

Chapter -- I

The Word Of God -- I (The Doctrine Of Inspiration)

(Though all religions have sacred books, the Bible is different from all of them. A knowledge of this difference is essential for living a life of non-compromise. The present series aims to expound the biblical doctrine of Revelation. At the same time this series will also discuss the erroneous views that have been creeping among Bible-believing people -- The Editor)

Right from the beginning of creation man has desired to know about God. The more religiously inclined thinkers actively sought this knowledge through meditation, contemplation, and even through mystical experiences. However, human methods are inadequate to reach God, or to discover detailed information about Him. Thus human attempts in this matter have always failed.

At the same time, the Creator-God did not keep himself aloof from mankind. Rather, He made Himself known to man right from the beginning of human existence. He gave General Revelation in nature, and Special Revelation through the Bible.

All of the above can be put together into three categories: Knowledge Of God Through Human Speculation, Through General Revelation, and Through Special Revelation.

I-Human Speculation: A large amount of information available about God is the result of mere human speculation. Since man's wisdom has totally been corrupted by sin, the result of human speculation about God is also corrupted by his sinful mind and method of thinking. Thus NO definite conclusion about God and His actions can be obtained through mere human speculation or contemplation.

A survey of various man-made religions would immediately reveal that there is a great diversity of opinion in them about God, often contradicting each other. What's more, even within individual man-made religions and philosophies, their viewpoints about God are often inconsistent and contradictory. Further, when man speaks about God from his human wisdom, the result is often a devaluated God. Such Gods are nothing more than highly elevated humans. Consequently one can note that in many non-Christian religions their gods are as sinful (or more) than their human creators are.

Since the human wisdom is totally corrupted by sin, not only is the consequent human speculation about God totally erroneous, but also all the religious books written by human wisdom are similarly corrupted. While an occasional statement here and there in them might correspond with what is said in the Bible, this similarity of accident does not elevate these books or these statements to the level of Bible (divine revelation).

2-General Revelation: God being love, He has not left mankind in darkness. He loves every human being in spite of human sin. He thus provides them enough information for them to realize that there is a God. This information also helps them to realize that this God is to be feared and obeyed.

General Revelation comes through the mighty creation of God seen all around. It also comes from man's observation of God's sustaining power. All of this is enough to make man aware of the existence of God, and to create in him a desire to know God. Further, when any person desires to know the real God, the omniscient and righteous God would surely make information available about Himself to this seeker.

While the General Revelation is available to every person of every generation and

religion, in itself it is not sufficient to lead a person to salvation through Christ. In fact the General Revelation does not contain any information about the gospel or about Lord Jesus Christ. Thus it is not possible for any person to receive salvation merely on the basis of general revelation.

The purpose of General Revelation is to create God-consciousness in humans. While this God-consciousness fills certain people with a sense of their own inadequacy, they still need to be introduced to the gospel before they can be saved. This gospel of salvation comes to the unsaved people only from those people to whom God has entrusted the information through Specific (Special) Revelation.

3-Specific (Special) Revelation: Specific Revelation always comes directly from God. Man's human understanding or wisdom is not the source for this type of revelation. Nor can this type of revelation be obtained by the use of mere human wisdom -- howsoever great this wisdom might be.

It is a doctrinal FALLACY to believe that people outside God's chosen ones received spiritual light or revelations through their meditation or human insight. It is a false doctrine and heresy to claim that sages, rishis, or ascetics of the ancient world received "insights" into spiritual matters through their own efforts. Apart from the chosen people in the Old and the New Testament, Special Divine Revelation has NOT been given to anyone else.

In the Bible we notice that God chose people from the line of Seth up to Methuselah for passing on Divine Revelation. Once Abraham was chosen by God, all revelations came through people of the chosen race. Subsequently this information was written down by Moses and others in the Canon of the Old Testament. This Canon came to completion with the writing of Malachi. After four hundred years came the New Testament Canon which was written and completed in less than one century.

Whether during the Old Testament period or during the New Testament times, only God's chosen people were entrusted with divine revelation. NO other people, family, or religious seekers were entrusted with divine revelation. Of course, God in His mercy gave his message to many seekers belonging to various cultural groups (like the Ethiopian Eunuch), but such message was always sent through a messenger belonging to the chosen groups. The chosen people were the godly descendants of Seth to Methuselah, the descendants of Noah, and finally the descendants of Abraham. In the New Testament period the messengers were all Born-again Christian believers.

Since many people moved into pagan religions after having their origin among God's people, they might have carried some knowledge of Biblical truth with them. These truths might have found a place in their religious books. But this mutilated human version (if such version exists anywhere) is NOT to be equated with divine revelation. Further, what people of other religions discovered through their efforts is also NOT to be equated with divine revelation. No amount of human speculation can discover doctrinal truths, and thus the occasional similarity between statements in the bible and statements in other books does not make those non-Christian books divinely revealed.

Summary

The human mind is TOTALLY blinded by sin. It knows nothing except rebellion against God. Thus anything that comes out of pure human speculation about God and His nature is bound to be wrong. Thus whatever people of other religions write about God on the basis of purely human intuition or (human wisdom) is bound to be totally erroneous. Any similarity with the Christian scripture is only a COINCIDENCE, and such similarities are not to be overemphasized.

