

On the Distinction Between Cosmic and Historical Revelation: Its Value and Limitations

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I first met Father Bede more than twenty years ago on my first visit to India. I spent three weeks at Shantivanam and had the opportunity there of engaging in two extensive conversations with him in his hut. The discussions revolved around the relation of theology to experience and of Hinduism to Christianity. I do not recall that the issue of cosmic and historical revelation came up, but I do remember Bede calling attention to the convergence of wisdom across religious boundaries and recommending that I read Seyyed Hossein Nasr's *Knowledge and the Sacred*. He also emphasized the need to pass beyond all words and concepts about the Divine in order to attain to the direct experience of God.

A year later, while still in India, I visited Father Bede again at Shantivanam on a wedding trip with my wife Mariam to receive his blessing. I did not see him again until a year before his death when he gave two talks at a Hindu ashram in Michigan.

I had already been reading Bede's works years before I met him, but it was not until I returned from India (after a five-year research visit) and began teaching at Notre Dame that I realized the significance of his distinction between cosmic and historical revelation. In a class I teach comparing Christianity with other religions one of the books we read is Bede's *The Cosmic Revelation*. This is a very good introduction to Hindu wisdom and experience as it is articulated in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita. I can think of no better introduction in English to the wisdom and spirit of the Upanishads than chapters three and four of this little book. And in the final chapter Bede brings Hindu thought into relation with Christian teaching and spirituality. It is here that the distinction between cosmic and historical revelation is formally addressed.

Many Revelations

Already at the outset of *The Cosmic Revelation* Father Bede addresses the crucial question of multiple revelations, even though he does not yet distinguish between cosmic and historical types:

We are going to reflect on what I call the Vedic Revelation; and I use the word revelation intentionally because I think we have to recognize today that God has revealed Himself in other ways than through the Bible. God has been speaking to man, "in many and various ways," as it says in the letter to the Hebrews, from the beginning of time.

Today we are aware of the presence in other religions of a wisdom and experience of God which challenges the Church. I feel that we are really entering a new epoch. For almost two thousand years the Christian Church grew up with the understanding that it alone was the true religion; that there was no religion outside Christianity which

was not fundamentally false, or at best no more than a natural religion. Only today, in these last few years, have Christians begun to discover the riches which God has lavished on other nations.

To say, as Bede does, that other religions are founded on revelation is a far-reaching assertion that pushes beyond the affirmation of other religions as articulated at Vatican II (1962-1965). It is well known that this Council, for the first time in the history of the Catholic Church, formally articulated a theological position that praised other religions because of their wisdom, values, and practices. Grace and divine providence are universally at work, it is said, and they are thus operative in the religions. In particular Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are treated with high regard, for they manifest not only goodness, but also truth and holiness. It is said further that Catholics are encouraged to collaborate with members of these religions for the establishment of peace and justice on a world-wide scale.

But nowhere in *Nostra Aetate* is the word "revelation" used in regard to other religions, nor is any reference made to a possible pre-biblical universal revelation or to a plurality of revelations. The nearest assertion of a non-Christian revelation is the document's statement that in Islam God is "Speaker to men." Yet this phrase is nothing more than a summary of the standard Muslim position. Nor does this document assert that Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, otherwise so highly extolled, might offer important truths largely unknown or underdeveloped in the Catholic tradition. On the contrary, *Nostra Aetate* openly acknowledges that there are disagreements in doctrine between Christianity and other religions. One gets the sense in reading this text that while there are truths in other religions, these truths are limited and mixed with error. Vatican II's reluctance to attribute revelation to other religions is therefore understandable if the essential teachings of other religions are not regarded as being entirely free of error. Christianity, by contrast, is seen by the Church as founded on revelation, and its essential teachings are therefore infallible. And today, more than forty years after the Council, this reluctance to formally acknowledge any revelation outside biblical revelation is still the official position taken by the Catholic Church.

Father Bede, by contrast, goes well beyond Vatican II and all post-Vatican II magisterial documents when he explicitly declares that Hinduism and other religions are indeed founded on divine revelation. It is not inconceivable that at a future Vatican III the Church might adopt Bede's idea of multiple revelations, but such a teaching would have to be articulated in such a way that the central and traditional role of Christ in the divine plan for salvation would not be compromised, if the Church is to remain faithful to its origins and its proclamation of Good News. Vatican III might in fact embrace Father Bede's Christ-centered pluralism, since in it Christ remains normative and absolute in the grand sweep of the Divine plan encompassing not only all religions, but also all of humanity. Perhaps Father Bede anticipated such a future Council as he challenged us to consider the possibility that God has revealed Godself in multiple ways to the world with Christ at the center.

