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Your Local Church of England Hindu Priest?

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It seems that an Anglican priest has converted to Hinduism — but is being allowed to continue as a priest in the Church of England. This sounds like a new BBC comedy series, but it is all too true.

The Anglican priest, Rev. David Hart, currently lives in India, where he officiates as a Hindu priest in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. He has taken the Hindu name “Ananda” and offers fire to a Hindu snake god, Nagar, and other idols.



This past April, he published a book about his conversion. Nevertheless, the Diocese of Ely later extended his clerical standing for another three years.

As Ruth Gledhill of *The Times* [London] explains:

Mr Hart is the international secretary for the World Congress of Faiths, the world's oldest interfaith organisation, and is a strong advocate of pluralism. He says in his book that Hinduism accepts the divinity of Jesus and is an especially tolerant and open faith. He adds that he changed his name to Ananda because of its Sanskrit meaning, happiness.

In an interview with today's edition of Church Times, Mr Hart admits that he had not told Dr Russell that he had converted, but said that he would be amazed if his conversion were treated with any suspicion.

"I have neither explicitly nor implicitly renounced my Christian faith or priesthood," he said. The renewal of his licence was sponsored by the Rural Dean of Colombo in Sri Lanka.

Mr Hart believes that his change to Hinduism would be "read in the spirit of open exploration and dialogue, which is an essential feature of our shared modern spirituality".

He also said that he would continue to celebrate as an Anglican priest when he visited England, but he would also visit a Hindu temple while there. "My philosophical position is that all religions are cultural constructs," he said. "I am acting out God's story in local terms."

That's my favorite line in all this mess — “acting out God's story in local terms.” The fact is that Rev. Hart's point is made all too seriously. He is the poster-priest for the worst and most mindless form of theological relativism. You would be hard pressed to find two more radically distinct theologies than those of Christianity and Hinduism. He is an idolater who has repudiated Christianity and biblical theism. And now he expects the Church of England to allow him to continue as a priest.

A woman priest in the Ely diocese said that she would oppose any effort by Rev. Hart to officiate in a local church. “We do tend to use Christian priests, surprisingly enough,” she explained. *Surprisingly enough?* Why not surprise all of us and respond to this apostate priest with the full measure of Christian conviction?

Where is Queen Elizabeth II, the Church of England's constitutional *Defender of the Faith*, on this? The Archbishop

of Canterbury?

Prince Charles, who has announced his intention to change the coronation oath from Defender of *the Faith* to Defender of *Faith* (any faith, all faiths . . . whatever) should take careful note of Rev. David Hart. He would be the perfect postmodern priest for the court of Britain's future postmodern king.

See also: Coverage in *The Church Times* [Church of England]

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