

**Cooperation without Compromise:**  
**Faithful Gospel Witness in a Pluralistic Setting**

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### **Faithful Gospel Witness in a Pluralistic Setting**

This treatise seeks to provide a framework for faithful gospel witness in a pluralistic setting by considering the long-standing military praxis known as cooperation without compromise. As a chaplain in the United States Army Reserve, a member of the adjunct faculty of two seminaries, and a pastor of a local church seeking to equip my flock for works of ministry, I have a great interest in finding a working model; so that which I have received, as it were, I desire to share with you.

I recently read a story of an ecumenical conference where the discussion related to how respective denominations would respond to demon possession. It was suggested that

Methodists would sing them out;

Pentecostals would shout them out;

Catholics and Greek Orthodox would incense them out;

Baptists would drown them out;

and Presbyterians would freeze them out!<sup>1</sup>

As a Presbyterian, I get a little tired of the frozen chosen jokes, but I get the point. The point of that illustration is to cause us to think about doing pastoral ministry—true to the Scriptures, to the Great Commission, and even to our distinctive and unique contributions to the body of Christ—in a pluralistic setting. However, I want to go

beyond this hypothetical, tongue-in-cheek gathering into the very real world we live in today. The setting is no longer just Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Presbyterians. The setting is more like what I saw when I stepped foot onto the soil of India to teach in Chennai and in Dehradun—Hindus, Buddhists, Islamic sects, cults who operate in the name of Jesus, as well as atheists and agnostics, secularists and materialists. Add to that Judaism of every brand and Christian groups of every kind. When I returned to my own nation, I wondered, Did I just see a snapshot of America and Great Britain fifty years from now?

Increasingly, that is our world today, not only in metropolitan areas, but in almost every community in America,<sup>2</sup> even in rural areas where plurality once meant (and still does in some communities) a Baptist church, a Methodist church, and an independent break-away congregation from both of the other two. Of course, there were always those contemptible few who dared not claim any of those, as in the rural south where I grew up (these are now the fastest growing group identified in the “American Religious Identification Survey” of 2001<sup>3</sup>). Today those same places are home, in an increasing way, to Muslims, various Eastern cults, Mormons, and of course, there seem to be more secularists and atheists. These are the teachers, the coaches, the students, and the next-door neighbors. Our nation, once ostensibly monochrome, the word used by the late English missionary and Bishop of South India Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998) to describe old Christendom, is now pluralistic.<sup>4</sup> The decisive spiritual warfare that Reinhold Niebuhr foresaw in “The Christian Church in a Secular Age”<sup>5</sup> has broadened onto new fronts in these dawning years of the twenty-first century. His “five types” in *Christianity*

*and Culture*<sup>6</sup> are ripe for reinterpretation as the cultural challenge itself has metastasized. John Howard Yoder, in his critique in 1958, and later Hauerwas and Willimon, in *Resident Aliens*, seek to do just that.<sup>7</sup> Old models of coping with plurality are no longer helpful, as Glenn Lucke writes on his blog *Common Grounds Online*: “The 1950s ‘tripartite settlement’ described in Will Herberg’s *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* no longer obtains as Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists have swelled in numbers in recent decades.”<sup>8</sup>

Writers like Robert Wuthnow in *America and the Challenge of Religious Diversity*, who welcomes the challenge, and Peter Wood in *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept*, who distrusts the claims, seem to be talking about our new identity but are less sure about how to live it out.<sup>9</sup> Maybe none of us really are sure yet. We are just in the middle of it. We are just seeing it, to paraphrase Hans Urs von Balthasar, not really seeing through it.<sup>10</sup> But to be sure, things have changed. It is not just “Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.” It is more accurately “Toto, Kansas isn’t Kansas anymore.” The question remains: How do we conduct faithful gospel ministry in this environment?

