

REMINDER

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What Is "Chrislam" and Who Preaches It?

by Rob Kerby, Senior Editor, Beliefnet.com

Are Christianity and Islam about to merge in to a worldwide mega-religion called Chrislam?



Dr. Jack Van Impe

Popular TV preacher Jack Van Impe recently ended his decades-long run on Trinity Broadcasting Network after he publicly accused California megachurch founder Rick Warren of mixing Christian and Muslim beliefs. TBN pulled the episode before a repeat broadcast could air — prompting Van Impe to announce he could no longer work with TBN.

Van Impe and his co-host wife, Rexella, cited Warren's speech to an Islamic conference in Washington in 2009 and Warren's invocation at President Obama's inauguration that invoked the name of Jesus in several languages. They claimed Warren said churches can attract new believers by taking crosses down from inside and outside their buildings.

Warren, however, has said exactly the opposite: "If you remove the cross from the church, it's no longer the church. Just a social club."

Is Chrislam the religion of the future? Science-fiction author Arthur C. Clarke, who wrote **2001: A Space Odyssey**, may have been the first to coin the term — as a futuristic religion he imagined.

The concept is likely to be embraced by a few non-fundamentalists on either side of the divide, such as Universalists, Unitarians and maybe some Buddhists. There are Hindus and Shinto faithful who are willing to add Christianity and Islam to their belief spectrum — rejecting that there is any single path to God.

However, Christianity has at its very core that Jesus is the only way to Heaven — and that eternal salvation is a gift of grace, earned for mankind by Christ's crucifixion. Islam holds the firm view that eternal damnation awaits those who do not earn salvation by submitting to the requirements of the Koran, which describes Jesus as a noteworthy prophet who didn't really die on the cross.

So, how does one reconcile the two views?

In Nigeria, Shamsuddin Saka seeks to bridge the religious divide. However, notes Fred de Sam Lazaro for "The World" radio program on Public Radio International:

"It doesn't take much to spark religious violence in the West African nation of Nigeria. Just this past weekend, rioting erupted in the town of Bauchi after Muslims parked their cars in front of a church. Bauchi lies along a line between Nigeria's mainly Muslim north and the Christian south. Tensions in the region often spill over into violence, but one man is trying to bridge the gap. He preaches a liturgy that blends Christianity and Islam.

Of hundreds of small churches in Lagos, this likely is the only one that has both a Bible and a Qur'an on the lectern. The invocations come loudly from both. Practitioners of what the preacher calls 'Chrislam,' fifteen 1,500 on some Sundays, see no religious fault line."

Saka preaches that Christians and Muslims are both children of Abraham — which is historically accurate, according to both the Bible, the Koran and DNA studies.

Saka was born Muslim, and, the PRI report notes: "...it was after returning from a Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca that he was inspired—he says instructed by God—to launch his new ministry: 'That was about 19 years ago. I was praying and I [laid] down and the Lord told

(continued inside)



me, make peace between Christian and Muslim.”

Christian Science Monitor reporter Abraham McLaughlin describes Saka’s place of worship:

At first, it seems a surprising sight: inside a two-story mosque in sub-Saharan Africa’s largest metropolis hangs a life-size portrait of Jesus Christ.

Yet worshipers at “The True Message of God Mission” say it’s entirely natural for Christianity and Islam to co-exist, even overlap. They begin their worship by praying at the Jesus alcove and then “running their deliverance” — sprinting laps around the mosque’s mosaic-tiled courtyard, praying to the one God for forgiveness and help. They say it’s akin to Israelites circling the walls of Jericho — and Muslims swirling around the Ka’ba shrine in Mecca.

This group — originally called “Chris-lam-herb” for its mix-and-match approach to Christianity, Islam, and traditional medicine — is a window on an ongoing religious ferment in Africa. It’s still up for debate whether this group, and others like it, could become models for Muslim-Christian unity worldwide or whether they’re uniquely African. But either way, they are “part of a trend,” says Dana Robert, a Boston University religion professor.

At a nearby church/mosque with perhaps 500 worshipers is a teacher named Tela Tella who says that Saka stole his idea for the religion. Saka’s congregation is larger than Tella’s — primarily because Saka is more aggressive in recruiting new members. PRI describes a service at Saka’s facility:

“It begins each Sunday morning with Qur’anic prayer. The prayer is intense, a trance-like frenzy similar to a Pentecostal Christian service. It climaxes with a sermon hitting repeatedly on the themes of prayerfulness and on the commonality between Islam and Christianity.”

Ishak Akintola, a religion scholar at nearby Lagos State University, told PRI the spiritual basis for the merger is sound:

“The Bible concentrates on teachings of love; that’s what Jesus says in Matthew: Chapter Five, that you love your neighbor and you even love your enemy. Now you find the Qur’an saying exactly the same thing.”

