

Syncretism

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For Discussion: Only 37% of US Pastors Have Biblical Worldview: Dr. Barna – Alex Newman

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According to Dr. Barna's research, the worldview known as "syncretism," which he describes as "the blending of elements from multiple worldviews into a customized individual philosophy of life," has taken over the belief landscape of the United States once dominated by Christianity.

https://libertysentinel.substack.com/p/only-37-of-pastors-in-us-have-biblical?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=1434665&post_id=160446895&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=false&r=2ko7lw&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email

What is religious syncretism?

Syncretism, as defined by the American Heritage Dictionary, is "the reconciliation or fusion of differing systems of belief." This is most evident in the areas of philosophy and religion, and usually results in a new teaching or belief system.

Can syncretism be reconciled to biblical Christianity?

No, religious syncretism often takes place when foreign beliefs are introduced to an indigenous belief system and the teachings are blended.

- The new, heterogeneous religion then takes a shape of its own.

What does the Bible have to say about syncretism?

1 John 2:15 – *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

Embracing extra-biblical, man-invented religions is of the world... if it is not of-God, it is of the world. Syncretism is compromising with the world.

How is The Roman Catholic Church a classic example of syncretism?

Roman Emperor Constantine instituted Christianity into a state religion which led to incorporating various pagan traditions to make the new Christian faith more palatable to pagans... Christmas and Easter for example.

This continued in Roman Catholic missionary history: the proselytizing of animistic South America.

- Threatened with the fear of death, natives were baptized into the church by the tens of thousands without any preaching of the Gospel whatsoever.
- Former temples were razed, with Catholic shrines and chapels built on the same spot.
- Natives were allowed to substitute praying to saints instead of gods of water, earth and air, and replaced their former idols with new images of the Roman Catholic Church.
- Yet, the animistic religion the natives had formerly practiced was never fully replaced—it was adapted into Catholic teachings, and this new belief system was allowed to flourish.

How long has syncretism been a problem?

Judges 17:6 – *In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did what was right in his own eyes*
It has been around at least as long as God has revealed Himself to mankind. Indeed, it began in the Garden of Eden when Eve embraced the narrative of the Serpent.

How has religious syncretism been seen more recently?

In such religious systems as the New Age, Hinduism, Unitarianism, and Christian Science. These religions are a blending of multiple different belief systems, and are continually evolving as the philosophies of mankind rise and fall in popularity.

What is the problem with religious syncretism?

Syncretism relies on the whim of man, not the standard of Scripture. The Bible makes the true religion very clear:

John 14:6 – *Jesus replied, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'*

How is adding to the Christian faith heretical?

Any modification to biblical principles for the sake of a “better” religion is heresy...

Revelation 22:18-19 – *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

While this specifically applies to the Book of Revelation, the principle here applies to all God-inspired Scripture.

Are Christians taking away from the Book of Revelation when scoffers neglect Bible prophecy?

Some certainly are... you can certainly make a good case that watching for the return of Christ is an essential for salvation based on this passage.

How does syncretism impact a person’s worldview?

A worldview is a collection of core beliefs that a person embraces to makes sense of the world.

What is a biblical worldview?

Christian culture researcher George Barna surveyed 7 cornerstones of a Christian worldview:

1. God is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent and just Creator.
2. Humans are sinful by nature.
3. Jesus Christ grants forgiveness of sin and eternal life when sinners repent and profess their faith in Him alone.
4. The Bible is true, reliable and always relevant.
5. Absolute moral truth exists.
6. Success is defined as consistent obedience to God.
7. Life’s purpose is to know, love and serve God with all one’s heart, mind, strength, and soul.

What other ways are there to describe a biblical worldview?

The beliefs that are essential to the Christian faith...

- the deity of Christ
- salvation by God’s grace and not by works
- salvation through Jesus Christ alone
- the resurrection of Christ
- the Gospel: Christ died for our sins
- monotheism and the Holy Trinity

This is augmented by the Five Solas of the Protestant Reformation...