Before I answer that question, it might be helpful to differentiate between pluralistic and pluralism as I use the terms. One is a matter of numbers and the other is a matter of ideology. Pluralistic refers to an undeniable plurality of beliefs and ideas and even the customs and cultures that are derived from those ideas. Even here Lesslie Newbigin sees inconsistency: “We are pluralist in respect to what we call beliefs but we are not pluralistic in respect of what we call fact. The former are a matter of personal decision; the latter are a matter of public knowledge.”<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, pluralists we are and pluralists we are becoming. Arguments notwithstanding, for instance, even among conservatives like Pat Buchanan and Dinesh D'Souza on how immigrants truly become American (American by creed [Constitution], according to D'Souza, and through "bonds of history and memory, tradition and custom, language and literature, birth and faith, blood and soil," according to Buchanan<sup>12</sup>), we are becoming more pluralistic every day. Within this global soup, full of every religious morsel imaginable, there is the presence of the ideology of pluralism. It may be that, as I have seen suggested, pluralism is a faith that exists as a people are on their way from one orthodoxy to another. We are moving from a Christian West to something else, and pluralism serves as the necessary faith bridge, if you will, to get us there.

We have mentioned Lesslie Newbigin before, but he is key in this study. In *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, *The Open Secret*, and *Foolishness to the Greeks*, among other increasingly important reflections on these matters, the late Bishop-missionary-church planter reminds us that we may be cooperative with one but without compromise with the other.<sup>13</sup>

I . . . believe that a Christian must welcome some measure of plurality but reject pluralism. We can and must welcome a plural society because it provides us with a wider range of experience and a wider diversity of human responses to experience, and therefore richer opportunities for testing the sufficiency of our faith that are available in a monochrome society. As we confess Jesus as Lord is a

plural society, and as the Church grows through the coming of people from many different cultural and religious traditions to faith in Christ, we are enabled to learn more of the length and breadth and height and depth of the love of God (Eph. 3:14-19) than we can in a monochrome society. But we must reject the ideology of pluralism.<sup>14</sup>

John Stott said, “Pluralism is an affirmation of the validity of every religion, and the refusal to choose between them, and the rejection of world evangelism. . . .”<sup>15</sup>

Of course, this is the rub for Christians. Susan Laemmler, Rabbi and Dean of Religious Life at USC, described the tenets of the ideology of religious pluralism as well as anyone: “. . . all spiritual paths are finally leading to the same sacred ground.”<sup>16</sup>

Another scholar, an Episcopalian Professor M. Basye Holland-Shuey of Belmont University,<sup>17</sup> said, “Pluralism . . . holds to one’s own faith, and at the same time, engages other faiths in learning about their path and how they want to be understood. . . . Pluralism and dialogue are the means for building bridges and relationships that create harmony and peace on our planet home.”<sup>18</sup>

According to this idea of pluralism, any denial of its validity would be paramount to blowing up bridges of common understanding and relationships among human beings. It is, according to her and many others, to stand against world peace. The idea of religious pluralism as the ideal cultural dynamic for our country is developed and defended by Diana L. Eck, Ph.D., professor of comparative religion and Indian studies at

Harvard University, in works like *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation*.<sup>19</sup>

But in *Christianity and Culture* T.S. Eliot wrote,

Only a Christian culture could have produced a Voltaire or a Nietzsche. I do not believe that the culture of Europe could survive the complete disappearance of the Christian faith. And I am convinced of that, not merely because I am a Christian myself, but as a student of social biology. If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes.<sup>20</sup>

For Eliot, pluralistic societies can only come through a Christian society with its essential understanding of and necessary consequences of the idea of human freedom and Christian liberty. However, Eliot is silenced beneath the cacophony of politically correct voices that equate pluralism with peace and exclusive truth claims with repression.

“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?” asked the psalmist (Ps 2:1 ESV). Yet in the postmodern city, the divergent voices find unity in opposition of the one who said, “I am the way, the truth and the life,” even as the early church in Acts prayed, ““Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed”” (Acts 4:27 NIV).

