

THE  
DISCIPLESHIP  
PLACE

Communicating the Gospel  
in a Pluralistic World



**SESSION 1**

The Various Meanings and a Brief History of Pluralism

## CLT Bible Study

### The Various Meanings and a Brief History of Pluralism

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Certificate of Lay Ministry  
Communicating the Gospel in a Pluralistic World  
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# The Various Meanings and a Brief History of Pluralism

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## INTRODUCTION

“If there were only one religion in England, there would be danger of despotism\*, if there were two, they would cut each other’s throats, but there are thirty, and they live in peace and happiness.” Voltaire (1694-1778), a French writer/philosopher. \*Absolute power

Pluralism describes a certain way of thinking that is quite widespread in the world today.

## LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- define and discuss the meanings of pluralism: political pluralism, cultural pluralism, moral pluralism, and religious pluralism;
- discuss the history of religious pluralism from ancient times to its current form as the belief of religious pluralism;
- explain why the worship of Yahweh excludes the ideas of religious pluralism and why the Christian faith did not make peace with religious pluralism in the Greco-Roman world;
- describe the contributions the Enlightenment, the modern era and historicism have made to the development of religious pluralism; and
- point out the numerous pieces that merged in the modern era to bring the ideas of religious pluralism to maturity.

# The Various Meanings and a Brief History of Pluralism

## INTRODUCTION



*"If there were only one religion in England there would be danger of despotism, if there were two, they would cut each other's throats, but there are thirty, and they live in peace and happiness." Voltaire (1694-1778), French writer/philosopher*

Pluralism describes a certain way of thinking that is quite widespread in the world today. It is not a new idea, though the word itself is relatively new in human history. The word first appeared in an article written by sociologist Horace Kallen in 1915 in *The Nation*. Kallen was a Jewish immigrant to the United States. He looked at his new home country and saw a mix of many ideas. The title of his article describes the situation in the United States at that time: "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot." A "melting pot" is where everything is put into one pot and stirred around so that it becomes mixed up. A new culture was being developed, and the old ways of one's homeland were being lost. People were free to become whomever they wanted. America was more like a symphony orchestra where everyone played differently, but the music fit together in harmony. All the different cultures were mixed together into a new entity that Kallen called "cultural pluralism."

## PLURALISM DEFINED



### NOTES

Pluralism is one of the biggest challenges today for the Christian faith. “Religious” pluralism challenges many core beliefs found in the New Testament. It challenges many statements of faith about the person and work of Jesus Christ established by the church over the centuries. These include the key convictions about orthodox Christian doctrine found in the Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed, and the Creed of Chalcedon. The Articles of Faith of the Church of the Nazarene make clear that we firmly stand in this tradition.

Today’s world forces believers to think about the relationship between Christianity and other religions. We cannot ignore or reject these religions or the different cultures that believe in them. The whole world has become a melting pot. Religions and cultures that were once far off in other parts of the world have now become our next-door neighbors. We need to exercise discernment and sensitivity to what our neighbors believe or how they act. We cannot put up a fence to protect our own Christian traditions. Surrounded by many cultures and religions, we live in a “pluralistic” world.

Many Muslims have now moved into Western Europe. A new term is being used to describe this called “Eurabia” (Europe plus Arabia). Immigration from the south and east has brought between 15 and 20 million Muslims into the European Union, which is between 3 and 5 percent of the population. This immigration has raised many struggles, both for native Europeans and the new immigrants. It is uncertain whether Muslim youth will fit into the new culture by becoming more European or whether they will become radicalized because of poverty, being forced to the margin of society, or listening to the anti-democratic and radical propaganda.

Many mosques, Hindu temples, Sikh communities, and Buddhist monasteries are being built in the US and are becoming more common. New forms of religion are developing besides these traditional religions. There has been a revival of ancient religious practices like Wicca. David B. Barrett, the editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* and a former missionary to Africa, has identified 9,900 distinct religions in the world. He says the number is increasing by two or three new religions every day.

It is possible in some areas for Christian ministers to mostly ignore religious pluralism and not need to answer the questions it raises. But the safety of this position is quickly disappearing. Soon, no one will be exempt from thinking about how to communicate and live with people from other cultures and religions.