On the other hand, God has provided enough indications in nature to show that He

exists and controls it all. Anyone with reasonable intelligence can thus come to a realization that God exists. However, after reaching this point of God-consciousness, that person needs to come in touch with Specific Revelation (the Bible) so as to know truths about the divine way of salvation. General Revelation does NOT lead anyone to salvation (or even to information about salvation).

Specific Revelation is contained in the Bible, and Bible alone. NO other religious book in the world was inspired by God. None of them contain inspired information about salvation or Jesus Christ. There might be some accidental similarities between the statements in the Bible and books of other religions. This might be accidental, or even the corrupt form of truth found in the Bible. Alternately it might be pure human speculation that somehow look somewhat similar to some statements of the Bible. However, such statements are a mere human imitation of divine truth, and they are NOT inspired by the Holy Spirit.

There is NO specific revelation from God outside the Bible. Information about salvation or Lord Jesus Christ are NOT available in any book other than the Bible. Claiming that books of other religions (or even parts of such books) are inspired like the Bible is an ERROR and a HERESY. Whether such teachings are spread directly or indirectly, believers should reject and even SUPPRESS such teachings. Specific Revelation from God is found only in the Bible, and nowhere outside it !!

**We Stand By The Following Assertions,
Denying Even A Single One Of Which
Renders A Person A Heretic:**

Sola Scriptura (Bible Alone)

Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)

Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

Chapter -- 2

The Word of God - II

(The Doctrine Of Inspiration)

(Christians often wonder about the extent up to which the non-Christians know about God. Basing their conclusions upon speculation, many of them see a lot of divine revelation among non-Christians. Still others feel that certain similarities between the Bible and other books show that divine revelation exists outside the Bible. This chapter takes a look at these issues -- The Editor)

The extent to which the non-Christians know about God has been a puzzle for many Christians. This question did not bother most Christians a till a few decades ago because they did not know much about their non-Christian neighbors. However, increasing social contact has now told the Christians much about the religious beliefs of their non-Christian neighbors.

No sooner a Christian begins to compare the Christian faith with the non-Christian faith he begins to see many striking similarities. For example almost all faiths talk about God, sin, punishment, salvation, afterlife, and good deeds. Many statements on these subjects, and more, are very similar to what the Bible says. Even in those cases where there is some divergence, the similarity has puzzled many believers. They not only wonder about the origin of these similarities, but also come to the deduction that it can be explained only by assuming that both have come from the same divine source.

Having said the above, eventually many of these Christians take another leap of thought and claim that both the Bible as well as the non-Christian scriptures are equally inspired, so that valid spiritual information can be obtained from both. This then leads many to take another leap and declare that information about salvation is available in every religion, so that people of any and every religion can be saved provided they understand their scriptures correctly. This kind of a blasphemous thinking has already begun at least among some Christians in India, and because of their ignorance of Bible, many people are attracted to this error.

The above teaching ultimately results in the stand that evangelism is unnecessary and even sinful. They feel that evangelism forcefully plucks out a person from his family and places him in a totally alien society, doing gross violence to families and societies. Thus they encourage Christians to pray for these people and also to advise them to discover the path of salvation as recorded by God in their own religions. The error in this view is obvious because then all the commands in the Bible for preaching the gospel to non-Christians are neutralized.

In Mark 16:15 Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." In I Corinthians 1:23 Paul says, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;" It is obvious that not only have Christians got to preach the gospel, but also that they have to keep doing it in spite of this being a stumblingblock to people of non-Christian faiths. Nowhere does the Bible indicate that people would be saved through the methods of salvation found in their own faiths. Further, the Bible is very clear in that there is salvation in none outside Christ. According to Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Obviously, there is a serious flaw with all the attempts to find ways of salvation in non-Christian religions. This error has resulted from the wrong assumption that God has given His inspired revelation outside the Bible also. In turn this erroneous view has developed because of human philosophy and carnal wisdom. Instead of deriving a doctrine from the Bible, many Christians have been developing doctrines based upon their philosophical speculations. This is a gross error. If the human mind were capable of autonomously discovering spiritual truth, there would be no need for the Bible.

Right doctrinal and spiritual understanding comes only when doctrinal deduction firmly is based upon the Bible. It is a lengthy process, and requires that we control our egos and meekly accept all what the Bible says. This also requires that instead of promoting our wishful thinking, we should teach only what the Bible says. It is here that many have gone wrong.

Instead of deducing doctrines from our human wisdom, we will look to the Bible for the answers. Let us see what the Bible says about non-Christian scriptures and divine revelation:

Bible As Revelation

Bible gives much attention to the subject of divine revelation, and repeatedly affirms where this revelation has been recorded. The Israelites at the time of Moses were passing through a situation similar to ours at the dawn of the twenty-first century. In Egypt and then in Canaan there was much mingling between God's people and the pagans. These societies were undergoing fast changes, which happens to be a time when there is little time to reflect upon spiritual realities. In such times as this, there is great attraction to pagan religions and philosophies.

A believer instinctively knows that such attraction is wrong and also contrary to the commands of the scripture which forbids God's people from intermarriage, inter-religious

activities, and the embracing of pagan faiths. These commands in the Old Testament are so blunt that many of them feel the need to soften this sharpness by pointing out to the many similarities between the Jewish faith and the surrounding religions.

The attraction was so strong that in more than 400 places God warned them not to be ensnared by pagan gods. For example, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me", Exodus 20:3. "And in all [things] that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth", Exodus 23:13. "Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and [one] call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice", Exodus 34:15.