This is where we find ourselves in the modern public square where pluralism is the common denominator of the plurality. However, we have been here before. Whether Noah, standing against the unbelieving masses of the earth who had rejected God’s truth

in sexuality and marriage for their own truths, or Moses, standing against the gods of Egypt, or Joshua, preaching against the pluralism of Canaan, or Elijah, challenging pluralism on Mount Carmel seeking to win back the hearts of Israel so enchanted by the religion of Baal worship, or Paul, standing before the idolatry of Athens or even preaching to the rabbinical Judaism of Jerusalem, the faith of the one true God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of our Lord Jesus Christ, has always been taught in the middle of a pluralistic setting. The one true God, who has revealed himself through general revelation and through special revelation, becoming closest to us in the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is a missionary God whose revelation is centrifugal, expansive, and victorious. God has always made himself known in this pluralistic setting and has gathered in his children to the one among the many. This God cannot be held in check by the ideology of pluralism and, therefore, can never be presented by his ministers except as the one who stands in judgment over the other pseudo gods, false religions, and harmful thoughts of this present evil age and who calls for human beings to escape the coming judgment on those religions and find the abundant life and eternal life that comes from trusting in Jesus Christ.

In short, then, pluralistic setting? Of course. Pluralism? Never.

Now the question is, How do we do ministry in this environment? My answer is not a final answer, just an answer I am familiar with and want to share. It is the answer I use each time I do ministry as an Army chaplain. It is a model commonly called cooperation without compromise.

## **What Is the Model?**

Cooperation without compromise is the military, specifically the US Army chaplain, way for doing ministry, even fulfilling the Great Commission in a pluralistic setting. Cooperation without compromise is a phrase that describes how military chaplains must conduct their ministry, not only to troops of many faiths, but in a chaplaincy with many different Christian denominations, as well as chaplains from various branches of Judaism, Mormonism, and now even religions (with the advent of Islamic and Buddhist chaplains). This value emerged early on in the American military:

As early as the French and Indian War (1754-1760) the Virginia Council, at the request of Colonel George Washington, had appointed a chaplain for his regiment. Washington was . . . Anglican, . . . [and of course] that was the established church in Virginia. But at the same time, in 1758, provision had also been made for dissenting clergymen (Baptist) to serve with the troops when requested.<sup>21</sup>

So from the very beginning of military chaplaincy, cooperation without compromise has been a working model for the chaplaincy. The phrase and its modern implications were worked out more completely after World War II. The value is being put to the test with the advent of other surprising and perhaps unintended participants at the pluralistic table, including Wickens.

Cooperation without compromise, as it is usually expressed in military chaplaincy settings, has a set of values that includes “Respect for others, Support of others, No proselytizing, Follow the existing laws, No need to compromise one's own religious values and practices.”<sup>22</sup>

Our ears are immediately pricked by that sticky stated value of “no proselytizing.” But it is important to think about that value in the context of military ministry. We must remember that among the recent cases making the headlines, no government authority, despite the tireless work of antagonists, has restricted, for example, a Pentecostal chaplain from preaching the gospel or a Jewish rabbi from chanting a Hebrew prayer in Jewish chapel. Nor has there been a single instance in which the government restricted the pastoral counsel of chaplains that would include the sharing of one’s faith with a military member who sought that chaplain for ministry. As Chaplain (BG) David Zalis has written,

United States Code Title X empowers and directs us to provide for the free exercise of religion to military members. Chaplains exist to provide religious services for all their soldiers and not just need to fulfill the spiritual needs of those whose religious affiliation is like theirs. This in no way means that we are not representatives of our respective faith groups.<sup>23</sup>

The “no proselytizing” value of cooperation without compromise simply means that, in our case, the gospel may be presented when there is an invitation for us to speak