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More importantly, since we believe that God's good news of salvation in Jesus Christ is for all people, we cannot ignore the problem of religious pluralism but see it as an opportunity. We cannot stay in our safe zones but must reach out to our new neighbors with the gospel.

Instead, our goal should be to find ways to engage the pluralism all around us. We must find ways that are consistent with and determined by the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must seek answers in the Bible and Christian doctrine. We can ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to how we should see the people around us. We must ask for forgiveness when we misunderstand or distort their ideas and beliefs. The Holy Spirit will teach us how to witness about Jesus as Savior and Lord in such a way that will give hope to the world.

This module is built on the firm conviction that Christ is speaking to all people through the Holy Spirit and drawing them to himself. Another conviction is that those who witness about Christ should do so in a way that honors God and how God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son for its redemption. This loving approach is the spirit of the Wesleyan-Holiness tradition. Another conviction is that as we approach the challenges of pluralism, we should be faithful to the Christian faith handed down to us from the apostles and early church through the centuries and inherited through our Wesleyan-Holiness tradition.

**DEFINITIONS**

The word "plural" means more than one. Plurality, pluralistic, and pluralism describe the condition of being more than one. Let's explore three other forms of pluralism besides religious pluralism: political pluralism, cultural pluralism, and moral pluralism.

***Political Pluralism***

In the study of politics, political pluralism describes how many ideas can exist together in a democracy. Different groups can voice their positions with equal opportunity. Power is spread out with the ability of different groups to elect representatives. One privileged group should not have power.

The diversity in political pluralism is viewed as a good thing for society. In a democracy, everyone has an equal voice. Every religion and every culture should be given freedom to practice as people want. Politics is separated from religion, making political pluralism secular and without God. Politics must be without religion so that people can practice their religion like they want. No religion is treated as special, and no religion is endorsed by the government.


**NOTES**
***Cultural Pluralism***

Cultural pluralism has similar ideas. Multiculturalism is a term used to express the mix of many cultures in the same country or area. This type of pluralism views and accepts different cultures as existing and positive. Every culture has its history and beauty, which should be acknowledged. Cultural pluralism has become common in many public schools in the United States. An Executive Committee Report of the National Education Association has shown that one out of every three elementary and secondary school students in the US comes from an ethnic minority family. In California and many other states, children from minority cultures now make up a majority of the student population.

***Moral Pluralism***

Moral pluralism is the belief that people who have different moral virtues should be respected and accepted. As long as these morals do not harm other people, they can be practiced. There is no one moral standard, but there are many possibilities. The virtues and behavior of one group should not be forced on another group.

***Religious Pluralism***

Religious pluralism can mean two things. First, it can refer to various religious movements in a particular country or part of the world. When used in this way, it describes the religions of an area without saying what religion ought to be accepted. It is descriptive and neutral without saying which religion is correct or should be followed. The United States has become one of the most religiously diverse nations on earth. There are many different religions in the US, including:

Afro-Caribbean	Judaism
Baha'i	Mormonism
Buddhism	Native American religions
Christianity	Neo-paganism
Confucianism	Shintoism
Hinduism	Sikhism
Islam	Taoism
Jainism	Zoroastrianism

Second, religious pluralism can also refer to a particular theory about religions and a way to view the world. When used in this way, religious pluralism refers to a philosophy that believes having many religions is the way it should be.

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This perspective means more than having many religions because of migration and multiculturalism. There is no one absolute true religion or story. Every religion has its own story and some truth. No religion has all the truth for all people.

The truth of a religion is determined by how well it helps a group of people understand their world. They can see themselves as part of a larger story that helps them make sense of their lives. Because people and situations are so different across the globe, the religions of those people are also very different. Religious pluralism as a belief sees this diversity as valid and true since it helps people understand their place in the world. The many different religions or secular views of the world are all acceptable and valid. Each is true when viewed from within its own culture.

