

Trevor Delmore II

Dr. Louis DeCaro

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“Pluralism and Christian Ethics” (5-3-1)

Questions

1. **What are the dilemmas that pluralism raise for Christians?** Hollinger says, “In a pluralistic society, people live, work, and attempt civic responsibilities with people whose fundamental outlooks on reality are at odds with their own. In particular, the two apparent dilemmas that pluralism raises are the truth dilemma and the social dilemma.”
2. **What is the philosopher Richard Rorty’s view on truth?** Rorty argues that “there is nothing to be said about truth save that each of us will commend as true those beliefs which he or she finds good to believe.”
3. **How does pluralism raise a truth dilemma for Christians?** According to the chapter, pluralism raises a truth dilemma because Christians believe there is a truth, and it has been revealed in the incarnate and written Word of God.
4. **How is a commitment to faith and morals seen in a pluralistic society?** In a pluralistic society, a commitment to truth in faith and morals is seen to be at odds with a pluralistic society that guarantees the rights and freedoms of all people, argues Hollinger.
5. **Why is privatization not a viable option for Christians?** Hollinger explains that “privatization is not a viable option for Christians because it forces Christians to bifurcate themselves, to be different people in different spheres. It forces them into an existence in which the lordship of Christ is muted and relegated to one small sphere of life.... Such an

approach to life would appear to be not only unhealthy psychologically but also contrary to the very nature of faith, in which every dimension of reality is to be captive to Christ and lived for the glory of God.”

Vocabulary

- **Pluralism:** a broad religion around which the entire society can unite
- **Civil religion:** a broad religion that transcends religions, yet one to which particular religions can adhere without a sense of contradiction, and provides coherence and foundation for a nation
- **Robert Bellah:** a sociologist most associated with civil religion. Bellah was a student of Japanese religion and noted the parallels between Shintoism in Japan and civil religion in the United States. Sometimes regarded as the prophet of civil religion due to his belief that in modern pluralistic societies, civil religion could challenge societies to greater moral heights, judge shortcomings, and provide collective meaning.

Summary

In this chapter, Hollinger addresses the dilemmas a pluralistic society creates for Christians. Then, he weighs a few approaches believers have employed to navigate these dilemmas, such as privatization, theocracy, civil religion, and Christian influence in pluralism. Ultimately, Hollinger decides that it is preferred for Christians to seek how to influence others amid a pluralistic society after exposing flaws in the alternate approaches discussed in the chapter.