in chapels or as soldiers come to us for counsel. It means also that we present the gospel without knocking over the altars of other religions, so to speak. This may mean, for instance, that an evangelical Methodist chaplain must cooperate by providing access to Catholic literature for his Roman Catholic soldiers. However, if a soldier reads the Catholic material, has questions about it, and asks to see the Methodist chaplain, at that moment the Methodist chaplain, having cooperated within the pluralistic setting, may then share with the soldier how he believes that justification is by faith alone through grace alone to God's glory alone, not through sacerdotalism. Perhaps he prays with the soldier, and the soldier then attends the Protestant chapel to hear more of the Methodist chaplain. The soldier then decides that he has never really known Christ, and the chaplain prays with the soldier to receive Jesus Christ as Lord. Then the chaplain, in seeking to disciple him, gives him a book on Wesleyan theology and the soldier decides that Methodism is an expression of Christianity most agreeable to him. The soldier joins the United Methodist Church where he begins a life of discipleship as a Methodist. In this scenario, the chaplain has cooperated within a pluralistic setting, shown respect for the rights of the Catholic soldier, even cooperating to the point of providing avenues for that soldier to express his Catholic faith, yet never compromising his own commitments. Indeed, as the soldier then was drawn to him, perhaps even through his cooperative spirit and firm faith, the soldier was converted to an evangelical understanding of the Christian faith, and even more distinctively, he became a Methodist. That is cooperation without compromise.

It gets tricky, of course. For example, a particular chaplain, a second lieutenant, is a PCA chaplain, or another denomination that does not allow ordination of females into the ministry. He reports to his new assignment in Heidelberg, Germany, at US Army Europe Headquarters. He walks in to meet his new section commander, a chaplain who is an American Baptist female and a colonel! Full bird! Well, what about it? That is a pluralistic setting from the professional, vocational side of the house as well as from the ecclesiastical side (I am speaking about the issue of male-female working relationships in the military which, in my own experience, is not fully and satisfactorily settled). In this hypothetical case, though, let us ask, What about the faith commitments of the PCA chaplain and the American Baptist female chaplain-colonel? The lower ranking chaplain will have to cooperate with the female American Baptist chaplain colonel in everything—military discipline, protocol, and daily assignments. However, the PCA chaplain will not have to, for example, co-officiate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the same service with her since that would be a violation of his own commitment and understanding of his faith. He may have to serve with her in a non-religious, involuntary military ceremony, such as a change of command or a patriotic ceremony; but he will not be required to compromise the teachings of his own denomination, which are, presumably, his own convictions.

While admitting that the military chaplaincy has unique ministry challenges distinct from civilian ministry in the public square and that the military culture is unique, I would, nevertheless, posit that the military chaplaincy is a good model for ministry in a pluralistic setting. Moreover, I would say, out of my own experience as an Army Reserve

chaplain endorsed from my denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America, that such a model is successful despite the growing tensions we have all read about.<sup>24</sup> The PCA, as has been mentioned, does not ordain females to the ministry, and thus, we are an even more restrictive denomination in terms of having to live out the cooperation without compromise military model. To put it quite simply, if we can do it, anyone can do it!

Here is the premise of this treatise: I believe that the military chaplaincy approach to ministry—cooperation without compromise—is a model to be considered for civilian ministry in pluralistic North America today. We have seen what it is; now, is it biblical and is it practical?

### **Is the Model Biblical?**

I want to turn to one particular event that is useful in the whole debate: Paul at Mars Hill. Paul was on his way from Thessalonica to Corinth. He did not intend, necessarily, to do what he did in Athens. The surprising turn of events that led him into the very religious environment of Athens was, in fact, a providential open door to preach the gospel. Can we make out a model of cooperation without compromise there? I want to look at the condition of Athens, the response of Paul, and the reaction of Athens.

The condition of that city was both pluralistic and obviously committed to pluralism. That it was pluralistic can be affirmed by Luke's citing of the religious groups. The city was full of idols, presumably spanning the gamut of possible deities of that period and that place—Jews who practiced and Jews who didn't; Stoics and Epicurean philosophers (there is no reason that they should be dismissed from the orbit of other

religious bodies); and those people who worshipped, among their other gods, the one with “To an unknown god” inscribed on an altar in one of the pagan temples. This was surely a pluralistic city, but we can also see pluralism in their midst. Though the ideology is not stated as such, there was a peaceful coexistence of gods, of ideas, and a commitment of their time and thus their lives to “saying or hearing something novel.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed, it was Paul and his teaching on the resurrection of Jesus Christ that was so new that they laid their hands upon him and lead him up to the Areopagus that they might discover the meaning of his message. So the pluralistic community and the ideology of pluralism, if you will allow me to call it that, provide a brief moment of opportunity for the gospel.

