

SYNCRETISM

1. Definition. Attempt to combine different or opposing doctrines and practices esp in ref to religious systems. Combination, blending of diff ideas and practices. Even used of a political alliance against common political enemy. Two facets: diff rel systems and diff rel practices. Syncretistic theol incorporates elements from a variety of religious faiths. Erasmus used it to mean a prudent alliance as did Melancthon and other reformers. . Later it connoted a negative and inadmissible mixture of rel beliefs and practices.

2. History. Idea as old as Israel's adopting features of Canaanite religion when in Land. Word came into prominence with Georg Calixtus (1586-1656), protestant theologian and prof of theology at U. of Helmstedt (1614-1656). Tried to construct a theol system which would lead to reconciliation between Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics on basis of Scriptures, Apostles' Creed, and faith of first 5 centuries interpreted by Vincentian Canon which proposed a 3fold test of catholicity: "what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all." Vincent of Lerins died before 450.

3. Examples of religious syncretism. (1) Canaanite influence on Israel. Judg 2:13. 1380-1050. Baal and female consorts, Ashtaroth. Hosea 2:13 worship of Baal developed from placing the Canaanite gods in secondary place to Yahweh, to considering Yahweh a super-baal, to elevating Baal worship so people forsook Yahweh. (2) Days of Manasseh. 695-642. Hezekiah was his godly father and they co-reigned for 10 years. Rebuilt high places, altars and image of Asherah in house of Lord. Practiced witchcraft. (3) In India a partial mixture of Islam and Hinduism. In China Confucianism and Taoism drew gradually together and Buddhism from 5th c. In Japan since 774 Shintoism and Buddhism combined. (4) Today Pinnock says "Christians in the West need to become less materialistic and more spiritually Buddha-like." Also CT article. (5) Evang and Catholics tog document.

4. Examples of cultural syncretism. Contextualizing Bible within another culture. Sow seed of Word without the flowerpot of West, in diff cultural soil and let its own version of Xnty grow. "Cont is the effort to make relevant the meaning of the biblical text to our contemporary social context" Nunez. (1) RC taking in African religions under RC umbrella without critical distinctions. Also Indian rel in Latin Amer. (2) General rev without going on to special rev in X as if can be saved by gen rev. (3) X in Latin Amer is politically and sociologically adjusted. He is a revolutionary and social reformer. Lib theol. (4) Music. Lopez's answer to using samba (a Braazilian dance of African origin) is worship. If it points one to living and true God OK; if to self, not OK. Various instruments of culture OK. Various rhythms not nec wrong. (5) Time of worship. Lord's day is clear day but time irrelevant. Slaves in 1st c.

5. Some vital considerations. (1) Xnty is exclusive rel not to be combined with any other. Acts 4:12, Jn 14:6. (2) Writers of NT did nto change message of OT to suit Greeks and Romans. (3) X did not urge revolt ag Rome. P did not urge freeing slaves but 1 Cor 7:20-24. (4) Worship style must always point to and exalt God, not people nor performance.