This second form of religious pluralism accuses any religion of being oppressive if it claims to have universal truth or tries to make converts. One religion cannot force its beliefs on people of another religion or culture. If a religion imposes its views on others, it is acting like a bully and tyrant. Religious pluralism evaluates such a religion as intolerant, ignorant, and harmful to others. This perspective directly counters the claims of Christianity. Orthodox doctrine, handed down in the church from the New Testament and through the ancient creeds, makes exclusive claims that are viewed as holdovers of ignorance. This view concludes that Christianity either needs to change to see itself as one among many with tolerance for all, or it needs to be abandoned.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



### NOTES

#### THE ANCIENT PICTURE

Religious pluralism is not new. Archaeology shows how ancient humans worshipped many objects in nature. Around 10,000 BC, in what is known as the Middle Stone Age, people worshipped a mother goddess who, they believed, caused seeds to grow into plants that could be eaten. Artifacts indicate that people also worshipped the sun, moon, and stars. Over time, other religions developed in what is known as the Fertile Crescent. This area stretches around the rivers of the Middle East, including ancient Babylon and the home region of Abraham. These religions included divine beings, myths of creation, sacred writings, hymns, cultic practices, and priests. These religions had a direct impact on the world and people of the Old Testament.

#### THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

Later, during the time of the New Testament, there were many religions in the Greco-Roman world around the Mediterranean region. Many of these regions had already been around for a long time. In many ways, it was as religiously diverse and pluralistic as our world today. These religions had levels of veneration. At the top was the Cult of the Emperor. The emperor was viewed as the savior of the world who provided for the Roman empire. In the social understanding of the time, the emperor was the patron who provided what the people needed. The Greco-Roman gods were believed to be even higher, making the emperor dependent on them as a client.

Douglas Harink refers to the Cult of the Emperor as the world religion of the time. This cult, or form of worship, began during the imperial time in Rome. This was a time of great peace known as the *Pax Romana* ("Peace of Rome"), brought during the reigns of Julius Caesar and Augustus. This peace came at a high cost to many people, like those who lived in Judea. Augustus, who was emperor at the time of Jesus' birth, was viewed as the savior of the whole world. As a result, he started his own religion and the religion of *Pax* in Rome. This religion spread or was imposed throughout the Roman Empire. It was believed that the *Pax Romana* showed the universal reign of the Roman gods. The Romans believed their empire was the will of the gods.

The Book of Revelation strongly goes against these claims of the Roman Empire. Imperial Rome tolerated the worship of other gods and lords as long as they were

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believed in a local community or by private individuals. For example, the Romans tolerated the religion of the Jews. However, the Romans did not tolerate religions that claimed to have absolute truth or be for all people. Other religions had to help and serve the causes of the Roman Empire.

People in the Roman Empire had many gods and lords. These included the gods and goddesses of the Greek and Roman pantheons. Other religions included the mystery religions that came out of Egypt and the East. Towns and villages also had their own local deities.

Religious pluralism was everywhere. There were public and private deities, temples, shrines, and idols of the many gods and goddesses. People practiced different rituals and sacrifices. Seers and oracles, magicians and astrologers, miracle workers, and philosophers were common.

The believers in the city of Colossae lived in such a religious environment. Paul wrote to them, warning them to stay true to the gospel. People believed that good and evil spirits existed all over. They did many things to try to appease and control these spirits. People mixed up different religious practices, taking the parts of a religion that they liked and forming their own. Combining different religions like this is called syncretism. One example of this comes from 167 BC. In that year, the ruler Antiochus Epiphanes IV dedicated the Jerusalem Temple to Zeus. He placed an idol of Zeus on the altar in the temple. He combined the Hellenistic worship of Zeus with the Jewish worship of Yahweh, supposing them to be the same. The Jews reacted in what is known as the Maccabean Revolt.

Paul, the second-century Christians, and later the Early Church Fathers preached and warned about the bad influence of Hellenistic religions. These early Christians used words, images, and even the philosophy of the time to preach the gospel. However, they did not change the core message of the gospel. They never compromised the claims of the Old Testament that there is only one God, Yahweh (Isa. 40:12-17; 43:10-13; 45:18-25). They never compromised what the New Testament said about Christ (1 Cor. 15:20-28; 2 Cor. 6:14-19; Col. 1:9-20). They never harmonized or merged together the claims of the Emperor Cult with the claims of Christianity, even when it cost them their lives. They maintained the exclusive claims of the gospel when the cultures around them were calling for diversity and acceptance.