It is worth remarking that such a Christ-centered theology of multiple revelations

has been at the forefront of much discussion and controversy in Catholic theological circles since the late 1990s, focusing especially on the work of the late Jacques Dupuis, S.J. Dupuis called his theology of religions “inclusive pluralism,” and “mutual asymmetrical complementarity,” the latter expression emphasizing the central role of Christ vis-à-vis other religions. It is not surprising that Dupuis and Bede Griffiths converged on 1. the notion of multiple revelations in the one universal divine plan, 2. the finality and decisiveness of revelation in Christ, and 3. the capability of other religions to deepen and enrich the Christian understanding of God and Christ. For Dupuis explicitly acknowledged his debt to Father Bede’s thought in both his last two books.

Doctrinal Complementarity and Conflict

But the issue of multiple revelations raises further perplexing questions: How exactly do the different revelations relate to one another? Can all be considered definitive and absolute? Might some revelations be more significant or perhaps more comprehensive in scope than others, i.e. might there be a hierarchy of truths among them? What exactly is the role of Christ in a world of multiple revelations? And how do we account for the fact, if we understand God to be Truth Itself, that the revelations sometimes clash in what they teach? And, finally, how does one theologically respond to these doctrinal conflicts?

Those who espouse a plurality of revelations sometimes promote also the principle of complementarity to explain the relations between religions. This is true of thinkers as different as Bede Griffiths and John Hick. According to the principle of complementarity the doctrinal differences between the various religions should be regarded as mutually completing and enriching. When taken together they give us a far bigger conceptual picture of the Divine Mystery, much like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, than the view of truth offered by a single piece. One puzzle piece, that is to say the particular teaching of any given religion, is helpful, but many pieces, when fit together, present a much more comprehensive understanding of the Divine, Its relation to us, and the ultimate goal of liberation. The principle of complementarity thus stresses the theoretical harmony of religions. We will see that this is the position Bede generally takes when he reflects on the relation of cosmic and historical revelation.

Though this approach to variant revelations characterizes the writings of both Griffiths and Hick, there is one significant difference between the two men. It is the way they address the problem of conflicting truth claims. Not all doctrinal differences, after all, can be harmoniously fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Some, as we have seen, are in conflict. Bede and Hick respond differently to the challenge of doctrinal disharmony among the religions. When faced with the problem of “conflicting truth claims,” the Hickian model refuses to commit to one particular teaching or religion over another. In our temporal world, where our perspective on truth is necessarily limited, no one revelation, religion, spiritual path, experience, event, value or religious figure can claim a privileged status over any other. Final answers to such questions of ultimate truth will only be given in the eschaton, not here on earth, according to Hick. This means that all teachings are at best relatively or provisionally true, and no teaching can yet be embraced as absolutely true.

Christ himself is therefore relativized; he is a great religious figure and teacher, but no more important than other famous figures of the past such as the Buddha, Krishna, or Muhammad. And so Christian revelation, whose primary content is the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, is itself relativized; it is simply one revelation alongside many others.

Bede's response to conflicting truth claims takes an entirely different approach than that of Hick and, by Christian standards, it is one that is entirely orthodox. On the second page of *The Cosmic Revelation* Bede writes: "And where there is anything challenging, let it be tested by whether it is true to Christ and to what God has revealed in Christ, and let us try to see other religions in their relation to him." So, unlike Hick, and very much in keeping with Vatican II and the whole Christian tradition, when it comes to conflicting truth claims, Bede makes the revelation of Christ normative and non-negotiable. While some of the teachings of other religions may be regarded as complementary, others will be seen to be incompatible with what God has revealed definitively in Christ. Bede's is thus a *Christ-centered pluralism*. It is a pluralism, first of all, because it espouses a plurality of revelations and, second, because it adheres to the principle of complementarity. It is Christ-centered, because Christ is the sole fully historical incarnation of divine truth and love in its fullness. As a consequence, there are non-negotiable teachings revealed in Christ, for example, that God is personal, that love is the highest value, that human life in its totality has a meaning and purpose, that the final goal of life is transformation of the entire created order, both material and spiritual.