Since an attraction and appreciation for the pagan gods is the first stage in their eventual worship, Jehovah emphatically declared in the Old Testament that only He is the true God. There are several hundred places where this statement is repeated. Similarly, the Old Testament reminded people not to be attracted and influenced by the Oracles of the pagan gods, which were available in plenty. Since these utterances came with plenty of fearsome religious shows in their temples, there was a possibility for the Jews to be attracted to them as though they are God's word. There are many examples of Jews who went at times of crisis to sources other than the true God for hearing a supernatural voice. Saul and the witch at Endore is one such example.

Because the temptation to label all of it as God's word was overwhelming, God emphatically told the Israelites that only the message coming from Him through His chosen Jewish prophets and spokesmen was revelation. Thus the Pentateuch alone there are 420 references to the fact that only what God revealed to His chosen prophets was true revelation. The same idea is found in throughout the Old Testament, and no less than 3800 times it says that only the specific revelation recorded through the Jewish prophets was to be considered the Scripture. Considering anything outside of this to be the revealed word of God was blasphemy.

Further, the Old Testament repeatedly affirmed that the word of God was given only to (and through) the Jewish people. In Ezra 9:4 we read, "Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel." The same idea is affirmed in the New Testament by Lord Jesus and the apostles who identify ONLY the law and the prophets as the word of God. (Matt. 7:12, 22:40; Luke 16:16, 29, 31, 24:27, John 1:45; Acts 13:15; Rom. 3:21, etc.).

As we progress further in the New Testament, the apostles speak about the progressive nature of revelation, but do not recognize anything outside the Bible as revelation (Hebrews 1:1). Interestingly, this was the period when the Greek philosophy was at its peak. Many things in this philosophy bore close resemblance with biblical statements. These resemblances were so deceptive that many of the third and fourth century Church Fathers made a lot of compromise between Greek philosophy and biblical theology. However, none of the inspired apostles fell into this error. They never endorsed the seeming Christian elements in the Greek philosophy, and nor did they accept that there is revelation outside the Old and New Testaments.

When the time the book of Revelation was written, a strict warning was issued that none should add anything to the Canon. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book", Rev. 22:18-19. In the light of these verses, trying to find the revealed words of God outside the Bible is definitely an attempt to add to the word of God.

The seriousness with which the above verses warn against this should caution believers not to propagate the false doctrine that God's revealed word is found outside the Bible

also. Further, when this kind of an erroneous doctrine finds acceptance at least among some of us, and when this kind of doctrine becomes popular, it is time for each one of us to take notice of our own failures. If each one of us was faithful to the Bible, and if each one of us were teaching the correct doctrine of divine revelation to our younger ones, such doctrines would not have taken root among us.

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Chapter -- 3

The Word Of God -- III

(The Doctrine Of Inspiration)

(Christians often wonder about the extent up to which the non-Christians know about God. In the last chapter we noticed that the Old Testament as well the New Testament identifies only the 66 books of the Bible as the inspired word of God. No book outside of them is God-breathed. In this chapter a study of the same subject is continued -- The Editor)

Bible speaks very clearly about which books are to be identified as inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is also very clear about the people through whom the inspired word was written down. Initially they were Jews, God's chosen people, and finally they were Church Age believers. No book (or portions of books) outside this range is to be elevated to the status of inspired word of God.

Every religious book outside of this range is ultimately the result of only human wisdom. Some of the books which came through "dictation" might even be the work of demons because the writers of such books accept that these were not their personal work. There are dozens of religious books about which their writers acknowledge direct supernatural help or dictation. Obviously, any quotation from these books would be equivalent to the doctrine of demons.

For example, the Theosophical society has many books produced through the dictation of a demon by the name of Dhvaj Khul. Interestingly, the Theosophists give great lip service to the Bible, and many statements in their religious books are similar to statements found in the Bible. Yet quoting from them is quoting from the devil because they came from the source of evil spirits. About quoting from sources that are demonic, the Bible has the following to say: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils", I Tim. 4:1

The religious systems and gods and goddesses created by human wisdom were to be rejected by God's children. Believers were forbidden from even mentioning the names of these alien gods. "And in all [things] that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth", Exodus 23:13. In the light of this, the liberal way in which many present-day Christian writers quote from non-Christian scriptures, and the frequency with which they mention

one or more of pagan gods as bearing the likeness of Christ are activities strictly forbidden by the Bible.

Further, in the light of what the scripture say comparing similar religious practices for the purpose of establishing relationship is also wrong. Though the outer practices might be similar, yet they are totally contrary to each others in essence. Thus in the matter of comparing biblical sacrifices with pagan one the following should be noticed: "But I [say], that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils", I Cor. 10:20.

Similarly, in the matter of comparing pagan gods and incarnations with Jesus Christ, the following statement of the Bible should be noticed: For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many), But to us [there is but] one God, the Father, of whom [are] all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom [are] all things, and we by him", I Cor. 8:5-6. This is a reminder that believers should not hastily compare the God of the Bible (Father, Son, or the Holy Spirit) with the gods of non-Christian religions.

Can Man Discover Spiritual Truths Himself

Having said the above, several questions still remain. For example, someone might feel that though there is no inspired revelation outside the Bible, yet there might be some highly valuable or profitable religious books ! Some Christians might feel that non-Christian religions have produced some of the greatest sages and acetics the world has ever seen.