And there are those academics who predictably think Chrislam is wonderful. Anthropologist Mara Leichtman at Michigan State University notes:

“According to Islam, the prophet Muhammad was the final prophet, but certainly not the only prophet; and they believe in Jesus and all of the other prophets of Judaism and Christianity that came before the prophet Muhammad,” “So it’s nothing foreign to a Muslim to believe in Jesus, to pray in Jesus, to light a candle for the Virgin Mary, for example, as I’ve experienced Muslims do in churches in Senegal.”

However, Alan Wisdom, director of the Presbyterian Action committee and vice president for research and programs at the Institute on Religion & Democracy contends that Islam should

never be viewed as an equal to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Moreover, Qurans should never be placed next to God’s Holy Word, he says. He told writer Chad Groening at the news site OneNewsNow:

“The Bible is God’s unique revelation to us. The pulpit of a church is for preaching the Word of God, and we believe that that is the scriptures of the Old and New Testament. When we go to worship God, we worship Jesus Christ, and we can’t mix that worship with any other allegiance.”



Alan Wisdom

Wisdom said that while he believes it is important for Christians to study and understand religions like Islam, he does not think believers should ever cross the line and blend Christianity together with a religion that is “antithetical to Christian teachings.”

Author Bill Muehlenberg on his website Culture Watch sees no future for Christam:

“Some misguided Christians believe they can somehow combine the two religions and still have something recognizable as the Christian faith. Sorry, but it can’t happen.

“Muslims are happy to use such versions of religious syncretism to gain entry into Christian circles, but it just results in the creation of more dhimmitude — Christians becoming second-class citizens.

“Islam always wins in such attempts, while Christianity always loses. The truth is, the two religions are fully incompatible. They may seem to be similar (both are world religions, both have Abrahamic origins, both are monotheistic, etc) but the differences are far greater.

“Yet some quite foolish Christians think they can blend their faith with that of Islam and still remain intact, effective, and biblical. Sorry, but it just does not — indeed, cannot — happen.”

He cites the example of churches in London sharing their premises with Muslims:

“They seemed to think that a church and mosque could coexist in the same premises, and that Christianity and Islam could coexist as a faith system. But all that happens is the Christian faith gets watered down while Islam continues to thrive.”

Muehlenberg quotes author Mark Durie, an Australian authority on Islam:

“A prominent element in Islamic daily prayers is the recitation of Al-Fatihah (the Opening), the first chapter of the Koran. Often described as a blessing, Al-Fatihah has a sting in its tail. After introductory praises, the final sentence of Al-Fatihah is a request for guidance ‘in the straight path’ of Allah’s blessed ones, not the path ‘of those against whom You are wrathful, nor of those who are astray.’

“Who are the ones who are said to be under Allah’s wrath or to have gone astray from his straight path? According to the revered commentator Ibn Kathir, Muhammad himself gave the answer:

‘Those who have earned the anger are the Jews, and those who are led astray are the Christians.’

“Al-Fatihah is as central to Islamic devotion as the Lord’s Prayer is to Christians: It is recited at least 17 times a day as part of daily Muslim prayers. Yet according to Muhammad himself, this prayer, which is on the lips of every pious Muslim day and night, castigates Christians as misguided and Jews as objects of Allah’s wrath.”

And while Muslims may look up to Jesus as a prophet, they regard it as blasphemous to view him as God’s son and the Saviour of the world. As Durie remarks, “Certainly there are some similarities between Isa of the Koran and Jesus of the Gospels. The Koran calls Jesus ‘al-Masih’ – the Messiah – and both figures are said to have been born of a virgin, to have performed miracles of healing and to have raised the dead. Yet here the similarities end. Isa of the Koran was not crucified and did not die but was raised up by Allah (Sura 4:157-158).

Author David Dollins doesn’t pull any punches in his denunciation of the concept — quoting Peter the Apostle:

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (II Peter 2:1).

“For these church leaders,” declares Dollins, “who are blind watchmen, to bring Islam and the reading of the Quran into the Church is to deny the Lord himself, it is to deny who He is, and it is to deny what He accomplished at Calvary’s Cross 2,000 years ago, when He gave His life for the sins of the world!”

He continues in his blog “Bible Prophecy” on the website of the Christian Post:

“Just as bad, it is an open acceptance of the Spirit of Antichrist, which John said will bring swift destruction and ultimately, yet sadly, the damning of the soul.

