

REFLECTION ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

Pluralism as described by John Hick, is now the mainstream of most media outlets and continues to invade our daily life, even in the church. My personal experience with a pluralistic worldview has been mostly limited to the current media forms of our culture like the Internet, satellite broadcasting, and social networking entities, but more and more you can see this view prevailing in our government as well. One can now see how easily a person can make the transition from the Truth of an exclusivist worldview, to being more inclusivistic, and then to pluralistic without perhaps knowing the transition has taken place.

Many who carry a pluralistic worldview today are not even aware that this is indeed the worldview that consumes their life, but it is the worldview that engulfs their life. Just the fact that we live in a society where this view prevails puts many, if not most, of us in some type of pluralistic camp. Author Ronald H. Nash wrote an excellent book on this topic titled *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* At the end of his section on pluralism Nash quotes John Hick from *Jesus and the World Religions* with the following propositions:

“If Jesus was literally God incarnate, and if it is by his death alone that men can be saved, and by their response to him alone that they can appropriate that salvation, then the only doorway to eternal life is Christian faith. It would follow from this that the large majority of the human race so far have not been saved.”¹

And Nash concludes the section on pluralism by saying

“If I am a Christian exclusivist and discover after death that Hick’s version of pluralism really is true, I will have lost nothing except Hick’s good will during the life. But if I am a pluralist and it turns out that Christian exclusivism is true, then the consequences for me will be very serious. “

These two statements are fundamental to the pluralism argument today and the last statement shows how deficient pluralism can be. In the media, where I have my personal experience with pluralism, I contend, is where most people in our culture have such a problem with an exclusivistic worldview when Hick says, “it would follow... a majority of the human race have not been saved. “

The media views what is or is not fair in two ways. One, what is socially fair to all (they insist and desire that all roads lead to the same God), and two, how some said worldview of fair effects the profit margin of the product or service they are selling (if they don't say all roads lead to the same God, or wide is the road to salvation,

¹ Ronald H. Nash, *Is Jesus the Only Savior* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zonervan Publishing, 1994), 69-92.

they will immediately exclude some potential sales to those who don't agree, which we have said is most in the world today). Exclusivism in the media's eyes is not fair to all; therefore they will always tend to push their efforts to the pluralistic worldview.

A pluralistic worldview can be discussed or defended when dealing with a person or group one on one, but when dealing with an entity as large as a new media outlet or a prime time network program where pluralism is so ingrained in the essence of the production, you can not simply converse about Matthew 7:13-14. In the case of the media, your only recourse in the end may be to refer to what drives the business, and that is profit (for the most part). The sometimes not-so-simple task of refusing to do business with the group or funding them in any way would be one way of removing yourself from their pluralistic worldview, although it may not make a substantial difference. Another way, as could be the case when dealing with the government, is to voice your argument to the appropriate person.

Unfortunately, Hick's view that eventually all human beings will ultimately be saved from Hitler to Stalin and everyone in between is the prevailing view of our culture, even among Believers, and changing their mind will mean changing their hearts to see the saving grace of God Himself.