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Item Type	Article
Authors	Röhr, Heinz
Publisher	Frankfurt University
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-05 15:11:42
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/191145

Journal of Religious Culture

Journal für Religionskultur

Ed. by / Hrsg. von Edmund Weber

Institute for Irenics / Institut für Wissenschaftliche Irenik
Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main
ISSN 1434-5935 - © E.Weber

No. 14 (1998)

Bhakti and Christian Faith
according to Rudolf Otto (1869-1937)[1]

By

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[Translated from German by Michael Vogt]

This study is obliged to the "Marburg School of the Science of Religions" (R. Otto, H. Frick, K. Goldammer, E. Benz). The methodological concept follows the comparison of religions, as it is classically demonstrated by R. Otto in his work about "West-östliche Mystik"[1] concerning the contrasting of Shankara and Meister Eckhart. That the comparison of the figures of the masters which is practised in this school may yield good results is also proved by G. Mensching, Otto's disciple in Bonn, in his book on "Buddha und Christus - ein Vergleich"[2] and H. Frick, Otto's successor on the Marburg chair in Systematic Theology, in his early treatise upon "Ghazalis Selbstbiographie. Ein Vergleich mit Augustins Konfessionen"[3][4]. Special emphasis should be given to the attempt of F. Heiler who as early as in 1918 contrasts Buddha as a "master of contemplation" to Jesus as a "master of prayer" in his work "Die buddhistische Versenkung"[5]. All the mentioned attempts are based on the eminent enquiries in the field of the common history of religions and the psychology of religion as R. Otto's "Das Heilige" [6] and F. Heiler's "Das Gebet"[7]. Worth mentioning is also the comprehensive study of the Marburg church historian and distinguished authority of the Asian religious world, E. Benz, about "Die Vision"[8]. Benz, also a disciple of R. Otto, was a famous researcher of mysticism and spiritualism as well (Joachim of Floris, J. Böhme, E. Swedenborg).

[1] First edition: see STUDIA IRENICA 33

In addition to the comparison of the figures of the masters there has always existed the contrasting of so called "religious top-values". I refer to the thin booklet on "Glaube, Liebe, Leiden in Christentum und Buddhismus"[9] with the important contribution by C. H. Ratschow [10] about "Leiden und Leidensaufhebung im Buddhismus und im Christentum". Of importance for our theme is the dissertation from K. Hutten on "Die Bhakti-Religion in Indien und der christliche Glaube im NT"[11] which is vitally based on the inquiries and translations of R. Otto.

The purpose of our study cannot be to recapitulate this work of research. Neither is it possible to come to fundamental new results by renewed contrasting of the texts (e. g. from the Gita and New Testament). F. Weinrich has already demonstrated this in 1935 for I Corinthians c. 13 and the Ittivuttakam, the Buddhist "Song of Songs" (including an inquiry into Bhakti) [12]. And, after all, a translation of the Gita which is sufficient for our purpose does exist in R. Garbe's "Indien und das Christentum"[13]. But I think it's obvious to inquire into the presentation and estimation of the bhakti in the "Marburg School" (and its vicinity) and especially into R. Otto's. It could be worth-while following the tracks of his interpretation of the bhakti in the German speaking countries and to compare them with other research methodologies, for instance in N. Söderblom's "Der lebendige Gott in der Religionsgeschichte"[14] or in Th. Ohm's "Die Liebe zu Gott in den nichtchristlichen Religionen"[15].

Hence, on principle the comparison in the history of religions is affirmed as an irreplaceable instrument for the comprehensional approach to the phenomena of a foreign religion. This implies the affirmation of the fundamental possibility to "comprehend" foreign religion which in that case does not remain "foreign" but makes the dialogue at all possible as a partner in an open meeting [16]. The non-interchangeable characteristics of the respective religions should not be equalised by comparison, but on the contrary should the other religion's typical individual genius ("Sondergeist", R. Otto), the gist of its sense and life be especially accentuated. This inquiry affirms and emphasises the famous statement by R. Otto: "That what makes our dogmatics so long and thick, exactly that is 'universal' and fifty percent of our theological ruses on inspiration, trinitarian speculation, incarnation, kyriology and sacrament could be transformed into Hindu and Buddhist systems. But in spite of all analogies one cannot transfer the parable of the lost son to the Gita or the bhakti-yoga to the Koran or the Faticha to the New Testament without making oneself guilty of the most deplorable break in style"[17].

Of course there is all the difference of the world between such a procedure and any form of dogmatic Christian claim to absolute truth, as it unfortunately has been established to a large extent in the continental protestant theology in the wake of K. Barth's "Dialectic Theology". A judgement on the Indian bhakti like that of K. Barth is not only unloving and unchristian, but also from the point of view of the science of comparative religions (which should work without any presuppositions) it is untenable. In his gigantic work on dogmatics Barth writes full 23 lines about the Indian piety of bhakti. In the beginning he defines quite correctly: "Bhakti is the act of complete devotion and surrender, in which one's own will is entirely engaged in the service of somebody else, and which bears the chance to become an act of personal hearty affection and love." But after a short notice concerning the opposition of the "cat-system" and the "ape-system" it is stated that in bhakti-religion "we're nevertheless in a totally different world than in that Japanese religion of grace and entirely than in Christianity. It would have to be quite a bad variety of modern protestant Christianity, which should feel kinsman-like attracted by these religions (sic !) of bhakti"[18].

