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Clueless in Seattle — Can You Be Both a Christian and a Muslim?

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Members of the Episcopal Church must brace themselves these days when they pick up the newspaper. The church is currently roiled by controversies over homosexuality and a host of other issues. Indeed, the Episcopal Church, US [ECUSA] is in danger of losing its relationship with the larger Anglican Communion over the issue of homosexuality alone.

As if that were not sufficient to fret the faithful, along comes the Rev. Ann Holmes Redding of Seattle. Sunday's edition of *The Seattle Times* featured a major [article](#) on Rev. Redding and her claim to be both an Episcopal priest and a practicing Muslim. She is serious, of course, which is what makes the story so interesting.

Janet I. Tu, the paper's religion reporter sets out the story:

Shortly after noon on Fridays, the Rev. Ann Holmes Redding ties on a black headscarf, preparing to pray with her Muslim group on First Hill.

On Sunday mornings, Redding puts on the white collar of an Episcopal priest.

She does both, she says, because she's Christian and Muslim.

Redding, who until recently was director of faith formation at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, has been a priest for more than 20 years. Now she's ready to tell people that, for the last 15 months, she's also been a Muslim — drawn to the faith after an introduction to Islamic prayers left her profoundly moved.

Her announcement has provoked surprise and bewilderment in many, raising an obvious question: How can someone be both a Christian and a Muslim?

Well, at least the question is right — How can someone be both a Christian and a Muslim. The simple and profoundly obvious answer is that one cannot be both a Christian and a Muslim, at least not until you completely redefine what it means to be both Christian and Muslim.

The case of the Rev. Ann Holmes Redding makes any sane person long for Aristotle and his law of non-contradiction. As Aristotle famously argued, two contradictory propositions cannot be simultaneously true. Nevertheless, the outright denial of the principle of non-contradiction is one of the hallmarks of the postmodern age. Postmoderns gladly embrace contradictions and refuse any responsibility to resolve them. This tactic, we might observe, works better on some issues than on others. Their denial of non-contradiction abruptly ends when it no longer serves their purposes.

Rev. Redding wants to claim to be both a faithful Christian and a faithful Muslim. The problem with this is immediately clear to anyone who understands the most basic teachings of Christianity and Islam.

Christianity stands or falls on doctrines such as the Trinity and the deity of Christ. The heart of the Christian understanding of Jesus Christ is that He is the only begotten Son of the Father, fully human and fully divine. Christianity also points to Jesus' death on the cross as the means of our salvation and to Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead as the Father's vindication of the Son and the promise of the resurrection of believers yet to come.

Islam acknowledges Jesus as a historical figure and a great prophet, affirms the virgin birth, and points to a future role of Christ in judgment. Nevertheless, Islam explicitly denies that Jesus Christ is in any way begotten of the Father, that He died on the cross, and that He was raised from the dead.

These are merely the most obvious foundational contradictions between Christianity and Islam. Furthermore, these most obvious contradictions are affirmed by all major Christian denominations and both historic branches of Islam.

That doesn't deter Rev. Redding one bit. "At the most basic level, I understand the two religions to be compatible. That's all I need," she says. The important point here is that "the most basic level" to which she points is a figment of her own fertile and heretical imagination.

But, then again, Rev. Redding is clear about her basic doubts about basic Christian doctrines. She denies original sin and admits she has long doubted the deity of Christ.

From the paper's report:

She believes the Trinity is an idea about God and cannot be taken literally.

She does not believe Jesus and God are the same, but rather that God is more than Jesus.

She believes Jesus is the son of God insofar as all humans are the children of God, and that Jesus is divine, just as all humans are divine — because God dwells in all humans.

What makes Jesus unique, she believes, is that out of all humans, he most embodied being filled with God and identifying completely with God's will.

She does believe that Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected, and acknowledges those beliefs conflict with the teachings of the Quran. "That's something I'll find a challenge the rest of my life," she said.

She considers Jesus her savior. At times of despair, because she knows Jesus suffered and overcame suffering, "he has connected me with God," she said.

So Rev. Redding denies the historic doctrines of the church and then declares herself a Muslim. In March 2006 she said her *shahada* or profession of faith, declaring that there is only one God and that Mohammed is his messenger.

At a Web site published by *The Seattle Times*, Redding later responded to questions from the paper's readers. In one answer she offered this:

I believe that Jesus is divine in the same way in which all humans are related to God as children of God. Jesus is different in degree, not kind; that means that he shows me most fully what it means to be in total submission to and identification with God. The significance of his crucifixion is that it is the ultimate surrender, and the resurrection—both his and as it is revealed in the lives of his disciples—shows us that God makes life out of death. That is the good news to me and it is salvation. I don't think God said, "Let me send this special person so that I can kill him for the benefit of the rest of humanity." That's not the kind of sacrifice I think that God desires.

Yet again, Rev. Redding denies the central teachings of Christianity and explicitly denies what the Bible undeniably teaches.

This is yet another reminder of the basic principle that religious liberals can negotiate themselves to any position they desire. Once you commit yourself to a methodology of denying Scripture and orthodox Christian doctrine, you can declare yourself to be a Christian and a Muslim, a Christian and a Druid, or a Christian and an Atheist for that matter.

The real shame in all this is that Rev. Redding is getting away with this while continuing to be an Episcopal priest in good standing. Adding insult to injury, her bishop, the Rt. Reverend Vincent Warner of Seattle, says that Rev. Redding's declaration that she is both a Christian and a Muslim to be exciting in terms of interfaith understanding. Is there any hope for a church whose bishop considers heresy to be exciting?

Once again, we are driven to pray for Christ's church to be rescued from such heresies and preserved in the truth in the midst of such confusion. We must also pray for the faithful Christians in the Episcopal Church and other denominations who are, in effect, paying the bills that sustain these heresies.

In the meantime, they had better brace themselves for whatever atrocity will come next.

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