## **CHRISTENDOM**

A significant change happened when the emperor Constantine (306-337 CE) granted official recognition to Christianity. The reign of Constantine marked the beginning of Christendom.

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The word Christendom describes the close relationship between the church and state that gave Christianity favored status. Christianity became the primary religion of the Roman Empire.

Christendom had two effects. One, the state became defined by its connection to Christianity. And two, the church was influenced by its political power and privilege. The difference between church and state became blurry. Christianity can influence culture and its institutions. However, the state can also influence the church. To be a baptized Christian meant to be a citizen of the Christian state. This combination of church and state under Christendom continued for centuries in the West. It was finally challenged during the Age of Reason (late 17th and 18th centuries) and the Age of Revolution.

Beginning with Constantine, the eastern part of the Roman Empire was also affected by Christendom. The eastern part of the church spoke Greek and was influenced by Greek thinking. It developed its own theology and styles of worship. Its center became Constantinople. The church in the West was influenced by Roman thinking and spoke Latin. Its center was in Rome, where the office of the pope developed. The Eastern and Western churches were formally divided in 1054.

A significant change came in the East in the late 11th and early 12th centuries when the Islamic Seljuk Turks conquered Asia Minor. The cultural influence of the Christian church was replaced by the influence of Islam.

The power of the Eastern Church to shape culture gave way to Muslim domination. But Christians and Jews usually benefited from Muslim protection. One of the ironies of Christian history is the controversy between John of Damascus (700-753 CE), a Christian official at the court of the Muslim khalif Abdul Malek, and the Western church over the use of icons. Yet John enjoyed the protection of the Muslim khalif. Early in the 8th century, the Muslims conquered and ruled formerly Christian Spain.

Under Muslim rule, Cordoba became the center of a brilliant Islamic culture. For a time, Christians and Jews enjoyed a significant measure of religious toleration. They could worship freely. Christians retained their churches and property on the condition that they pay tribute for each parish, cathedral, and monastery. Working together with Muslims, Christians, and Jews made Cordoba a flourishing and elegant city. Then, in 822, Abd-er Rahman II became the Muslim ruler. Tolerance for Christians and Jews declined, and persecution began.

Even though there were times of peace between Christians, Jews, and Muslims,

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there was also a long and ugly history of conflict. We should not forget that Christian history bears the ugly scars of the Crusades (1095-1270). During this time, Western Christians victimized Jews, Muslims, and many Eastern Christians. Even though the Seljuk Turks caused much harm, Western Christians also had many injustices against Jews, Muslims, and Eastern Christians. The hatred that resulted from many directions led to problems in the future. In their book *Christian Jihad*, Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner describe that chapter in the church's history as a time when a state-run church led to blood in the streets.

The Church in the West became so powerful throughout most of the Middle Ages that the actions in the secular world depended on the approval of the church. In this atmosphere, religious diversity was discouraged. The Jews were both tolerated and persecuted. Although there were notable exceptions, the common attitude toward persons of other religions was to exclude or condemn them.

Christianity's influence on the West continued through the 16th-century Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic Counterreformation that followed. For many centuries, Christianity had shaped and defined the story of Western culture. But its hold began to weaken at the beginning of the modern era.

In the 18th century, the strong connection between church and state and the church and culture in the West began to weaken. The 18th century is known as the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment. The Age of Reason is also known as the Age of Revolution. These changes included political, industrial, scientific, and philosophical revolutions. Locke, Diderot, Voltaire, Berkeley, Hume, and Leibniz were just a few of the significant philosophers of the Enlightenment.

Modernity is a term that describes the era that began with the Age of Reason. Modernity includes the Enlightenment but is not synonymous with it. Reason became the main way people began to form their beliefs. People believed that reason freed them from religious, political, and even philosophical oppression. They thought that reason offers the best way for humans to find freedom, maturity, happiness, and peace.

One of the significant thoughts during the Age of Reason was that human thinking and culture should not be controlled or influenced by religion and its traditions. The church was seen as an obstacle to freedom and human development. The old ways of religion were stopping new ideas. One area of particular criticism was how the clergy and the church received special privileges from the state. There were exceptions. During the Enlightenment, some people thought that Christianity could be compatible with reason. One such group was the Deists, who believed that the world can be observed by reason, and from this reason,

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one can conclude there is a Supreme Being. This and similar ideas could only be considered by making significant changes to orthodox Christian beliefs.

