism Creates Prejudice and Hatred':**

1. The 'tolerance' claimed by pluralism is quickly found wanting when I start preaching the above truths.
2. If I preach the truth on homosexuality, all of sudden the "tolerance advocates of pluralism" will label me as a 'gay-bashing, homophobic, narrow-minded, backward, fundamentalist, right-wing bigot'.
3. Does that sound like a compliment? (1 Peter 2:12)

C. **'Freedom and Rights are Lost not Gained'**

1. Rather than promoting free thought, pluralism ends up pressuring everyone to believe the same falsehoods.
2. Churches that buy into this false doctrine will start 'feeling the heat' to conform to the cultural standards of society.
3. Romans 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
4. Many mainline denominations are under great pressure at the present time to change their positions on abortion, homosexuality, the role of men and women, and many other issues.
5. FREEDOM TO BELIEVE THE TRUTH IS LOST IN PLURALISM.

D. 'It is seeking to please men and not God'

1. When people are more concerned about how society is viewing their religious group than how God views them, they have ceased to be servants of Christ. (Galatians 1:10)
2. Pluralism is so concerned about not offending anyone (i.e. of political and social importance), that it has completely forgotten that God might be offended!
3. God's blessing rests upon those that can accept everything that Jesus taught, without being turned off. "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Luke 7:23

Conclusion

1. History repeats itself. Humans refuse to learn from the mistakes of the past.
 - a. God warned that His people many years ago "thou shalt have not other gods before me." - Ex. 20:3
 - b. But they did not listen and were plagued by syncretism - the combination of other religious beliefs.
 - c. They did not completely remove God from their lives. They did not become atheists.
 - d. But they mixed many elements of false religion into their own beliefs and practices.
 - e. During the days of the northern kingdom of Israel just before they were taken into Assyrian captivity it was said of them: "they feared the LORD, and served their own gods," II Kings 17:33
2. Today this climate is the way of religious people today:
 - a. They tell us we must not be judgmental but rather tolerant of all others.
 - b. So what has happened is that we have had a mixture of many different forms of

religion - syncretism - or conglomerationalism.

c. And we have a large number of people who want us to believe that every way is acceptable to God - pluralism.

d. Syncretism and pluralism are both wrong and must be rejected.

3. Jesus said: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Matt.

4:10 And he also said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

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