But what is not clear in Bede's work is this: if all religions are founded on divine revelation, how then can there be conflicts in doctrine? Bede says simply, "There are defects, no doubt, in every scripture where God and man work together, but there is something of the 'word' of God in the Vedas." It would be helpful if Bede were to elaborate further what he means by this, but he does not. He does not tell us how exactly the divine and human cooperate in the articulation of scripture or how it is possible that the revelation of other religions is not preserved from error in its written form. One gets a sense that, while a genuine encounter with the Ultimate has been made in various ways by followers of other religions, its articulation is not free of error.

Moreover, to say that there are "defects in every scripture where God and man work together" is to impose a model of revelation on other traditions that they themselves do not hold. Bede knows this. The Qur'an, he notes, is understood by Muslims to be delivered through a process of revelation which is a word-for-word divine dictation through an angel. There is no human component here in the formulation of the revelation itself. Likewise, the standard Hindu understanding of Vedic revelation is that it is without human authorship. The source of the Vedas is an entirely transcendent one. But, for Bede, these scriptures should be regarded as fallible when they are in conflict with Christian revelation, and the cause of their error is their *human* source. And so, unlike both the Muslim and Vedic understandings of the revelational process, Bede regards both of them as deriving from a *human experience* of the Absolute. All revelation has an experiential, and therefore human, basis, according to Bede. All religions have a mystical core and origin.

We are now at the point where we may begin examining the distinction between

cosmic and historical revelation. What we have seen thus far, by way of summary, is that for Bede the revelations given by God are numerous, that for the most part – but not always - they are mutually completing and enriching, and that Christ stands out as *the* revelation by which all others are judged and appreciated.

Cosmic and Historical Revelation

Perhaps the most foundational and significant distinction in Bede's system is that between cosmic revelation and historical revelation. These types of revelation unveil the two fundamental ways in which the divine is present to our world. This distinction runs through most of Bede's later works and is, I believe, for the reader of his books the foundational point of departure for appreciating from a Christian theological perspective the value of the so-called "religions of the East" and of religions everywhere. "The one Reality," he says, "God, Truth, Spirit, by whatever name we choose to call it, has been manifesting itself from the beginning in all creation and in all human history and in every human consciousness."

Before I summarize the content of cosmic revelation, it is first worth emphasizing its geographical breadth. Cosmic revelation is to be found potentially everywhere in the world. Bede speaks of the "revelation of the divine mystery, which took place in Asia, in Hinduism and Buddhism, in Taoism, Confucianism and Shintoism. Nor can we neglect the intuitive wisdom of more primitive people, the Australian Aborigines, the Polynesian Islanders, the African Bushmen, the American Indians, the Eskimoes. All over the world the supreme Spirit has left signs of his presence." In other passages he includes cosmic revelation even in religions that he normally associates with historical revelation, such as Christianity and Islam. Though this cosmic revelation can be found in virtually all quarters of the world across time, "it may be said without exaggeration that Hinduism represents the culmination of this cosmic revelation and stands today as a witness to the whole world of the length and the breadth and the height and the depth of this universal cosmic revelation."

What, then, is cosmic revelation? For Bede,

It is the revelation which God makes to all men through nature and the soul. . . It is the intuition of Being in pure consciousness, which underlies the whole tradition of Hindu religion. . . This is not a merely rational knowledge of God. It is knowledge by intuition or by experience. The soul passes beyond both sense and reason and reaches the eternal ground of its being and knows itself by the direct experience of God present in the inmost depth, the "cave of the heart". . . This then is the "revelation" which God has given to India, a revelation of himself as the ground of being and the source of consciousness and the goal of absolute bliss.

The cosmic insight is an awakening to the divine mystery within all creation, to the all-pervasive presence of God in nature and the soul. Here the divine is known, in the words of Jacques Dupuis, in the "depths of oneself" rather than in the "events of history." It involves a passing to a higher state of consciousness through a new inner awareness,

whereby “the self discovers a new dimension of its being” and “goes beyond itself and awakens to the ground of its being in self-transcendence.” The Absolute is here experienced as present to the soul as quiescent blissful Ground, as the changeless eternal Reality behind and pervading the passing appearances of time. Here one awakens to an interior unity of being and consciousness, a non-duality of the finite and infinite. For Father Bede, this insight or intuition of Being and Ground comes “from the presence of the Spirit in the depths of the soul.”

