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Book Review: *La Bible et la Veda comme parole de Dieu: un essai en theologie comparée*

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***La Bible et la Veda comme parole de Dieu: un essai en theologie comparée.* George Chemparathy. De Nobili Research Library, Vienna University, Vienne 2010. xxviii + 373 pages.**

GEORGE Chemparathy, Emeritus Professor of Indian philosophy at the University of Utrecht (The Netherlands), is well known among the Indianists as a specialist in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. In particular, he has made a special study of, and published a book and some articles on Udayana's *Nyāyakusumañjali*, which is a monograph in very succinct Sanskrit, establishing the existence of God against the Indian deniers of God with no less than eighteen proofs. He also kept up a lifelong interest in Christian theology and has published major papers in the area of comparative theology.

The book under review originated as a doctoral thesis in theology, submitted to the Catholic University of Louvain in 1977 and has been dedicated by the author to his thesis supervisor Professor Julien Ries. It summarizes the work of a lifetime.

Before going into details of its contents, I would like to express my admiration for the stupendous scholarship displayed by the author: he is in command of all the source-languages of Bible and Veda and in addition makes use of secondary literature in another half-dozen classical and modern languages. All references are meticulously identified, and proofreading is near perfect.

The topic of the work is central to Hindu-Christian dialogue, and Chemparathy's way of dealing with it is exemplary. In Part One – "The Veda as Word of God" – Chemparathy clarifies the notion of *Veda*, its content and its

importance for Hindus. He examines the positions of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā philosophers on the authority of the Veda and explains their theory of Īśvara as the author of the Veda. Part Two contains a comparative theology of Veda and Bible, dealing with the claim to, and meaning of, "inspiration" in connection with Veda and Bible. He deals with their claim to truth as well as the question of the Vedic and Biblical canon. Central to his discussion is the observation that the Bible is essentially a 'scripture', i.e. writing, that is being read, whereas the Veda is communicated through speaking, i.e. an oral revelation, that is being heard.

Chemparathy not only presents the traditional positions in Christian and Hindu scholarship but also critically discusses more recent research, as presented at the 1975 Bangalore Research Seminar on Non-Biblical Scriptures. He examines in detail I. Vempeny's suggestion of 'analogical inspiration' with regard to Hindu scriptures.

Rather than developing his own idiosyncratic notions on scripture and revelation, Chemparathy elaborates and states the positions of recognized Hindu and Christian authorities. In the last paragraph he summarizes his findings in these words:

"At the end of our comparative study of Bible and Veda as word of God we have arrived at the following conclusion: The Bible – for Christians, on the one side – and the Veda – for Hindu thinkers of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, on the

other side – are both called ‘Word of God.’ Nevertheless, over and above the startling apparent similitude between the two Sacred Scriptures, our study has enabled us to discern the profound dissimilarities between the Christian and the Hindu conceptions of their own Sacred Scriptures as ‘Word of God.’ A better knowledge of the nature of the Veda as Word of God will help us – so we hope – to

better appreciate the Veda as Sacred Scripture of the Hindus.” (My translation)

The book is extremely informative, balanced in its approach and should be required reading for all who are interested in Hindu-Christian dialogue.

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***The Language of Disenchantment: Protestant Literalism and Colonial Discourse in British India.* Robert A. Yelle. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. xxii + 298 pages.**

TO expose the notion of disenchantment as myth is to draw into focus the questionable nature of modern secularity, thus re-establishing the ‘truths’ of history and the genealogy between Christianity and modernity. Robert A. Yelle, assistant professor in the Department of History and the Helen Hardin Honors Program at the University of Memphis, aims through his book *The Language of Disenchantment: Protestant Literalism and Colonial Discourse in British India*, to destabilize the myth of religious neutrality that fuels the illusion of a secular modernity. In this book, the British engagement with colonial India provides a robust case study for a more general inquiry into modernity, secularity, and “the roots of modern exceptionalism and disenchantment” (162).

Yelle’s *Language of Disenchantment* is written almost completely in response to the effects that the Christian Reformation had on the attitudes, characteristics, and modes of conduct of modernity. The idea that the Reformation inspired the modernization and secularization

of society was first developed by Max Weber in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Through globalization, the distribution patterns of secularization described by Weber have influenced the modernization of world cultures, thus leading to what has been termed ‘disenchantment’. Yelle—borrowing from Weber—takes ‘disenchantment’ to mean the following: “the decline of belief in miracles, mystery, and magic,” (7) which results in the creation of modernity. It is this exportation of disenchantment, from Christianity to world cultures, that Yelle aims to discuss in this book—in particular, *The Language of Disenchantment* focuses on the British colonial endeavor in India, and the colonial effort to bring allegedly-secular Western modernity to India.

The notion of disenchantment is treated as an historical and linguistic event by Yelle—a treatment that through the book sometimes risks being read as a modification of historical data to suit a new history of modernity.