Many of these sages or Maharshis have produced vast volumes of philosophical and theological discourses. Often the work of a single sage might be more voluminous than the entire Bible. Many of the statements in these books might be very similar or even identical to what is found in the Bible. Thus is it not possible that they were able to discover, through personal investigation, the same spiritual truths that are recorded in the Bible. Further, should we not give them the status of revelation seeing that they have discovered the same truths that are found in the Bible. As to whether the truths recorded outside the Bible are the same in essence with what is found in the Bible, we would discuss in another sections. Here we will concentrate upon the discovery of human truth by great thinkers and ascetics through insight, meditation, and reflection.

Bible emphasizes in several places that spiritual things are foolish for the natural man. According to I Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned". In other words, of his own wisdom natural man does not receive divine information. On the other hand, divine message looks foolish to him and therefore he would not appreciate, record, or propagate them. Whatever he propagates has to look wise to him. But anything that looks wise to a human heart is contrary to the Scripture.

Further, in several places the scripture reminds that things having their origin in human mind is totally corrupt and contrary to God. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually", Gen. 6:5.

Even if a man seems like searching God, here is what the Bible has to say, "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, [and] seek God. They are all gone aside, they are [all] together become filthy: [there is] none that doeth good, no, not one", Ps. 14:2-3. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God", Rom. 3:11. If anyone thinks that it is possible for human mind to understand doctrines or obtain revelation which is the "mind of Christ", here is what the scripture says, "For my thoughts [are] not your

thoughts, neither [are] your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts", Is. 55:8-9

All this attempt to elevate the works of even the greatest sages and ascetics to the level of the Bible is futile. No human can perceive divine information through his own efforts, insights, or meditation. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable [are] his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor ? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again", Rom. 11:33-35

The human mind is so corrupt and the human wisdom is so marred by sin that no human howsoever great can discover or perceive spiritual truths through any human process of meditation. Thus once again it is erroneous and even heretical to suggest that spiritual truths identical with that of the Bible have been recorded in books produced by non-Christian sages and ascetics.

Conclusion

It is very tempting to tell the non-Christian that their sages have written things that are found in the Bible also. In fact some Bengali Protestant Christians started this approach about fifty years ago, but most evangelical theologians and teachers opposed this approach. They pointed out not only the error in this approach, but also the grave deviations that would eventually result through this approach.

Fifty years from that beginning, today we stand at a time in history when the doctrinal knowledge of people has become minimum, and the dangers pointed out by our forefathers have come out to be true. People who were in the habit of referring to religious books of others have now totally abandoned the Bible. They show more loyalty to the religious books of Hindus rather than to the Bible. They even distort biblical truths so as to bring them in conformity with Hindus.

This is exactly the danger when we fail to distinguish between divine revelation and human speculation.

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Chapter -- 4

The Word Of God -- IV

(The Doctrine Of Inspiration)

(In the last chapter we noticed that Biblical writers take a stand that no book outside of the Bible is God-breathed. In this chapter the writers offer a study of the passages in non-Christian religious books that bear some similarity to statements in the Bible -- The Editor)

With the increasing availability of non-Christian religious books in the market, more and

more Christians have begun to study them. This practice was hastened by the influence of two groups of people, the theological radicals and the universalist Hindus.

The theological radicals all over the world are the illegitimate children, born out of the unfortunate church-state marriage in Germany. Because of historical coincidences, all major theological institutions in that country were government-run institutions. Consequently, Bible colleges were run more like government institutions, and less like the house of God. This resulted in many deviations.

Like the Tower of Babel conceived by Nimrod the ruler, Government institutions can never be the custodians of divine truth. Human mind is enmity against God, the ultimate output would always be a rebellion against divine truth. The same thing happened in Germany. Gradually the theological colleges became staffed with highly learned professors who were not even born again ! A lavish amount of research money was available to them, so they set out to publish books with a vengeance. These books flooded the whole theological world and influenced entire generations of theological students worldwide. This is how the cancer of infidelity spread even among evangelical theological students.

One contention of the radical movement was that there is nothing original or divine in the Bible. According to them, all world religions including the Christian faith had their origin and development through a lengthy process of evolution. In this process, the Christian faith borrowed almost all its theological ideas from other religions, having nothing unique to itself. This idea then motivated them to study other religions with a reverence that should have been reserved for the Christian faith.

Consequently, theologically radical colleges give great emphasis to studying religious books of other religions placing them on par with the Bible, and even above it. This group has done a lot to devaluate the Bible and also to elevate the non-Christian books in the minds of Christians. The influence of these groups have resulted in Christian placing Shivalinga, the sign of Oum, and other symbols in churches and Bible seminaries. It is the same influence which cause a theological college in Bangalore to install a statue of Lord Jesus sitting in lotus position upon a coiled snake, reminiscent of the Hindu gods.

The influence of these theological mercenaries have been quite pervasive, and that is the first factor which has brought non-Christian religious books into Christian churches. The second group which attracted Christians are the Universalists Hindus.

Universalism is the idea that all religions lead to the same destination, and that all religions should be respected equally. With this mindset, many learned Hindu scholars and sanyasis have been quoting liberally from the Bible. A notable example is the widely available book, The Autobiography Of A Yogi. Also, almost all the major Hindu reformist group leaders quote liberally from the Bible. This has come as a pleasant surprise to many Christians, who have never paused to examine the way in which these people are using the Bible to justify their own brand of philosophy and theology.