Bede sometimes called cosmic revelation the “primeval revelation” and the “Primitive revelation.” For him there are thus two *stages* of revelation, first the cosmic or primeval, then the historical. Historical revelation is a revelation of the Absolute *additional* to cosmic revelation, one that throws new light on both the created order and on the nature of the Divine and of the divine will for the world. Historical revelation gives to the world and to the human a value that is generally lacking in religions that focus on the cosmic presence alone. In cosmic revelation the discovery of the infinite as the true Reality and highest spiritual goal often threatens to diminish the value of the finite and material. Though the world is perceived as a symbol or expression of the Divine it has itself no final purpose or goal. Such a vision of life can lead to a spirituality that seeks to transcend or pass beyond the human and the material instead of striving for its completion, fulfillment and integration into the divine life. This is especially true of spiritualities that focus exclusively on interior experience.

By contrast, historical revelation, witnessed to by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, unveils the liberating activity of God in history on behalf of the world. God is not simply the hidden inactive and quiescent Ground behind all finite realities, the changeless “Real of the real,” the great silent Mystery, but is also active participant in world history, leading the world and humanity to their proper end and goal of transformation and completion in the Supreme. Bede speaks here of “God’s action in history, of the one, eternal Being acting in time and history and bringing this world of time and change into union with himself.” Here the bodily and societal, not just the spiritual dimension of human existence, are experienced as the beneficiaries of the divine mercy and ethical commands. God is present to human history in a dialogical encounter of call-and-response, as active holy will, as the giver of ethical commands, as intervening power for the liberation of the oppressed, as demander of justice and mercy. The material world and the human person in its entirety, both body and soul, are therefore sanctified and given value by God’s presence in the history of Israel and finally in the Incarnation itself. In this understanding of the divine actively present in the give-and-take of time and history, the ultimate orientation is to the future that God is bringing about, a future in which God will be fully revealed and the world transformed in what Jesus called the “Reign of God.”

Now prior to historical revelation God is already present to the world as its source and ground. And the experience of the Absolute in cosmic revelation, under whatever name or symbol, is already a beatifying and salvific one, an experience whose requisite is the death of all ego-centeredness and selfish desire. But this experience of Being itself and pure consciousness, even when enriched with the experience of divine personhood, mercy, and grace, knows yet nothing of a divine will or intent for the world’s transformation.

There is no talk here of the integration or completion of the visible world, simply because it is not part of the data of this particular revelation. Such information has not yet been given. It is Father Bede's claim that followers of religions centered on cosmic revelation could benefit from the biblical revelation of the meaning and goal of history and human existence. And so, when in cosmic revelation the value of the human person is at best an unanswered question, historical revelation in its affirmation of the person would be completing and complementary, but where the value of the human person in its entirety is rejected in favor of any form of anthropological dualism, historical revelation would necessarily serve as a corrective.

It is also true that the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament know little about God as nondualistic Ground. The biblical authors witness rather to the Creator as dynamic Other intervening in inter-human relations and in the politics of nations, leading history to its preordained goal of justice and peace. This understanding of God, even if correct, can easily lead to certain misunderstandings, for example, that God is best conceived anthropomorphically, or that God is an objectifiable though hidden entity living among other entities within the universe rather than Being itself. Cosmic revelation might serve to correct such misconceptions and also expand traditional notions of divine presence and absoluteness.

Cosmic revelation also enlarges our awareness of life beyond the human. "We have become too human, too limited in our vision of life," writes Bede. He goes on to say:

The danger of Christianity today is that it over-emphasizes the importance of matter and science and history and human progress in this world striving for a better world. All these things have their value, of course, but the danger is that they absorb all our energies and all our attention. Yet we know that all is going to lead in the end to death. Death is the end of everything, unless there is a resurrection. And so the modern Christian view needs to be complemented with the constant awareness which the Hindu has of the eternal dimension of being.

(more to be added here on cosmic revelation)

Appraisal

My concluding remarks will address what I perceive to be the strengths and possible weaknesses of Father Bede's distinction between cosmic and historical revelation. First the strengths:

1. I think, first of all, that Bede's claim about historical revelation bringing a deepened awareness of the value of the human person, of society, and of the material world is not only a valid point, but also very significant for our age. This prophetic and eschatological vision of life keeps our attention focused on issues of societal injustice and exploitation and prevents us from withdrawing into a spirituality of pure interiority. To combat societal and all other forms of injustice is to do the very will of God, according to the biblical witness; such injunctions lie at the very heart of historical revelation. But, as

Bede points out, eschatology is of very little interest to Hindus (with few exceptions) and to other religions outside the pale of historical revelation. Bede's emphasis on the value of historical revelation will find little receptivity among Hindus and Buddhists, but the message needs to be emphasized with great urgency in our time. Preserving the unity of the material and the spiritual is one of the enduring goals of historical revelation. Our life in the body, our life with others, and our life in the world is part of the totality of our life in God. This is as true for Judaism and Islam as it is for Christianity.

