

Heresy Rising: Christian Pastors Embracing New Age Syncretism

For all the heated accusations about personalities like megachurch pastor Rick Warren preaching Chrislam, one man of God is admitting how Buddha has influenced his prayers to Jesus.

Rowan Williams, perhaps better known as the former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Williams, is not hiding his strange religious rituals—rituals that smell like syncretism.

Williams says he spends up to 40 minutes a day squatting and repeating an Eastern Orthodox prayer while performing breathing exercises as part of a routine influenced by Buddhism, according to the *Telegraph*.

In an article headlined, “Rowan Williams: How Buddhism Helps Me Pray,” he also shares how he spends time pacing slowly and repeatedly prostrating himself as part of an intense early morning ritual of silent meditation and prayer. His prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner.”

“Over the years increasing exposure to and engagement with the Buddhist world in particular has made me aware of practices not unlike the ‘Jesus Prayer’ and introduced me to disciplines that further enforce the stillness and physical focus that the prayer entails,” he says.

Williams goes on to explain, using what sounds like New Age language, how he pictures the human body as a “cave” through which breath passes and is sure that people who practice these rituals regularly could reach “advanced states” and become aware of an “unbroken inner light,” the *Telegraph* reports.

This smacks of syncretism. Syncretism is a blend of different religious, cultures or schools of thought. Syncretism defies logic, often mixing contradictory beliefs in the name of unity.

Although I am not opposed to people from different faiths working together, many times such endeavors lead to Christians compromising their beliefs in the name of unity—and that's one of the key dangers of syncretism. We cannot compromise the Word of God for the sake of getting along with Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Mormons or any one else. Once we've started embracing elements of other religions, we've compromised the gospel that has the power to save those who know Christ in name only.

The New Age movement is syncretistic, blending various religions, relying on various gods, and crediting the "universe" with power it doesn't have. Chrislam, as its name suggests, is also syncretistic, blending elements of Christianity and Islam. Muslims use Chrislam theology as a way into Christian pulpits, essentially opening the door to false worship.

Pope Francis recently welcomed Israeli and Palestinian presidents to meet at the Vatican (a first in history) where they incorporated Jewish, Catholic and Muslim prayers in several languages—and readings from the Quran. Although the spirit of unity is admirable, these sorts of world events forward the gospel-eroding cancer of syncretism.

Don't be fooled. Just because something has Christian elements doesn't make it Christian. In his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul points to "enemies of the cross" (Phil. 3:18). Islam is not a friend of the cross. Buddha was not a friend of the cross. Leaders of false religions are not friends of the cross. And we cannot reconcile the enemies of the cross to the Christ who hung upon a tree to pay the price for their sin if we compromise the gospel and essentially worship their god.

How does God feel about syncretism? “For you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Ex. 34:14). God Jesus said, “If you love Me keep My commandments (John 14:15). Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad” (Matt. 12:30).

Friends, too many religious leaders are making headlines for practicing syncretism. Although Rick Warren has called his affiliation with Chrislam “nonsense” and “a lie that won’t die,” Rowan Williams is openly admitting embracing what sound like New Age practices. Don’t be fooled in these last days. Ask God to give you a discerning spirit. Remember, unity without an unadulterated gospel isn’t unity at all—it’s syncretism that pours water in the gospel’s gas tank and fails to redeem the enemies of the cross.

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