Not everything was negative about the Enlightenment. Breaking the hold of Constantinian Christianity allowed the church to return to many of the practices and thinking of the early church. Reason is significant in the Wesleyan-holiness tradition, along with Scripture, tradition, and experience. Scripture is primary and supported by the other three in what is known as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. We believe that there is no conflict between the Bible and reason. Reason became an important tool for studying the Bible, church history, and systematic theology. Reason did not replace faith but helped the church understand the apostolic faith it had inherited.

### **ENLIGHTENMENT RIVER**

Numerous currents formed the Enlightenment River. The following are some of the most important ones.

*Middle Ages to Renaissance.* The Renaissance was the transition period from the close of the Middle Ages in the 14th century to the beginning of modernity in the 17th century. The Renaissance was known for its interest in the ancient world. The characteristic way of thinking was humanism and the rediscovery of ancient Greek philosophy. Humans were viewed as the center of everything. It was a time of significant social changes. There were advancements in creative art, architecture, and literature. During this time, towns grew, trade flourished, and the early seeds of capitalism were sown. Political organization changed from medieval fiefdoms to cities and states.

*Protestant Reformation.* The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century split Western Christianity and ended Rome's religious control in the West. With the hold of the Roman church released, people began to feel more freedom. As a result, revolution and nationalism began to arise.

*Age of Exploration.* The Age of Exploration followed the close of the Middle Ages. Exploration brought Westerners more and more into contact with the religions and cultures of Asia. Explorers brought their Christian thinking with them and interpreted the new religions and cultures from their Christian lenses. The great achievements of Western culture gave them a sense of superiority. The achievements of other religions and cultures were viewed as inferior when compared to the economic, industrial, and scientific developments in the West.

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**Emerging Sciences.** Another part of the Enlightenment River was the emerging empirical sciences. The word empirical is used to describe how the truth of a matter was determined by experiments and not tradition. The use of philosophy to determine truth was replaced by careful observation. The advances in science can be seen in the following significant developments:

- The 16th-century Polish churchman Nikolaus Copernicus determined that the sun and not the earth is the center of the solar system.
- The 17th-century Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei confirmed the heliocentric theory of Copernicus and contributed to the field of physics.
- The 17th-century British mathematician Isaac Newton made many discoveries and was one of the greatest scientific geniuses the world has ever known. His greatest achievement was his formula for the law of gravity.
- The Englishman Francis Bacon (1561-1626) gave one of the clearest statements about the new scientific approach. His phrase, *Novum Organum*, is translated as “a new way of knowing.” This new way looked at tradition in a new way. He proposed new principles for viewing the world through observation and gathering data. His approach led to new arts and inventions. The goal of his *Novum Organum* was to gain practical knowledge that could benefit humankind and relieve human suffering.
- The Scottish philosopher David Hume looked at the nature of humanity from a scientific perspective. He argued that human knowledge and faith come from one’s experiences. This raised further doubts about religious faith.

**The Wars of Religion.** The Age of Reason developed during a time when religious wars ravaged Europe in the name of God and revelation. These wars called into question the claims of Christianity, with Christians fighting Christians. One of the consequences was that people began to turn away from claims of divine revelation to human reason. The final phase was the savage Thirty Years War (1618-48). This devastating war divided nations and left people doubting about religion.

Many of the educated saw the church as divisive and destructive to society. They believed the church stopped human progress because it sided with oppressive kings and allowed clergy special privileges. They saw the church as a hindrance to the development of science because it supported traditional politics and ways of thinking.

**Great Lisbon Earthquake.** Another factor that contributed to a loss of confidence in

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God's providential control and goodness was the Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755. This significant catastrophe killed an estimated 100,000 people and caused a major tsunami that destroyed much of Lisbon.