“What should the Church do now? We must get back to proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation without fear of reprisal. We must defend and preach the deity of Jesus, that He is the one true God and there is no other. Then we must also boldly proclaim the Holy Scriptures, not the Quran, as the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

“Everyone should be free to practice their religion in the way they choose. What this is about is defending the truth of who Jesus Christ is and what He accomplished at the Cross, and preserving the purity of the Church against the infiltration of false doctrine. The Early Church Fathers (e.g., St. Polycarp, St. Irenaeus) defended the Truth against heresy, so why don’t we?

And never one to mince words, author Dr. John MacArthur on his website *Grace to You* writes:

“When evangelicals capitulate and attempt to soften the offense of the gospel [by joining with Muslims] in this way, they blur the lines between the god of Islam and the God of the Bible. But now is not the time for blurring lines. Now is the time to draw

lines—lines between truth and error, and between the one path to heaven and the many paths to hell.

“Islam rejects the Trinity and the God of the Bible, insisting instead that Allah alone is the one true deity. It denies that Jesus is God, that He died on the cross, and that He was raised from the dead. Instead, say Muslims, Jesus was but one of thousands of prophets sent by Allah, the greatest of them being Mohammed. In other words, Jesus was merely a man.



Dr. John MacArthur

“Islam rejects the salvation of forgiveness through Christ, teaching that only Muslims can be saved. According to the Koran, if a person follows Islam and does enough good deeds to outweigh the bad, Allah may allow him to enter paradise, but even then he can’t be certain. The only sure pathway to heaven is killing and being killed in jihad, a holy war.

“Islam gives lip service to the Bible as a holy book, but it undermines and denies every fundamental doctrine about sin and salvation taught in the Bible. In fact, Islam today is the most powerful system on earth for the destruction of biblical truth and Christianity—thousands of Christians are dying under Islamic persecution, especially in the Middle East, Africa, Indonesia, and other parts of Asia.”

“Clearly, Islam and Christianity are mutually exclusive. Both claim to be the only true way to God, but both cannot be right. There is no atonement in Islam, no forgiveness, no savior, and no assurance of eternal life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of hope; Islam is a religion of hopelessness.

“Making these kinds of distinctions may not be politically correct, but it is critical if the purity of the gospel is to be protected. Put simply, there is no salvation outside of Christ. When this truth is compromised, the gospel is abandoned—and so is the only hope that we can offer to those who are not our enemies, but rather our mission field.” ■



The Word of God shall stand forever—Isaiah 40:8

NURSERY MINISTRY WORKERS FOR THIS WEEK

10:50 a.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Shirley White
 Cradle Roll 2: Bertha Segebarth
 6:30 p.m. Service ----- Cradle Roll 1: Rebekah White
 Cradle Roll 2: Nathaniel White
 Wed. Evening Service ---- Cradle Roll 1: LeAnna White
 Cradle Roll 2: Seth White

AND THE PEOPLE CAME...

Week of October 23, 2011

Sunday School ----- 19
 Sunday Morning Service ----- 38
 Sunday Evening Service ----- 27
 Wed. Eve., 10/26/11 Service ----- 26

AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...

Week of October 23, 2010

Undesignated Tithes & Offerings ----- \$ 812.00
 Insurance Fund ----- \$ 8.00
Total Received for Week of 10/23/11: \$ 820.00

Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed to operate the church EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ 1,400.00

INSURANCE FUND REPORT FOR OCTOBER:

Monthly Requirement ----- \$ 273.08
 Amount Received during September, 2011 ----- \$ 100.00
Amount Short For Oct., 2011: - \$ 173.08

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

1. *Admit that you are a sinner.*
2. *Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.*
3. *Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.*
4. *You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).*
5. *By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.*

Please Remember To Be Faithful to Give!



As with everything else, the costs of keeping a church going never go down - they always go *up*. Bills wait for no one, and churches are no exception to this. An extra, sacrificial gift today by everyone present would go a long way...

We encourage all of our membership to practice obedience to God by being faithful every payday to give back to Him His tithe (10%). *If every family in our church would practice this one simple discipline, we would never have weeks where we have to put off paying some bills until the following week!*

Everything is expensive, especially for a small church like ours, but ours is a BIG God, and He LOVES to bless His children when they are obedient to Him!

If you are already a tither, we thank you, and encourage you to also give offerings as well. If you're currently not tithing, won't you please start *today* - **OK?** Thank you.

Church Directory

Todd W. White ----- Pastor
 Mickie Shatwell, Janell Diehl ----- Pianists
 Dickie Eberle ----- Greeter, Custodian
 Larry Mathews, Caryn Quinnelly, Todd W. White ----- S.S. Teachers
 Larry & Mary Byars, Brian & Charity Crawford,
 Dwayne English, Lou Martin, Don Diehl ----- Outreach
 Flowers ----- Hannah and Shirley White