Look at Paul’s response. It is important to see what Paul did not do. Paul did not turn over the altars. In fact, he studied them. He did not take the opportunity to denounce their culture. In fact, he quoted from their poets. He did not resist the philosophers to retreat to the safety of the believing Jews, but he went along with the game, so to speak. In short, at every turn Paul cooperated with the pluralistic culture. However, let us affirm that Paul never compromised. While cooperating, in the sense of that word as we have used it, we, the readers, know that Paul’s spirit was “exasperated”—to use the translation of Richmond Lattimore—over the idolatry of Athens.<sup>26</sup> But Paul’s exasperation was an energy put to good work as he preached. At the Areopagus, Paul did not rail as an angry prophet against their idolatry (though he had been provoked in his spirit by it), nor did he protest their paganism (like an ancient Fred Phelps and his Westboro Baptist Church-Topeka followers with “God Hates Athens” lifted high)<sup>27</sup>, but he approached the

Athenian religious plurality with the care that God did when he sent Jonah to Nineveh. There was a graciousness in Paul's words. He was speaking to the pagan audience as a man unto men.<sup>28</sup> His own humanity was wrapped up in theirs as he said, "Being then God's offspring, we . . ." (Acts 17:29 ESV). Note these features of his message and their powerful implication for our pluralistic, pluralism-committed generation.

It is a message that seeks for signs of God in the culture of the pagans, a recognition with Calvin of the *divinitatis sensum*, the innate awareness of God.<sup>29</sup> This is evident from his powerful introduction in which he points out the inscription to the unknown god.<sup>30</sup>

It is a message that seeks to disclose true faith in Christ by connecting what Reformed theology calls general revelation with the God of special revelation:

For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man. (Acts 17:23-24 ESV)

Paul shows that behind the seen and unseen forces of life<sup>31</sup> there is the one true God. Paul declares that the world is moving toward a day in which this God will judge the world. He will judge the world through a man whom he has appointed to do this, after giving sure proof to all by resurrecting him from the dead.<sup>32</sup>

It is a message of grace. This God has overlooked previous sins.<sup>33</sup> In his commentary on Acts, John Calvin warns about speculative theology at this point.<sup>34</sup> It means what it says, and we must live in the tension of the mystery of why God allowed darkness to reign in their world until that moment (or why God, in his goodness, chose that time to reveal Jesus Christ to them). This surely cannot mean that the forefathers of the Athenians were not responsible for their sins, but that rather than visiting the Athenians with wrath at this point in history, a good God had sent his apostle to them to announce the good news of Jesus Christ. While Luke does not give Jesus' name in the sermon proper, he tells us that Paul was in fact preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.<sup>35</sup> (Is this the complete sermon or Luke's redacted account? We do not know.)

It is a message that calls for repentance: "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30 ESV). And what happened? Some scoffed, some wanted to hear more, and some believed—among them a man and his wife.<sup>36</sup> A family in Athens was now Christian. Presumably, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had now engrafted former Athenian pagans, from among the plurality of religions, out of the resistance of pluralism, to become members of the "Israel of God."<sup>37</sup> In his case, according to Greek Orthodox endorsed history, St. Dionysius became the Bishop of Athens, and inspired by Paul, took the gospel to Gaul and was martyred for Christ on what is still known as Montmartre. His name went into the French as St. Denis (he was sometimes confused with a saint of the same name from the third century).<sup>38</sup> Out of the many came one who affected so many others with the gospel. We

are left to marvel and ask with confidence concerning the answer, Can anything stop the kingdom of God?

It is clear that the cooperation without compromise motif is one that Paul used. When considered alongside other passages, far too many to deal with in the limits of this treatise, we could even say that he used it self-consciously.<sup>39</sup>

### **Is the Model Practical for Civilian Ministry?**

Conducting a faithful ministry in the public square of our culture, whether as preachers or educators or Christians in any employment, is not only the call of Christ for the Christian, but also the plan of God for the world. The gospel goes forward in this way. If you agree with me that Newbigin is exactly biblical when he says that the “only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it,”<sup>40</sup> then Christ will use the church in a pluralistic society, committed as it may be to an ideology of pluralism, to draw some, even a number no man can count, to himself through our salt and light encounter with the religious people of our pluralistic world. A framework of cooperation without compromise is a God-honoring, biblically sound, time-tested, and proven way of accomplishing that worthy end. Moreover, it does so by honoring human beings, even when an inconsistent pluralism does not honor Christ or his claims.