2. Father Bede, together with other European Catholic theologians living in India such as Swami Abhishiktananda, Raimon Panikkar, Sara Grant, and Richard De Smet (though these five do not always agree in their conclusions), have written about the value for Christians of exposure to the enlightenment spirituality of the Upanishads and Shankara (ca. 700 C.E.). Their work illustrates well the nature and value of cosmic revelation, i.e. the unveiling of God's presence to "nature and the soul," as Bede so often says. Though the writings of these five contemplative-scholars engage only a single – though influential – Hindu tradition, and despite certain ambiguities as to the ontological status of the world in Upanishadic and Advaita teaching, Hindu teachings on non-duality in general represent a powerful example of the significance and value of cosmic revelation, of interiority, and of the need to attain a unitive higher state of consciousness, freedom, and self-realization. Bede's focus on Hindu non-duality enables him to guide the reader to a broader understanding of the divine mystery and divine presence in the world, of the mystery of creation and selfhood, and of liberation itself than that customarily presented in Christian theology alone. Through Bede one gains a strong sense of the complementarity of Hindu nondualistic enlightenment experience and the Christian experience of divine love active in time and creation. The principle of complementarity gives greater value to religions founded on cosmic/interior experience; they are not simply relegated to a natural striving after truth.

3. To assert a revelational basis to other religions, as Bede does, is a theological issue that needs to be discussed more extensively in contemporary Catholic thought. The notion that other religions might be recipients of very different insights into the one divine mystery and that, further, conversation with them could lead to a deepening of Christian insight about God and Christ need not lead to an inevitable relativism and indifferentism. I think one of the strengths of Bede's theology is his fidelity in dialogue to Christian revelation and tradition; he is unwilling to sacrifice doctrinal non-negotiables, such as the central role of Christ in the divine plan of salvation, for the sake of dialogue. If Christ is, as the Christian tradition has maintained, the unique Incarnation of God, the sole historical instance of the complete union of the Divine and the human, could not the Christian encounter with the teachings of other religions serve to deepen our understanding and appreciation of this fact? Might we thereby come to an even more expansive realization of the significance of Christ? It should be pointed out, however, that Bede's theological understanding of Christ is not always unified; he appears to waver between a Logos-christology and a Spirit-christology. But this need not be seen as a weakness.

Alongside the *achievement* of Bede's distinction between cosmic and historical revelation there are, I believe, also certain *problems and ambiguities* with his approach:

1. As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to attribute the same word “revelation” to teachings that are in conflict. Part of the problem is that for Bede “revelation” is definitive and without error when used in the Christian context, yet in need of purification from error when used in regard to other religions. “Revelation” is also at times broadly synonymous with general mystical experience and intuitive wisdom.

2. Bede has sometimes been criticized for making sweeping generalizations about religions, for a simplistic cataloguing and categorizing of traditions into Eastern and Western types, or masculine and feminine. The category of “cosmic revelation” is likewise a very broad one, a kind of umbrella term covering many different experiences of interior transcendence and insight. But certainly Theravada Buddhists would not want the Buddha’s experience of enlightenment with its denial of all selfhood to be regarded as harmonious with that of the Upanishadic seers and their experience of the absolute Self. Has Bede overlooked significant differences in such experiences in his quest to synthesize? A closer examination of the particulars of the different religions would be useful here.

