



Global Connections National Conference 4-6 November 2009

The Uniqueness of Christ in a Pluralistic World Summary Report

Models of Pluralism

Two good –

- Horizontal or Institutional Pluralism
- Vertical Pluralism

Four bad –

- Secular State Pluralism
- Religious Pluralism
- Postmodern, subjective relativism
- Islamic Monism

Biblical and theological foundations

Of the many strands of evidence for the Uniqueness of Christ (prophecy, birth, miracles, teaching, death and resurrection, and transforming effect on people's lives) the most persuasive, because totally unique, is the incarnation/death/resurrection.

In relating to people where they are at, there will be opportunity to tell the Jesus story, relating it to our own experience and backing it up with a consistent life-style.

Postmodernism and pluralism need not be considered as entirely hostile and threatening to Christianity. They can also help Christians shake free from a harmful institutionalism where 'truth' becomes wooden and monolithic. In fact what these trends are really seeking for finds its fulfilment in Christ.

Challenges from Islam

Persuading Muslims will not come through argument or even Scripture, but through revelation, often in dreams (and consistent Christian life-style).

There was some discussion about 'The Son of God'. Some thought that since it is used so often in the NT we are not free to dispense with it. But others recognised that it came out of a (mainly) Jewish context. The expression in, for instance, a Muslim context is offensive because it can convey erroneously notions of physicality and sexuality (procreation) that are rightly blasphemous to Muslims. There is an inevitable offense to the Cross and to the Gospel, but let us avoid unnecessary obstacles by sympathetic understanding of the issues.

Lesson for us Christians: if there are non-negotiables, then may we communicate them not with arrogance and dogmatism but with warm-hearted, relaxed conviction. (We seek to win people, not arguments)

Key thoughts

- Thinking about Islam and Buddhism and how we can portray the uniqueness of Christ. Also that we get very hung up on language in a way that isn't always very helpful.
- Stimulation of hearing different and sometimes opposing opinions. Challenging! It's good occasionally to be 'jolted'. Eg on language and terminology.
- I was encouraged on the legitimacy given to integral mission – refreshing to hear enthusiasm for once on approach where I often feel I am fighting in a corner against proclamation-focussed evangelicals.
- We cannot argue anybody into a personal relationship with Christ. This should impact the way we evangelise and point us towards holistic mission.

Notes collated by Bryan Knell

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