With the very visible work of the two groups above, a lot of Christians have become interested in non-Christian religious books, especially that of the Hindus. Numerous quotations taken from the Hindu scriptures have even become well-known among Christians. For example, almost every educated Christian today knows the Hindu prayer, ASATO MA SADGAMAYA, TAMASO MA JYOTIRGAMAYA, MRUTYORMAM AMRUTMAGAMAYA (Lead me from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light, and from mortality to immortality). Even the casual Christian notices some similarities between at least some of these statements and the Bible. Thus arises the question of their status.

If a passage in the non-Christian religious book is similar with passages found in the Bible, are they proclaiming the same truth. Further, if the biblical passage is inspired by

the Holy Spirit, can we deny the same status to the identical passages in the non-Christian scriptures ? The question is reasonable, and a proper answer is indeed needed

What About The Similarities

Accidental And Superficial Similarities: Though similarities are found between statements in the Bible and almost all other religions, the most explored area is the Christianity/Hinduism relationship. Thus we will concentrate mainly upon this subject in this chapter. However, it should be kept in mind that what is said here about Christianity/Hinduism applies equally to Christianity and all other religions.

First of all, some of the similarities are only mere coincidences. When two people speak voluminously on any given subject, they are bound to make some similar statements even if they are speaking from totally opposing viewpoints. Anyone who has heard a lengthy debate knows this fact. In such cases, the similarities are mere accidents, and they should not be used to conclude that the speakers agree with each other in essential matters. Rather, those accidental similarities should be examined in the light of the total position of the speakers before one can come to any conclusions.

The same is the case with many Christian/Hindu similarities. The religious books of both groups speak on a large number of common subjects. The Hindus have produced literally of thousands of philosophical books, all having the status of holy books. Thus some accidental similarity is inevitable, but that is not the mark of Holy Spirit's inspiration of these Hindu books. When those quotations are taken in the light of the entire thesis of the Hindu writers, it would become clear that there is no actual agreement between them and the Bible.

For example, the Hindu scriptures talk about God, salvation, condemnation, heaven, earth, sin, justification, afterlife, incarnation, and many other subjects of interest to Christians also. But just because they happen to use these words does not mean that both of them are talking in substance about the same subject. For the Christian, God is a person while for the Hindu his god is impersonal. The Christian talks of salvation in the sense of escaping from condemnation, hell, and a new life. His personality and individuality are not obliterated. For a Hindu, salvation means being merged back into the Ultimate Reality (Para-Brahma), who himself is an impersonal cosmic force and not a person. So while the Christian idea of salvation is speaking about an individual rising to the most blessed personal state, the Hindu salvation is talking about going out of personal existence. Both of them are not one and the same.

The same divide is seen on whatever theological subject that we talk. Thus the first category of similarity seen between the Bible and Hindu scriptures is mere accidental coincidence. Further, most often this is only a coincidence in words, not of ideas. Thus attributing to Holy Spirit's inspiration to such passages is not only a theological heresy, but also an intellectual stupidity. Even the Hindus know that. For example, some of the books published by Geeta Press Gorakhpur and the Ramakrishna Mission in Madras have analyzed and pointed out these differences beneath the seeming outward similarities. If they are able to see the difference, we who have available to us the illumination of the Holy Spirit ought to see these things far more clearly and insightfully.

Similarities When Context Is Ignored: we have an atheist acquaintance who keeps intimidating young and undiscerning Christians by claiming that the Bible itself says that there is no God. On being challenged, he promptly produces a Bible proudly and shows two underlined passages that say THERE IS NO GOD. This silences plenty of our people, mostly those who are not acquainted with the Bible. What is worse is that many of these defeated Christian young people do not even try to check the whole passage, to the delight of the atheist.

The context in which a statement is made has significant effect upon its final meaning. The full passage here says that "The fool hath said in his heart that there is no God." Had the young person taken a few moments more to examine the complete verse, he would not have been so dejected! The same is the case with many quotations from the Hindu scriptures that are attributed a Bible-like status.

As we write this chapter, we have in front of us an English tract titled SACRIFICE, published by GLS, Bombay. This publishing house and many other Christian publishing houses and even individual Christians have published this tract in Hindi, Telegu, Malayalam, and numerous other languages. (This little pamphlet is the initiator of the Heretical thinking among Christians, today known as the Prajapati Movement. It is already on the way to become what can rightly be called the Prajapati Cult).

The first page of this pamphlet contains nine quotations from Hindu scriptures, all about sacrifices. This seems quite interesting and exciting to the naive Christian who all the while thought that only the Bible speaks about sacrifice. This tract says that the Hindu scriptures also speak about sacrifices for salvation, and the Christian swallows this proposal hook, sinker, and the pole.

What the Christians overlook is the fact that the context is not given, nor are the source references cited. If the location were given (Book, chapter, verses), then it would be easy for anyone to check the context. Though the author has successfully prevented investigators from checking the context, a close look at the quotations themselves reveal that their context is missing. Of the nine quotations, most of them contain only THREE words or less. Any intelligent person knows that there are no sentences with so few words, specially of theological significance. For these words to express meaning, the remaining words from the FULL sentence have to become known, which the author successfully hides. This is exactly similar to what our atheist acquaintance has been doing.