1. Sola scriptura: “Scripture alone”
2. Sola fide: “faith alone”
3. Sola gratia: “grace alone”
4. Solo Christo: “Christ alone”
5. Soli Deo gloria: “to the glory of God alone”

How many Americans have a biblical worldview?

George Barna’s research found that:

- only 4% of Americans have a biblical worldview
- only 11% of those professing to be born again actually have a biblical worldview.
- Only 37% of pastors have a worldview.

What is driving the dismal biblical worldview results?

George Barna’s response to Alex Newman:

- The culture is influencing the church
- Too many parents have out-sourced raising their children to be Christians
- The media advances narratives that hardly reinforce a biblical worldview
- Syncretism – people pick and choose what to believe based on what is popular
- Churches are neglecting the commission to make disciples.

Why is Bible knowledge essential to having a biblical worldview?

If someone doesn’t know what the Bible says about the sanctity of human life, for example, it will be difficult for them to form a biblical view on the subject.

- For the uninformed, education is the key.

Why is it a problem to reject what the Bible has to say on certain issues?

This is syncretism... picking and choosing what you will believe. It is also compromising with the world.

- For those who are contrary, repentance is the key.

How does yielding to the world’s culture impact worldview?

Proverbs 29:25 – *Fear of man will prove to be a snare*
Those who are more concerned with what the world thinks of them than what God thinks will not be able to embrace a biblical worldview.

- When a believer starts making compromises with the world’s thinking, he loses focus on God’s perspective.
- For those who are fearful, godly courage is the key.

How does a lukewarm commitment to Christ impact a worldview?

Like the church of Laodicea, they are “neither cold nor hot” (Revelation 3:15), unwilling to take a stand for Christ.

- For the lukewarm, commitment is the key.

How do the lies of the world influence a worldview?

From the time of Adam and Eve, Satan has used his ability to deceive and confuse (Genesis 3:1-6; Revelation 12:9).

- A powerful tool in Satan's arsenal is the idea that the Bible is a book of myths, that it's full of errors and not to be trusted.
- Satan wishes to convince people that the Bible is no longer relevant; its laws and principles are obsolete.
- For the deceived, discernment is the key.

How do circumstances cause people to doubt God's promises?

In Matthew 14, when Peter stepped out of the boat to walk on the water, he was demonstrating a biblical worldview:

- Jesus is the source of all power.
- However, when Peter focused on the storm-tossed sea, his worldview shifted: maybe the waves are more powerful than Jesus.
- For the doubting, faith is the key.

What is essential to having a biblical worldview?

To have a consistently biblical worldview we must go back to the Bible and take hold of the promises God has made to us, for the world offers us nothing (Luke 9:25; John 12:25; Matthew 6:19).

Is having a biblical worldview a salvation issue?

Romans 12:2 – *do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

If a person is truly born again, there should be evidence that they are becoming more like Christ...

- They cease to be conformed to this world that rejects the truth about God.
- Being transformed is having our minds renewed to think like Christ.

Why is renewing our minds so important?

What we know in our minds to be true forms a conviction in our hearts of that truth, and that conviction in our hearts translates into action.

- Therefore, we must first renew our minds.

How can we replace the error of the world's way of thinking?

By replacing it with God's truth, and the only infallible source of God's truth is His revealed Word, the Bible.

- Transformation through renewed minds comes as believers expose themselves to God's Word through the faithful exposition of it each week in church, personal Bible study, and group Bible study.
- A solid church that believes in preaching the Word, reading the Word, and singing the Word is invaluable in helping us renew our minds.

There are no shortcuts. There is no magical formula for renewing our minds. We must fill our minds with God's Word. As Jesus prayed to the Father, "*Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth*" (John 17:17).

What is the prophetic significance syncretism's impact on biblical worldviews?

It is contributing to the apostasy of the church...

1 Timothy 4:1 – *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*

What applications do we see from this discussion?

- Syncretism is an aspect of apostasy, a sign of the times
- Having a biblical worldview is a salvation issue