One final application comes from the case from a few years ago when a controversy arose in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod over the involvement of one of its clergy in a multi-faith service held in Yankee Stadium in New York after the

tragedy of 9/11/2001. On September 23, 2001, the Rev. Dr. David Benke, President of the Atlantic District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, stood on the same stage with members of not only other Christian denominations, but of other religions. On that Sunday, before 20,000 people gathered for a multi-faith service that expressed the grief of the largest city in the United States, Dr. Benke made his way to the microphone. He said that the “field of dreams”—referring to Yankee Stadium—had “turned into God’s house of prayer.” He then prayed. I quote from his prayer made to God whom he repeatedly called a “Tower”:

O Heavenly Father, un-bind, un-fear, un-scorch, un-sear  
our souls; renew us in Your free Spirit. We’re leaning on  
You, our Tower of Strength. We find our refuge in the  
shadow of Your shelter. Lead us from this place--strong--to  
bring forth the power of Your love, wherever we are.

In the precious name of Jesus. Amen.<sup>41</sup>

Without injecting this Presbyterian into Lutheran ecclesiology nor, for goodness sake, readjudicating the case for them and admitting that many believe that such multi-faith gatherings fail to aid in public crisis or celebration as much as monochromatic services, I would say that this case—a case which was brought about by one minister’s response, along with the other religious leaders in his community, to the greatest public crisis since Pearl Harbor—is a classic example of what we will face as we seek to minister the gospel in a pluralistic age in a nation committed to pluralism as a public value. A faithful gospel minister was asked to join with other religions to offer prayer.

Yet, in this case, at least as I have found it, the minister did nothing less than Paul did at Athens. He cooperated with the many religions. He did not use this as an opportunity to protest their religion, but to bring Christ to the culture and to the minds of the 20,000 present plus millions of others around the world that read his words. He prayed to the God who is a tower to those who seek him. He prayed in the name of a “precious” Savior, Jesus Christ. Ultimately, his denomination ruled in favor of Dr. Benke and his usage of cooperation without compromise was vindicated.<sup>42</sup>

Such scenes as Dr. Benke faced are being presented to Christian clergy and people alike all over pluralistic America. How do we respond? Scripture, as well as praxis, vindicates the military chaplaincy model of cooperation without compromise, and this treatise commends this framework as a faithful response to the challenges of fulfilling the Great Commission in our pluralistic age.

We must be clear. The gospel says that “it ain’t over till it’s over,” to borrow the words of the very quotable Yogi Berra. Jesus is on the throne. His kingdom is here and will grow through the fulfillment of the Great Commission given to the church. He will come again and bring a new heaven and a new earth. Nothing can stop the forward movement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Even India, mentioned earlier—that jewel of pluralistic visions and example of where pluralism can lead—is now witness to a phenomenal growth of Christian conversions. Pluralistic societies and pluralism itself cannot stop the gospel. They could not in the first century, they cannot in India, and they will not prevail, ultimately, in the West. We need not be intimidated.

I close with the words, once more, of Lesslie Newbigin:

The church needs to be very humble in acknowledging that it is itself only a learner, and it needs to pay heed to all the variety of human experience in order to learn in practice what it means that Jesus is the King and Head of the human race. But the church also needs to be very bold in bearing witness to him as the one who alone is that King and Head. For the demonstration, the proof, we have to wait for the end. Until then, we have to be bold and steadfast in our witness and patient in our hope. For “we are partakers of Christ if we hold our first confidence firm to the end” (Heb. 3:14).<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. Vanlier Hunter, Th.D., “Biblical Reflections on Theological and Religious Pluralism.” Online: <http://www.icjs.org/clergy/vanhunter.html>.