Just before Barth has described the Japanese Amida-Buddhism as the "most precise, inclusive and illuminating 'pagan' parallel" to the reformatory Christianity, only to disqualify its followers (like all the adherents of "heathen" religions) as "miserable, completely lost pagans". Barth hammers the idea into our heads that "there is only one thing which is decisive of truth and untruth concerning the religions. This one and only is the name of Jesus Christ"[19]. Barth could have known better from the writings of R. Otto! (Barth doesn't mention any au-

thority for his presentation of bhakti, as concerns the Japanese Amida-Buddhism he refers to P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye ("Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte") and Tiele-Söderblom ("Kompendium der Religionsgeschichte").

Let us draw a short parallel between this and what N. Söderblom says about bhakti and Christianity: "Nowhere else in India we meet the living God like here. Warren Hastings was right when he wrote that from all known religions it is this one which is next to Christianity"[20]. And Otto himself: "There is no doubt that in the doctrine of Ishvara, bhakti and prapatti the development of western and eastern religions has almost come to a point of contact"[21].

Otto had started to study Sanscrit and to read the holy texts during his first voyage to India in the Himalayas. That was a very exceptional project for a professor in dogmatics who was already in his age. No other German theologian has gained a reputation in the field of indological research as R. Otto did. The Sanscrit texts lay always open in his Marburg study: by means of reading and translating he entered into the spirit of the Indian religion in an intense manner. A remarkable series of translations is the result of his efforts [22]. In particular the two volumes "Vishnu-Narayana" and "Siddhanta des Ramanuja" were widely propagated. When "West-östliche Mystik" was concerned with the inter-religious comparison (Shankara and Meister Eckhart), so here Otto devoted himself to the inner-Hinduistic discrepancy between Shankara's advaita-philosophy and the faithful and confident love to the Lord (Ishvara), Ramanuja's god of redemption. Otto states: "Two great principles are wrestling with each other in Shankara and Ramanuja who only play the parts. This almost scary wonderful, world cancelling, in the final analysis irrational, inconceivable, undefinable All-in-One of theopanistic mysticism wrestles with the Lord, the feeling, desiring, personal, rational, loving and beloved God of the heart and the conscience. Nowhere in the world's literature have these two opponents (are they opponents? or are they poles?) clashed as sharply, clearly and determinately as here ..."[23]. Especially to mention is Otto's effort for a reconstruction of an original Gita. In correspondence to R. Garbe and others he tried to create a pure bhakti-Gita, free from all advaita motives and from all elements of paths of redemption by means of acts (karma-marga). These attempts are to be considered as failed. It rather corresponds to Indian imagination to delineate "God now theistic, now pantheistic", as it is practised in the Gita. 'Sow the ascetic renunciation of the world is praised, now the selfless acting in the world, now is the self acquired cognition, now the pious devotion to God recommended as path to salvation"[24].

In total F. Heiler seems to be right, when he emphasises in spite of the varieties of single motives: "But the actual salvation theory of the Bhagavad-Gita is not the mysticism of identity but the mysticism of immanence. The soul doesn't dissolve in God, but becomes his dwelling. 'Those who lovingly worship me, they are inside of me and I am inside of them'."[25]

But Otto also had deep relations to the modern India. When R. Tagore held his lecture which was entitled "My religious confession" in the Marburg University’s auditorium, Otto served him as interpreter [26].

But especially Otto was interested in the Indian bhakti-mysticism. In a brilliant contrasting to the Christianity of reformatory character Otto once again sought to work out the essentials of bhakti.

As an example for Otto's ingenious religious intuition, which he proved especially in his religion comparative studies his description of Vishnu shall be quoted: "... an originally unpretentious tribal god draws to him more and more, like in Israel, the position of dignity of a full and sole deity, superior to the world. (...) 'Whole divinity' that means in Indian terms: it is the eternal brahman in itself; the one and highest and exalted one. But this in the appearance of a personal and at the same time unique God-Self, as the Ishvara, i. e. the Lord, not as an impersonal and undefinable absolute"[27]. Otto dedicates all of his interest to this melting process in which a god transforms his figure while appropriating the names and qualities of similar deities (Hari, Narayana). Religion is not static: "There are times of evolution, decay, renewal

