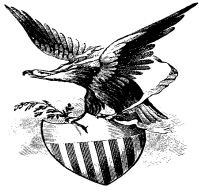


Light Brings Salt

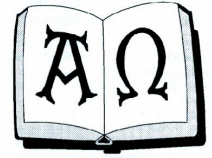
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Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God



Choosing Mystical Union Over the Cross

by Brian Flynn

The goal to unify man through a shared mystical religious experience is becoming more crystal clear with every passing day. The Sufis of Islam have "Fana," the Kabbalists (Jewish mystics) have "Amidah," and the Buddhists and Hindus have TM. And now last but not least, the Christians have contemplative prayer. Through contemplative prayer, many evangelicals and post-modernists say we can join the shared universal experience.

Listen to a few comments by dedicated New Agers and mystics who affirm their belief that the mystical element unites all humanity:

A highest common factor [is] ... the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality ... [linking] every religious tradition. -Aldous Huxley

I would like to explore what I call interspirituality: a crossing-over boundaries that mysticism makes possible and concrete. -Wayne Teasdale

This mystical stream [contemplative prayer] is the Western bridge to Far Eastern spirituality. -Tilden Edwards.

It is with great sadness and dismay I tell you now that this New Age mindset has spilled over and is now invading Christendom. Evangelical author and speaker Tony Campolo, in his book *Speaking My Mind*, affirms this union:

[M]ysticism provides some hope for common ground between Christianity and Islam. Both religions have within their histories examples of ecstatic union with God, which seem at odds with their own spiritual traditions but have much in common with each other.

Later he asks the question, "Could they [Islamic Sufis] have encountered the same God we do in our Christian mysticism?" With various examples, Campolo paints a picture of

interspirituality through mysticism. Referring to Muslim and Christian mystics, he even tells us that the Christian mystics, such as St. John of the Cross, were enriched by the teachings of Sufi philosophers. In comparing St. Francis of Assisi with the founder of the Sufi movement, Campolo says:

Both men sensed a sacred presence in everything and claimed to have experienced a mystical union with God.

The obvious implication of Campolo's statement is that God can be reached through mystical experiences, regardless of one's religion and beliefs. This is common thinking among contemplatives who often state that contemplative prayer does indeed provide a bridge to Divinity. The Bible makes it clear there can be no access to God except through Jesus Christ, but these writers negate this central claim in Jesus' proclamation by their promotion of mystical union with God for all religions.

Alan Jones, an Episcopal priest and a member of The Living Spiritual Teachers Project(9) states in his book, *Reimagining Christianity*:

Christ and Buddha are not antithetical. They are not at cross-purposes. Neither are they identical. The man on the cross and the princely contemplative are different images telling different stories. But they are not at war. They can be in conversation. There is grace in both.

He later states:

Jesus is the Way to a new kind of life. Jesus and Buddha have this in common with all great spiritual teachers--to make human beings more conscious of themselves, to get more real.

New Agers and postmodernist Christians are attempting to deny or obscure the unique person and work of Jesus so He can be considered the equivalent of Buddha and other spiritual teachers.

Jesus Christ is God. Buddha was a man. Jesus is alive. Buddha is dead. Can they not tell the difference? Emerging church leader Brian McLaren further develops this attempt in his book, *A Generous Orthodoxy*:

This is how I feel when I'm offered a choice between the roads of exclusivism (only confessing Christians go to heaven), universalism (everyone goes to heaven) and inclusivism (Christians go to heaven, plus at least some others). Each road takes you somewhere, to a place with some advantages and disadvantages, but none of them is the road of my missional calling: blessed in this life to be a blessing to everyone on earth.

McLaren wishes to be a "blessing to everyone on earth," but I wonder how many of those, who are being blessed by him, will be deprived of hearing the true gospel of Jesus Christ and believing in Him.

Contemplatives, such as Brennan Manning, believe we cannot even have a close relationship with God without the mystical, contemplative element. Manning states, "Intimate knowledge of God only comes through centering prayer. " That would mean that without a mystical experience of going into an altered state of consciousness there is no chance at all of knowing God intimately. Apparently, for Manning these experiences are more trustworthy and effective than the Word of God.

Combine McLaren's and Campolo's teachings that God can be found in mystical experiences regardless of a person's actual beliefs, with Brennan Manning's idea that we cannot even know God closely without contemplative, and what do you get?--a new Christianity that excludes Jesus Christ as being the only way of salvation.

Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). I view that statement as good news. It is the end of confusion. It is the end of ambiguity. It is the end of wishy-washy postmodernist ideas. It is simply good news! When I became a Christian it was a relief and a joy to finally know the truth about God, to know who He is, to understand His nature, and to know His will.

However, for these contemplatives, Jesus' claim seems to be a source of embarrassment. They believe that the exclusivity drives people away

from Christianity. Are they ashamed of Jesus' exclusive claim for salvation? That appears to be the case. And yet, shouldn't Christians follow the example of Paul, who in the end lost his life because of his stand for Christ?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first, and also for the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

Through their shame of the gospel, the contemplatives wish to erase what they see as Christianity's exclusive claim. If only we could rid ourselves of doctrine, disagreement, and certainty then we can join with our brothers of the East and share our knowledge of God obtained through meditation.

Alan Jones states: "A 'doctrine' is not like a fact to be believed but rather a way of being in the world that is validated by experience."

The New Age offers empty feel-good platitudes and subjective meditative experiences. Sadly the contemplatives offer much of the same. That is what they should be ashamed of.

LIBERTY

"Remember when we heard that if only our leaders had known how to 'connect the dots,' the September 11 attacks could have been prevented? After nearly six years without a similar attack, the government has learned much about detecting the outlines of jihadist terror plots before they take shape.

As a result, and after all the aggravations and humiliations of what I still hope are temporary safety procedures, our security has remained essentially intact. But can we say the same thing about our freedoms?

At this point, I must interrupt... to apologize to all Leftists settling in for a juicy tirade against the Patriot Act, wiretaps for terrorists, or the sufferings of sensitive poets in residence at Guantanamo Bay.

It is not the Bush administration's efforts to protect us from 'terror' (more maturely known as jihad) that compromise our freedoms, it is jihad itself. And the basic freedom to discuss, analyze, debate, imagine, and, therefore, resist jihad is now under unprecedented assault." —Diana West