*Age of Reason.* The Age of Reason helped the growth of religious pluralism. The new ideas about human reason called into question many claims of Christianity. The church could no longer claim to have the only truth. The foundations of Christianity that had stood firm since the early church were challenged and shaken.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORICISM**

One of the fruits that grew on the Enlightenment tree is historicism. Historicism uses the scientific method to study cultures, religions, eras, institutions, ideas, and so forth. People began to think about history differently in the Renaissance period and the scientific revolution of the 17th century. In his *New Science* (1725), Giambattista Vico gave a new principle called the *verum factum*, which basically means "just the facts." He argued that truth is what people make it to be. Truth is created by language, civil institutions, and culture. To know something, we must study how it began. His philosophy became influential and led to the development of historical studies.

The rise of religious pluralism was influenced by a form of historicism that reduced religious, political, philosophical, and moral ideas to their simplest forms. Any claims about ultimate truth can be traced to their earthly origins in history. This idea was applied to religious beliefs, holy writings, and moral values. All these were created by people and not by a deity. History (people's ideas and experiences) determines the meaning of truth for different people. The result of this idea is that a religion's truth is relative to those who have accepted it and believe it to be true. Other people from another culture, time, or situation may have different interpretations of the truth. Truth in this interpretation does not need to have come from God or any transcendent being but from people.

Before this time, people claimed that their religion had ultimate truth and power. They believed their scriptures and doctrines came from divine sources and not humans. However, the new approach to history rejected these beliefs. It claimed religions are accidental and part of human development. The situation in which a religion developed determined its scriptures and doctrines. If the circumstances were different, the religion would have been different. The scientific study of history can determine how religions developed. This view of history posed a serious challenge to Christianity and to the claims of any religion about divine or

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ultimate truth.

What gave rise to historicism?

- First, as early as the Renaissance, the study of Christianity and how it began raised questions about the authority of church teachings.
- Second, reason was used to study the beginnings of religions without considering what these religions claimed themselves. Historicism believed that every effect had a natural cause and explanation. This cause can be identified, observed, and explained. If the claims of a religion cannot be explained by natural causes, then it is to be rejected as just an illusion. It is not worth being taken seriously by the careful thinker.

These ideas have serious consequences when applied to the religions of the world. The result of historicism is to doubt ultimate, universal, or final claims of truth or authority. This perspective creates the situation for religious pluralism to develop because it puts all religions on the same level. No religion is superior to another. Persons can still make this claim about their religion, but historicism shows that this idea has no support in history or science.

### **ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

In the late 19th and 20th centuries, many additional factors helped the rise of religious pluralism. These factors include:

- Westerners had more firsthand contact with other cultures because travel became easier and more frequent.
- The world's religions began to be studied more. The World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, in connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893, increased interest in this study.
- Two world wars raised doubts about the moral and cultural claims of the West. People associated Western culture with Christianity. The evil of these wars caused people to question the cultural superiority of the West.
- Study of the world's religions increased in secondary and university education in Europe and North America. People became aware of and interested in other religions.


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- In the last third of the 19th century, the academic study of religion developed. The focus of this new study was on the history of religion. The form of study became known as the History of Religion School. This school of thought impacted the development of religious pluralism by applying the principles of historicism to Christianity and other religions. Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) was one of its most distinguished representatives.
- More recently, Postcolonial Criticism has evaluated the impact that religions and scriptures have had on people. Postcolonialism is the study of how nations have struggled with national identity after being colonized by Western powers. It studies if religion was a source of oppression in the cultures that were colonized. Special interest has been shown in how women have been oppressed by religion.

### **MATURE RELIGIOUS PLURALISM**

Ninian Smart identifies the 30 years, 1960-1990, as a significant time for the rise of religious pluralism in the West. The traditional confidence in Western religious, cultural, and even technological superiority faded. Six reasons contributed to the rise of religious pluralism during these years:

1. In the West, people became more interested in Eastern cultures and religions. This was especially true of Buddhism, Hinduism, the Sikhs, the Jains, and Chinese thought and practice influenced by Confucius. The rapid growth and spread of these religions in the US and Europe since the 1960s have been remarkable. For example, there are presently more than 300 Buddhist temples in Los Angeles, home to the greatest variety of Buddhists in the world. The growing interest in Eastern religions was noticeably seen in the hippie movement (1960s). Theodore Rozak tells this story in *The Making of a Counter Culture*. The Vietnam War also increased awareness of the religions and cultures of the East.
2. Immigration of Muslims to the West has led to conversions and rapid growth of Islam. The Revolution in 1979 in Iran attracted more attention to Islam.
3. The economic success of Asian countries, including Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, increased Western awareness of Eastern cultures and religions.
4. Writings about Islam and the old and new religions of the East are now filling shelves at bookstores. Christian books have to fight for space in the


