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Marquette University Press, United States, 2002. Paperback. Condition: New. Language: English . Brand New Book. Syncretism is a word with an ambivalent, not to say bizarre history. It originated with the Greek historian Plutarch as a descriptive noun for advantageous political alliances among the Cretan tribes. It was later adopted by the Renaissance humanist Erasmus to propose to other humanists a way for them to unite against barbarism. But in the seventeenth century some Protestant theologians, followed later by some Catholics, used it to describe unprincipled compromise with conflicting teachings. Since then, among Christians the word has signified theological distortion, although anthropologists have employed it neutrally to describe the phenomena of religious mixtures resulting from intercultural contacts. The present work seeks to retrieve the ancient meaning of syncretism, since the book's thesis is that such mixing grows out of a human desire for unity and synthesis. More, among oppressed tribal peoples, it is an attempt to understand and rationalize their situation. While acknowledging that not all syncretism is good and that some cases, like Nazism, have been demonic, this book argues that syncretic process is a historical movement by which Christianity can understand itself better as a faith to be shared by all cultures. Thus, once again, theology becomes faith seeking understanding.



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