3. In presenting the content of cosmic revelation Bede gives special attention to Hindu teachings. It is certainly the religion he knows best outside his own. More importantly, Bede appears to privilege it because its teaching is unusually comprehensive and subtle; the Upanishads and Vedanta, for example, witness to the non-duality and the presence of God as the deep Self and Ground, while the Bhagavad-Gita proclaims a real personhood of God and gives witness to divine grace and love. All this derives from cosmic revelation. Nevertheless, questions could be raised, for example, about reducing Hindu doctrine to Vedantic teaching, when Hinduism is so much more, so amazingly wide-ranging and diverse. Equally problematic for some of Bede’s critics is the validity of his claim of an almost monolithic Hindu understanding of certain doctrines, for example the teaching about cyclical – and therefore purposeless – time. For when one looks more carefully at Hindu texts and teachings things appear to be more complex. As Jacqueline Hirst suggests, “to contrast a Hindu repetitive cyclical view of time with a Western linear one is too stark. There is not just one Hindu (nor indeed one Western) scheme of time.” If there is anything we have recently learned from comparative theology it is that we must avoid generalizing about religions, and the way that we do this is by paying greater attention to the particular, in all its manifestations. Bede’s emphasis, by contrast, is on certain universal experiences of transcendence more than on the particulars of religions.

And yet after such reservations about Bede’s project, I find myself deeply sympathetic to it. One of the things notably prominent in the work of much comparative theology today is an almost excessive emphasis on the particular, especially on individual texts, to the point that anything like the broad fundamentals of a religion are overlooked. The fact is, almost all Hindus do believe in reincarnation, as Bede says; they are therefore dualistic in their anthropology, and they do not subscribe to individual or cosmic transformation in a future eschaton. These doctrines they regard as a strength of their religion when compared to the teachings of the major Semitic religions. They consider reincarnation and dualism to be foundational to what it means to be a Hindu, regardless of sect. It is these majority positions within Hinduism and Christianity that are the focus of Bede’s attention. But instead of simply noting their incompatibilities Bede seeks to uncover

the underlying spiritual – even revelatory – experiences that gave rise to these doctrines. In taking this approach, whether right or wrong, he seeks to honor the depth and beauty of other religions and the God who has lavished so much upon them.

New York: Crossroad, 1981.
Springfield, Illinois: Templegate, 1983.
Cosmic Revelation, 7.

The extent to which Vatican II affirms the validity of other religions has been much debated. Cf. the summary by Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997), pp. 161-170.

Nostra Aetate ().
Nostra Aetate

Nostra Aetate

Cf. here Paul Knitter, *No Other Name?* , p. .

See especially *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* and *Christianity and the Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001).

Cf. *Toward a Christian Theology*, 242, 278-279; *Christianity and the Religions* 105, 123. But Dupuis was also critical of Bede's Trinitarian theology; cf. *Toward a Christian Theology*, 267-268. It is clear that Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri Le Saux) had an even greater impact on Dupuis than did Father Bede, especially in regard to recognizing the depth of the Hindu experience of interiority and non-duality. See here George Gispert-Sauch, S.J., "Jacques Dupuis and Swami Abhishiktananda," *In Many and Diverse Ways: In Honor of Jacques Dupuis*, ed. Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins (Maryknoll, Orbis, 2003), pp. 146-157.

See my "Swami Vivekananda and Bede Griffiths on Religious Pluralism: Hindu and Christian Approaches to Truth," *Horizons* 25 (1998):217-237.

Father Bede's Christology is one of the topics to be covered at our conference.

Two well-known examples of "conflicting truth claims" are 1. the Christian affirmation of Jesus' divinity and its denial by Islam and 2. the Christian rejection of Hindu and Buddhist teachings on reincarnation. All these doctrines are foundational and normative to their respective traditions.

See note 14.

Cosmic Revelation, p. 8. On p. 17 he adds,
See note 8. See also "Moksa in Christianity."

Cosmic Revelation, p. 8.

One encounters a similar silence on this point in the works of Dupuis.

Cosmic Revelation, p. 9. The dictation goes first from Allah to the angel Jibrael and is then dictated verbatim by Jibrael to the Prophet Muhammad.

Cosmic Revelation, p. 9.

For some of what follows see my "Swami Vivekananda and Bede Griffiths on Religious Pluralism," (note 12 above).

Marriage of East and West, p. 33. Cf. similarly on p. 38: "God is revealing himself at all times to all men in all circumstances."

Marriage of East and West, p. 202.

"... the cosmic vision, which is common to all religious tradition from the most primitive tribal religions to the great world religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity." *Marriage of East and West*, p. 51.

Griffiths, "The Sources of Indian Spirituality," *Indian Spirituality in Action*, preface by Joseph Cardinal Parecattil (Bombay: Asian Trading Corporation, 1973), pp. 63-65.

“Sources of Indian Spirituality,” pp. 63-66.

Cosmic Revelation, pp. 109-110.

Jesus Christ at the Encounter of World Religions (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), p. 48.