In essence, many of the alleged similarities are not similarities at all. They are just one to three Sanskrit words forcefully detached out of their context and presented to a mostly Christian audience that does not know the original language. Then the biased Christian interpreter interprets these fragments and gives them a Biblical slant, and a lot of people are trapped into believing that the Hindu scriptures speak exactly what the Bible speaks !! This trick becomes obvious when one notices that the three-word Sanskrit quotations are explained using full-length sentences of our language !

This is jugglery, not Bible exposition. Using this approach anyone can prove anything, so it is dishonest and unethical.

Summary

Many Christians make a big case out of the assumed similarities between statements of the Bible and the non-Christian scriptures. These similarities are either mere accidents or are the result of taking the text out of context. No serious Christian should pay attention to such jugglery. Rather, it is high time to question the ignorance or the dishonesty of such writers and also to suppress their writings altogether.

**We Stand By The Following Assertions,
Denying Even A Single One Of Which
Renders A Person A Heretic:**

Sola Scriptura (Bible Alone)

Sola Fide (Faith Alone)

Sola Gratia (Grace Alone)

Solus Christus (Christ Alone)

Chapter -- 5

The Word Of God --V

(The Doctrine Of Inspiration)

(Some Christians teach that passages in non-Christian scriptures that are similar to the Bible are also inspired. Bible does not support that view. In the last chapter the writers offered a study of the passages in non-Christian religious books that bear some similarity to statements in the Bible. This chapter continues the same theme -- The Editor)

In the last chapter we indicated that many similarities are just accidental and that we do not have to take them seriously. We also reminded that many statements look similar because the Christian writers take just two to five words from a Hindu text, and then compare this with biblical statements. On the other hand, if they take the entire sentence from the Hindu scriptures, the similarity would vanish. In this chapter we mention some more causes for similarity, and also why this does not indicate that the non-Christian scriptures are inspired by Holy Spirit.

1. Similarity Because Of Blindness: Modern man is very intelligent, and he is able to detect even minute things. Yet in the field of establishing a link between the Bible and the non-Christian scriptures most people close their eyes. Consequently, differences are overlooked and only similarities are mentioned.

Some people go a step further, just overlook the difference, and announce that two passages are similar. For an example, we quote from the well-known tract known as SACRIFICE. According to this tract, the nine features of the sacrifice mentioned in the Rig Veda are fulfilled totally and completely in Lord Jesus. What this tract fails to mention is that the Rig Veda mentions HUNDREDS of characteristics of sacrifices, and that all of these are contrary to what was found in Christ.

If a hand full of features are selected from hundreds, anyone can prove anything by a doing a careful selection. This is not honesty, but pure deception. This is what everyone calls a white lie. On the other hand if the Rig Veda had mentioned only a total of nine characteristics (and no more), and if all of them were fulfilled in Christ, we could say that Rig Veda points to Christ.

The same selective argument can be used to prove that Rig Veda has been talking about Muhammad Sahib of Moslems, Buddha, or even Mahatma Gandhi. This is exactly the same false method used by Joseph Edamaruku to allegedly prove that Christ was not a historical person. Selective description and proof has been a well-tried weapon in the hands of infidels, atheists, antisocial elements, and all kinds of wrongdoers. While this is alright for their ethics, this practice is not appropriate for a Christian.

2. Similarity Because Of Imposed Christian Hermeneutics: Every statement has a context, and a proper understanding of it is essential for correct interpretation. If the context is ignored, any kind of meaning can be imposed upon what is said. That is why Biblical Hermeneutics is taught in all good Bible schools.

Muslims very zealously quote from the Bible and interpret according to their outlook. Christians do not accept this approach. Similarly, there are hundreds of Hindu gurus in India who quote from the Bible and try to establish Hindu doctrines. Then there are palmists who quote Job 37:7, "He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work", and claim that this proves that Palmistry is a God-made science.

No sensible Christian would ever accept this kind of distortion. He would insist that every statement of the Bible should be interpreted only in the light of the Bible. It is only commonsense that Bible should be interpreted under biblical hermeneutics, while the Hindu scriptures should be interpreted under the Hindu hermeneutics. Further, since there are several competing philosophies and theologies in Hinduism, each religious book should be interpreted only according to the schools of philosophy to which it belongs.

What Christians often do is to take a fragmentary statement from the non-Christian scriptures, give it a Christian color, and then interpret it according to Christian hermeneutics. This is as unethical as the Hindus who try to interpret the Bible for justifying their religion.

Let us take the well-known quotation: ASATO MA SADGAMAYA, TAMASO MA JYOTIRGAMAYA, MRUTYORMAM AMRUTAMGAMAYA, which being interpreted means, lead me from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light, and from mortality to immortality. These sentences look very attractive, and they express a yearning in the hearts of our Hindu neighbors. This quote can even be used as a starting point to demonstrate that only Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Light. However, some people go much beyond that approach.

There are many Christians who quote this passage and claim that it is identical in meaning and in spirit with what the Bible says. That is false because they have assumed that the actual meaning and intention of this *sloka* is what is obtained by applying a Christian outlook or hermeneutics to it. That is totally wrong. The person who originally spoke it, and the scripture in which it is recorded have already assigned a definite meaning to this *sloka*. Every statement has to be interpreted in its context, and therefore Christians have no right to detach this *sloka* from its context and then claim that this statement has meaning identical to what is seen in the Bible.