<sup>2</sup> The religious makeup of America is 77% Christian, 3.7% Other Religions, 14.1% No religion, according to the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS). For further study, see Professor Barry A. Kosmin; Professor Egon Mayer; Dr. Arela Keysar: Study Director, “American Religious Identification Survey,” [cited November 14, 2006]. Online: [http://www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research\\_briefs/aris/key\\_findings.htm](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research_briefs/aris/key_findings.htm).

<sup>3</sup> “The greatest increase in absolute as well as in percentage terms has been among those adults who do not subscribe to any religious identification; their number has more than doubled from 14.3 million in 1990 to 29.4 million in 2001; their proportion has grown from just eight percent of the total in 1990 to over fourteen percent in 2001.” (Ibid.).

<sup>4</sup> Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans; Geneva, SZ: WCC Publications, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses* (ed. Robert McAfee Brown; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ the transformer of culture. (H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* [San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1951]).

<sup>7</sup> His unpublished critique was later published (Glen Harold Stassen, D.M. Yeager, John Howard Yoder, *Authentic Transformation: A New Vision of Christ and Culture* [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1996]); Stanley Hauerwas, William H. Willmon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1955, 1960); Glenn Lucke, "Review of Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*," Insight. Cited November 13, 2006. Online:

[http://commongroundsonline.typepad.com/common\\_grounds\\_online/2005/11/glenn\\_lucke\\_rev.html](http://commongroundsonline.typepad.com/common_grounds_online/2005/11/glenn_lucke_rev.html).

<sup>9</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Peter Wood, *Diversity: The Invention of a Concept* (San Francisco, Calif.: Encounter Books, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Credo: Meditations on the Apostles' Creed* (trans. David Kipp; New York, N.Y.: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 27.

<sup>12</sup> For excellent reflections on Dinesh D'Souza's *What's Great About America* and Pat Buchanan's *State of Emergency: the Third World Invasion and Conquest of America*, see Chris Seck, "Buchanan on Nationhood," [cited October 7, 2006]. Online: <http://buchanan.org/blog/?p=125>.

<sup>13</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*; Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995); Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 243-244.

<sup>15</sup> John Stott, "Interview with John Stott," *Orange County Register*, Oct 3, 1998. Cited November 9, 2006. Online: [http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel\\_plurl.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel_plurl.htm).

<sup>16</sup> Susan Laemie, Education as Transformation: A National Project on Religious Pluralism, Spirituality and Higher Education on the Wellesley College website, 1998, [cited November 9, 2006]. Online: <http://www.wellesley.edu/RelLife/transformation/edu-ngoverview.html>.

<sup>17</sup> "M. Basye Holland teaches courses on World Religions and Biblical studies at Belmont University in Nashville and is the Religion and Training Consultant for the Huntsville/Madison County Interfaith Mission Service, board member for the Alabama Faith Council, and presents programs on Inter-religious Dialogue for churches and universities." Online: <http://www.episcopalarchives.org/e-archives/bluebook/6.html>.

<sup>18</sup> M. Basye Holland-Shuey, "Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue" a speech given to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Florence, AL, January 13, 2002, [cited November 9, 2006]. Online: [http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel\\_plurl.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/rel_plurl.htm).

<sup>19</sup> Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Now Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*, (San Francisco, Calif.: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001). "Dr. Eck received the National Humanities Medal from President Clinton in a White House ceremony for her work in the area of religious pluralism." Dr. Eck, a United Methodist, and her lesbian partner serve as "the first homosexual housemasters at the prestigious Lowell House dormitory at Harvard." They have been active in not only advocating religious pluralism but also promoting homosexuality as normative in the Christian faith. Review by Liza Kittle. Online: (<http://www.renewnetwork.org/A%20New%20Religious%20America.pdf>).

<sup>20</sup> T.S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (New York, N.Y.: Harcourt Brace, 1976), 200.