Marriage of East and West, p. 161.

Marriage of East and West, p. 199.

Cited by Judson Trapnell, *Bede Griffiths: A Life in Dialogue* (Albany: SUNY, 2001), pp. 89, 103.

Bede Griffiths, *The New Creation in Christ*. Edited Robert Kiely and Laurence Freeman. London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1992, pp. 95-96.

Find Upanishads quote.

Marriage of East and West, p. 177.

Cf. *Cosmic Revelation*, pp. 120-121.

Cf. similarly J. A. Di Noia's distinction between “God's personal (and not merely causal) presence to his people in love and mercy.” *The Diversity of Religions* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), p. 86.

This is true even of the Bhagavad-Gita.

The teachings of Sri Aurobindo are a notable exception here, but his affirmation of the value of matter derives more from his education in the sciences while a young man living in England than they originate with his Hindu heritage. It is well known that Father Bede regarded Aurobindo as one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century. I have heard but cannot confirm that Bede spent eight years studying carefully the works of this philosopher-yogi-saint.

See *Cosmic Revelation*, pp. 119-122.

Such dualism is, of course, also widely present among Christians not well grounded in biblical revelation. In place of resurrection the Christian hope is then sometimes articulated as the disembodied soul's ascent to heaven.

In a conversation at Shantivanam in June 1984 Bede lamented to me the widespread popular Christian dualistic understanding of God and world, a view which is finally unbiblical. See also a similar concern expressed by Karl Rahner in “Welt in Gott. Zum christlichen Schöpfungsbegriff,” in Andreas Bsteh, ed., *Sein als Offenbarung in Christentum und Hinduismus* (Modling, Austria: St. Gabriel, 1984), pp. 74-75.

Cosmic Revelation, p. 38.

Cosmic Revelation, p. 128.

This lack of interest in the eschatological completion of created reality in all its dimensions is typical of the writings of Bede's fellow monastic, Swami Abhishiktananda (Henri Le Saux), whose work I otherwise find intellectually stimulating and spiritually nourishing. Swamiji is less orthodox than Bede and Sara Grant in both his eschatology and Christology.

See here my “Advaita Vedanta and Christian Faith,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36 (1999):397-422.

On Logos-christology Bede writes: “When I say, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,’ I think of Jesus as the Word of God . . . I believe that the Word took flesh in Jesus of Nazareth and in him we can find a personal form of the Word to whom we can pray and to whom we can relate in terms of love and intimacy, but I think that he makes himself known to others under different names and forms.” Cited in Trapnell, *Bede Griffiths*, pp. 152-153. Elsewhere he adds: “We do not believe in words or in doctrines, we believe in a mystery, the Mystery of Christ, the Word of God, that is beyond words and beyond thought.” Cited in Trapnell, p. 161.

On Spirit-christology (though Bede does not use this term), cf. *Marriage of East and West*, p. 187: “In Jesus a man was found, fully a man and centered in history, a Jew of Palestine in the first century, in whom there was no defect; body and soul were so perfectly under the control of the indwelling Spirit, that they became its instruments, responding totally to its impulse. In him the Spirit was not limited by a defective body and soul, but could act freely, expressing the will of the Father at every moment, surrendering to his will to the point of death on the Cross, and in the Resurrection, taking complete possession of body and soul, so as to transfigure them by its power. Jesus therefore was a man, in whom body and soul were pure instruments of the indwelling Spirit. In him the destiny of man has been fulfilled.”

Cf. Trapnell, *Bede Griffiths*, p. 199.

See here Jacqueline Suthren Hirst, “Myth and History,” *Themes and Issues in Hinduism*, ed. Paul Bowen (London and Washington: Cassell, 1998), pp. 105-131; Julius Lipner, *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. ; Arvind Sharma, *Hinduism and Its Sense of History* (New

Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Hirst, "Myth and History," p. 123.

Cf. similarly the work of some important post-Vatican II Catholic comparativists such as Heinrich Dumoulin, for example, a contemporary of Father Bede who lived in Japan as a scholar appreciative of Buddhism and a practitioner of its meditation methods. Dumoulin often spoke of the foundational irreconcilable differences between Buddhism and Christianity, focusing on the very same themes as Bede, especially as regards the Buddhist and Christian treatment of the ontological status and value of the human person. See also the recent work of Paul Williams on the Buddhist-Christian encounter.

See Pennington's distinction between "hard" and "'soft" essentialism.