When the Hindu scripture says ASATO MA SADGAMAYA, it is not saying that God should lead the devotee from all falsehoods into truth. Rather, it is saying that he wants to leave the false perception of creation and move to a true perception. The falsehood, according to him, is the idea that man and God are different from each other. The truth, according to him, is the idea that man, the universe, and God are all one. By TRUTH the Hindu here means the Advaita truth that says AHAM BRAHMASMI, TAT TWAM ASI: I am God, and likewise you are also God.

Similarly, each sloka or quotation that many Christian friends produce from the Hindu scriptures to show similarity with the Bible actually have meaning totally different from what the Christian friends tell us. The Christian friends are applying Biblical hermeneutics to Hindu scriptures to derive meanings that are totally alien to what those books say. This is a totally deceptive method for interpreting something, and using this a clever person can prove almost anything.

When we do not allow Hindus, Muslims, and Bahais to interpret the Bible according to their hermeneutics, in the like manner we should also be honest enough not to interpret their books according to principles of Christian hermeneutics.

Summary

In an era when there is a great burden in the hearts of Christians to lead others to Christ, it is tempting to quote from non-Christian religious books. This tendency started around 1930, and today it has degenerated into a serious heresy. According to the present heretical view, just as the Bible is the inspired word of God, in the same way inspired word of God is found in the religious books of others. Close to a hundred books, tracts, and articles have already appeared in the Malayalam language which promote

this heretical viewpoint.

According to the Bible, divine revelation, inspired by the Holy Spirit is recorded in Bible and Bible alone. There is no inspired revelation of God outside the Bible. Though God makes Himself known to people through Nature, this knowledge is not sufficient to lead people to Christ. People come to Christ only through the message found in Bible.

Similarity between statements in the Bible and non-Christian books is either accidental or the result of deliberate deception on the part of Christians. There are no actual similarities in essence. Attributing divine inspiration (similar to that of Bible) to any non-Christian scriptures, or even to parts of them, is a serious heresy.

It is dangerous to add to the Bible by claiming that there are divinely inspired or Holy Spirit inspired messages outside the Bible. But since this message has been forgotten by many people in our generation, let this book serve as a warning to every believer who is careless about Bible study. Ignoring your Bible, and remaining ignorant about important doctrines, is a sure way to invite spiritual slavery and curse. May God help each one of us to remain away from the trap and bondage of ignorance.

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Annotated Bibliography In Religious Pluralism, and new Religious Movements

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<http://www.denverseminary.edu/dj/articles2004/0400/0401.php>

This list makes no claim to be exhaustive. Some books are listed more than once if they fit under more than one category

1. Adler, Mortimer. *Truth In Religion*. New York: MacMillan, 1990. Argues that religions teach different things and thus cannot all be true. (I)
2. Aldridge, Alan. *Religion in the Contemporary World: A Sociological Introduction*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2000. (I)
3. Anderson, Norman. *Christianity and World Religions: The Challenge of Pluralism*. Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity, 1985. (I)
4. Berger, Peter L., ed. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999. Challenges the idea that the modern world is becoming increasingly secular in accordance with sociological forces. (I)
5. Clark, Andrew and Bruce Winter. *One God, One Lord: Christianity in a World of Religious Pluralism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992. Essays by Richard Hess and Bruce Demarest, of Denver Seminary. (I)
6. Corduan, Winfried. *Mysticism: An Evangelical Option?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991. (I)
7. Cox, Harvey. *Fire From Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century*. Reading, M: Addison-Wesley, 1995. Cox changes his tune from hailing the "secular city" to appreciating global Pentecostalism (but still from a theologically liberal mindset). Compare this book to Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*. (I)
8. Crockett, William and James Sigountos, eds. *Through No Fault of Their Own: The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991. (I)
9. Edwards, Paul. *Reincarnation: A Critical Examination*. New York: Prometheus Books, 1996. Edwards is an atheist, so some of his arguments against reincarnation (such as, the mind cannot exist apart from the body) also cut against Christian beliefs in the afterlife. Nevertheless, the arguments specifically against karma and previous lives are applicable to Christian apologetics. (I)
10. Erickson, Millard. *How Shall They Be Saved? The Destiny of Those Who Do Not Hear of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996. (I)
11. Fernando, Ajith. *The Supremacy of Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1995. (B)/(I) Excellent defense of Jesus as Lord, based on John 14:6.
12. Fernando, Ajith. *Sharing the Truth in Love*. Discovery House, 2001. Helpful update of his earlier book, *The Christian Attitude Towards World Religions* (Tyndale, 1987). (B)/(I)
13. Griffiths, Paul, ed. *Christianity Through Non-Christian Eyes*. Orbis, 1990. (I)
14. Griffiths, Paul. *An Apology for Apologetics*. Orbis, 1991. (I) Argues that inter-religious apologetics is proper and fruitful-an unpopular view in the world of Religious Studies.
15. Groothuis, Douglas. *Unmasking the New Age* InterVarsity Press, 1986. (I)
16. Groothuis, Douglas. *Are All Religions One?* InterVarsity Press, 1996. Booklet comparing Christianity, Islam, and nondualistic Hinduism. (I)
17. Groothuis, Douglas. *Confronting the New Age*. InterVarsity Press, 1988. (I)
18. Gruzalski, Bart. *On The Buddha*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2000. By a Buddhist who approaches the subject philosophically. (I)
19. Halverson, Dean, ed. *Compact Guide to World Religions*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1996. Excellent introductory exposition and apologetic engagement on major religions. (B)
20. Hackett, Stuart. *Oriental Philosophy: A Westerner's Guide to Eastern Thought*. Madison, WI: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1979. Excellent philosophical treatment. (A)
21. Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. Argues that Christianity is growing most rapidly in third world contexts, and is taking on new non-Western forms. Also refutes the notion that Christian growth