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“religion” section. Most books stores will have a section with translations of the Bhagavad-Gita, the Tao-Te-Chin, and the Koran. The book Siddhartha, by Herman Hesse, originally published in German in 1922, has since its publication been widely influential among high school and college students. This book tells the story of a young Brahmin’s quest for the ultimate reality, much like Buddha’s question for enlightenment. Western students who have become aware of Eastern religions have found this book to be a source of revelation.

5. The Vatican II (1962-65) modernized the Catholic church. Although it did not specifically endorse the idea of religious pluralism, it gave a positive view of non-Christian religions. The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra aetate) says:

“The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself!”

6. Finally, The Internet has also increased religious pluralism by making religions easier to access and study. The Internet helps globalization by connecting the whole world together. Cultural distinctives become blurred. People share more ideas and practices in common. The information available on the Internet has raised positive awareness. For example, people around the world can now know about democracy, citizen empowerment, freedom of communication, culture, civic participation, gender equity, human rights, civil justice, peace, and general quality of life.

Wadi Haddad refers to the result of this media-enhanced culture as international culture. The Internet has made it easy to share information and culture. The world has grown closer together with the availability of information. People have found they share common concerns, values, and social awareness. The new international culture stretches over the whole world. It creates a new global identity that goes beyond state, ethnicity, religion, and so forth. Media makes it possible for people to learn about and engage with cultures from all over the world without leaving their homes.

**NOTES****CONCLUSION**

Traditional Christian faith now finds itself in an age of pluralism. People question the claims that Christ and the gospel are the ultimate truth for all cultures and all times. The church must find ways to proclaim the good news that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life in this age of skepticism and pluralism.

## APPLICATION

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**NOTES**

1. Spend some time exploring various internet sites for the word “pluralism.”
2. Write a reflection paper based on the following questions. Be prepared to share that paper with your mentor.
  - In what ways do you think pluralism is a positive idea? How can it be helpful?
  - How does the classic Christian faith conflict with pluralism?
  - What did you read in the session that was most helpful to you in understanding pluralism and why?

## EXAM



### NOTES

1. The Enlightenment of the 18th century is also called the Age of Reason.
  - A. True
  - B. False
2. Historicism considers the Christian Faith on the basis of human history alone.
  - A. True
  - B. False
3. The Church of the Nazarene is not committed to what the apostolic tradition claims about the person and work of Christ.
  - A. True
  - B. False
4. Christianity is compatible with cultural pluralism.
  - A. True
  - B. False
5. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century ended Rome's religious monopoly in the West and prompted the rise of nationalism.
  - A. True
  - B. False
6. David Barrett, editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, has identified \_\_\_\_\_ distinct religions in the world.
  - A. 120
  - B. 440
  - C. 2,000
  - D. 9,900
7. The internet helps with communication but does not really affect how different cultures interact.
  - A. True
  - B. False
8. The Age of Reason called into question the claims of historic Christianity.
  - A. True
  - B. False

## EXAM

**NOTES**

9. Religious pluralism rejects evangelism and sees it as oppressive.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
10. Beginning with Emperor Constantine, Christianity had favored status in the Roman Empire
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
11. Historicism affirms pluralism by understanding all religious traditions as products of particular cultures and their history.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
12. The Wesleyan-holiness tradition does not value reason as a resource for faith.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
13. The development of science offered a new source of authority: empirical knowledge gained by observing the real world.
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
14. The development of science offered a new source of authority: empirical knowledge gained by observing the real world.
  - A. 120
  - B. 440
  - C. 2,000
  - D. 9,900

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT

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**NOTES**

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Review the exam questions and answers. Discuss any issues or questions the participant raises for you.
2. In what ways do you think pluralism is a positive idea? How can it be helpful?
3. How does the classic Christian faith conflict with pluralism?
4. What did you read in the session that was most helpful to you in understanding pluralism?