<sup>21</sup> *United States Coast Guard Lay Reader Training Manual*, (United States Coast Guard, 1995), 12.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Chaplain (BG) David Zalis, *The Army Transformation and Objective Force Unit Ministry Team*, 2002 [cited November 9, 2006]. Online: <http://www.usachcs.army.mil/TACarchive/ACwinspr02/Zalis.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> For some of the tensions, and from a liberal viewpoint, read Laurie Goodstein, “NY Times: Evangelicals Are a Growing Force in the Military Chaplain Corps” (July 12, 2005). Cited November 9, 2006. Online: <http://www.refuseandresist.org/repro/art.php?aid=2123>.

<sup>25</sup> According to the translation of Richmond Alexander Lattimore, *Acts and Letters of the Apostles* (New York, N.Y.: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>27</sup> For more on this illustration of one way—an unbiblical, unprofitable and even inhumane way—to respond to plurality and pluralism, you need only to type in “Fred Phelps” to get 59,400 entries at Google (on November 15, 2006). I read from <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/111-westboro-baptist-church>.

<sup>28</sup> And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place. (Acts 17:26 ESV)

<sup>29</sup> Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library). Online: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.iv.i.iv.html>; “That there exists in the human minds and indeed by natural instinct, some sense of Deity. . . . God himself . . . endued all men with some idea of his Godhead” (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1. 3. 1.).

<sup>30</sup> “For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ““To the unknown god.”” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.” (Acts 17:23 ESV)

<sup>31</sup> “nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for ““In him we live and move and have our being””; as even some of your own poets have said, ““For we are indeed his offspring.”” (Acts 17:25-28 ESV)

<sup>32</sup> “because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31 ESV)

<sup>33</sup> “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30 ESV)

<sup>34</sup> On Acts 17.30, Calvin writes, “And assuredly we be not able to comprehend the reason why God did at a sudden set up the light of his doctrine, when he suffered men to walk in darkness four thousand years; at least seeing the Scripture doth conceal it, let us here make more account of sobriety than of preposterous wisdom.” (Jean Calvin, *Commentary on Acts* [Christian Classics Ethereal Library] Online: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom37.html>).

<sup>35</sup> “. . . he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.” (Acts 17:18 ESV)

<sup>36</sup> “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, ““We will hear you again about this.”” So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.” (Acts 17:32-34 ESV)

<sup>37</sup> “And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.” (Galatians 6:16 ESV)

<sup>38</sup> Read more on him and the legend, as well as the pseudo Dionysius and his letters. Online: <http://www.bartleby.com/65/di/DionysiuA.html>.

<sup>39</sup> I am thinking now of Paul's appearance before Festus after having been charged by the Jews with crimes against the state. Paul said, "If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar" (Acts 25:11 ESV). Paul would cooperate in many ways with the existing governments, even though they were pagan, anti-Christian, and even hostile to the faith. So, too, would Peter charge believers to do this: "Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor" (1 Peter 2:17 ESV). Much more has been and could be said about this matter, but for my purposes, it is clear that Paul—as well as Peter and their Christian auditors—could and must cooperate but without compromise.

<sup>40</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. 227.

<sup>41</sup> I quote from documents outlining the charges against The Reverend Dr. David Benke concerning his participation in the multi-faith prayer service at Yankee Stadium. The prayer is a direct quote from an October 13, 2001, letter from The Reverend Charles Hendrickson to officials of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Online:

<http://209.85.165.104/search?q=cache:NAYcVVt9eNoJ:www.cat41.org/news/archives/2001/BenkeDocs.rtf+benkedocs+yankee+stadium&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us>

<sup>42</sup> The final verdict in the ecclesiastical case was given in the words of the panel investigating the event: "Rev. Benke's participation [in "A Prayer for America"] was neither a rejection of nor a challenge to the Synod's fellowship position and practice, but a discretionary response to a quite extraordinary set of circumstances in a quite unordinary event--a terrorist attack on the United States of America, specifically in New York City and the parochial area of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, New York, New York, and the Atlantic District of the LCMS." (Hillary Wicai, "Suspension Lifted for Missouri Synod Leader," *Christian Century*, May 31, 2003. Online:

[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1058/is\\_11\\_120/ai\\_102750105](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1058/is_11_120/ai_102750105)

<sup>43</sup> Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*, 148-149.