- outside of the West has usually been imposed upon unwilling cultures. Compare this book to the earlier *Fire From Heaven* by Harvey Cox. (I)
22. Johnson, David L. *A Reasoned Look at Asian Religions*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1985. Good expository and apologetic material. (I)
 23. Kaufmann, Walter. *Religion in Four Dimensions: Existential, Aesthetic, Historical, Comparative*. New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1976. A fascinating book filled with Kaufmann's photographs, poems, and atheistic musings on religion. (I)
 24. Mangalwadi, Vishal. *The World of Gurus*. Chicago: Cornerstone Press, 1992. (I)
 25. Netland, Harold. *Dissonant Voices*. Regent Press, 1998; orig. pub. Eerdmans, 1991. Probably the best and most thorough evangelical treatment of the subject of religious pluralism. Moderately difficult but well-written and lucid. (I)
 26. Netland, Harold. *Encountering Religious Pluralism*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001. Elaborates and further develops themes from *Dissonant Voices*, but also contains new material on modernity, postmodernity, and other issues. Clearly written and penetrating. (I)
 27. Nash, Ronald. *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994. Good critique of John Hick and a defense of exclusivism. (I)
 28. Okholm, Dennis L. and Timothy Phillips, editors, *Salvation: Four Views*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995. Four authors debate the proper approach to non-Christian religions. (I)
 29. Smart, Ninian. *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*, 2nd ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1995. Explores the various dimensions of religions with a philosophical awareness.
 30. Stackhouse, John Jr., ed. *No Other Gods Before Me? Evangelicals and the Challenge of World Religions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001. Hexam and Mouw essays are particularly good.
 31. Yandell, Keith. *The Epistemology of Religious Experience*. Cambridge, 1993. Philosophical assessment of religious experience claims. (A)
 32. Yandell, Keith, *Philosophy of Religion*. Routledge, 1999. Strong analytic approach with an equally strong emphasis on comparative religious philosophy. (I)/(A)

III. RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

1. Ankerberg, John and John Weldon. *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1996. Quite thorough and generally on track. Probably a bit too negative on alternative medicine. Weldon is the primary author. (B)
2. Bowman, Robert. *Orthodoxy and Heresy: A Biblical Guide to Doctrinal Discernment*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1992. Well-informed and clearly written guide to biblical thinking about theologically errant groups. (B)/(I)
3. Clark, David and Norman Geisler. *Apologetics for the New Age*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990. Sadly out of print. Very thorough and philosophical. (I)/(A)
4. Chandler, Russell. *Understanding the New Age*, 1988. Christian journalist looks at the New Age movement. (B)
5. Edwards, Paul. *Reincarnation: A Critical Examination*. New York: Prometheus Press, 1996. A secular critique with many good logical points. (I)
6. Groothuis, Douglas. *Unmasking the New Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986. One of the first worldview analyses of the New Age movement from an evangelical perspective. (I)
7. Groothuis, Douglas. *Confronting the New Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988. (I) Oriented toward apologetic engagement and social action. (I)
8. Groothuis, Douglas. *Christianity That Counts*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995. Collection of essays, many of which address New Age concerns. (B)/(I)
9. Groothuis, Douglas. *Are All Religions One* (booklet). Downers Grove, IL:

- InterVarsity Press, 1996. Compares Christianity, Islam, and Nondualistic Hinduism. (I)
10. Guinness, Os. *The Dust of Death*, revised ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 1994. Still the best assessment of the counterculture, including its embrace of Eastern religion and occultism. (I)
 11. Heelas, Paul. *The New Age Movement*. Blackwell, 1996. Scholarly, sociological treatment. (I)
 12. Jenkins, Philip. *Hidden Gospels: How the Search for Jesus Lost Its Way*. New York: Oxford, 2001. Critique of exotic reconstructions-often New Age in orientation-of Jesus based on very liberal scholarship. (I)
 13. Martin, Walter R. *Kingdom of the Cults*, revised ed. Hank Hanegraaff, editor. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997. Revision of a classic work after the author's death in 1989. Most of the new work is not done by Hanegraaff. (B)/(I)
 14. Miller, Elliot. *A Crash Course on the New Age*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989. Excellent overview. (I)
 15. Newport, John. *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998. Compendium of materials on just about every aspect of the New Age movement. Little new research. (I)
 16. North, Gary. *Unholy Spirits*. Institute of Christian Economics, 1988. Emphasizes worldview critique. (I)
 17. Partridge, Christopher and Douglas Groothuis, eds. *Dictionary of Contemporary Religion in the Western World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002 (March). Features many articles on new religious movements, such as my entry "New Age Spiritualities." (I)
 18. Sire, James. *The Universe Next Door*, 3rd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997. Excellent chapters on Eastern pantheistic monism and New Age thought. (I)
 19. Sire, James. *Scripture Twisting: Twenty Ways Cults Misinterpret the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980. (I)
 20. Strohmer, Charles. *The Gospel and the New Spirituality*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson. Excellent on how to communicate the Gospel to New Age people. (B)