and reformation." Such as the religion of the Gita: "It mingles with other forms of Hinduism and disentangles again." "Prophets" but also "folk singers" and "doctors of theology" pave the way for a religious master as we meet then in Ramanuja (1055-1137) [28]. Otto emphasises that this is not only the result of a "psychology of peoples" (against W. Wundt) or "development" but a case of personal experience of "chosen and extra-ordinary natures"[29]. In other words, Otto esteems the religious genius of a pious individual and not some collective, not even a "collective unconscious" (C. G. Jung), which Otto does not know yet, as the essential mythopoetic factor [30]. It is not possible to analyse Otto's central categories in religious psychology (the "holy", "rational and irrational", the "numinous", "schematisation")[31] in this paper in order to come closer to his comprehension of the primal religious act. Only by doing this we might answer the question: "How does bhakti come into being - and how does Christian faith?" It might be interesting to trace Otto's contrasting bhakti - Christianity in order to see how he practices the comparison in religious history. Beforehand it may be emphasised that Otto (as it is popular until today) reproached the bhakti with lack of historicity, lack of understanding the notion of personality and the lack of depth in the experience of sin. But he does not at all become a superficial apologist at the same time. His comparison attains an almost unique depth. At first it is striking that here, as in none of his other works, Otto (as far as I see) sharpens the contrast in regard of the problems of sin and grace and thus strongly emphasises the lineage St. Paul - St. Augustine - Martin Luther. May be this is psychologically conditioned on advanced age - Otto is now 61 years old - may be there is an work-immanent development in hand which since "Das Heilige" proceeds to an emphatic Lutheran tone colour of a "theological science of religions" (my expression) [32]. In his obituary for R. Otto H. Frick pointed out: "The emphasis with which Otto steps from comparing to valuation, that means from science of religions to theology, is somehow surprising"[33]. Later commentators came to the same opinion (W. Haubold, G. Mensching, K. Rudolf) [34].

So also here Otto makes a sharp distinction between an approach to a foreign religion, its interpretation as done by the "mere 'historian of religions'" (p. 44), and his own position. Also Frick asks, by what this sovereign mind is urged in the midst of the 'profane' task of comparing religions "to profess very personally again and again the Christian faith, i. e. more specified: Lutheranism?" According to Frick, Otto has an "objective scientific compulsion": Otto transcends mere "phenomenology": he wants "to teach norms"[35]. (Already in 1913 Otto had spoken of "measurement of religion", comparing to which all religious comparisons only are of preparatory and serving character.)[36] And it is Otto's opinion that a firmly grounded religious persuasion of the researcher will be the necessary basis for an appropriate comprehension of a foreign religious top value. Considering this methodological statement there are of course gravest objections to be raised by a "profane science of religions" (G. Mensching).

In his contrasting Otto starts in a typical manner with an experience: At an interreligious congress there should be prepared a worship with a common Lord's Prayer. But both Christians and Hindus protested against a common Lord's Prayer, according to Otto with good reasons. Otto concedes that there is a "far-reaching understanding" between Christianity and bhakti "in respect of particular religious ideas" up to essentials of the dogmatic doctrine like "the teaching of hypostasis and incarnation, appreciation of the 'word' (shabda) as true source of religious insight, rigid exclusivity against other types, grace, election and so forth. All that returns also on the other side. And yet is the 'spirit' of the two religions a different one" (p. 46 seq.). But with a view to the "virtual decisive center" of the "special spirit" ("Sondergeist") Otto speaks of a total "shift of the axle" (p. 46 seq.).

"Comparison and distinction" is the subtitle of the relatively thin volume (110 pages) and in chapter 4 Otto treats the issue comparatively clear-cut in ten points on 42 pages at a brisk pace.

In the first point he clarifies the difference between the far more slashing and stronger Palestinian spirit and that of India while using the beginning of the Lord's Prayer and the second

request ("Thy kingdom come"). The Father's name as highest designation of the godhead would appear strange to an Indian. There the "supreme address" means purushotama (= 'supreme spirit'). According to Otto the "most profound spirit of this religion" expresses itself in it. A "transfer" of the Rig-Veda's purushasuktam or of the savitri (prayer to savitar, the 'pusher' which Otto quotes) into the Christian sphere would be as impossible as such a transfer of the Lord's Prayer into the "Indian sphere". The second request of the Lord's Prayer emphasises that: there is no correspondence for the Kingdom of Heaven (mal'kut Jahwe) (p. 48 seq.).
In the second point Otto deepens the question about the notion of God: "Ishvara reigns in his eternity. Far below him rushes the torrent of world and humanity in samsara in constantly repeated cycles of becoming and dissolving. In it the wandering soul goes astray, by means of its apostasy remote from Ishvara lost in the universe. Then he leans to her in pure undeserved grace" (p. 50).
Among the prophets of Israel, Jesus and young Christianity prevailed an "ardent expectation of advent"(p. 51). In accordance to P. Tillich's theory of 'kairos' Otto says: "A sense of advent in humble awe and in craving hope for the finally emerging 'Wholly Other' is the soul of this religion"(p. 51).
In third, forth and fifth point Otto deals with the different attitudes towards the world. At first he picks out the relation to the world as a reality. "India doesn't know a true value of the world, because it doesn't know a 'Telos' of the world." The way of the world is "play" (lila), an endless steady repetition from kalpa to kalpa. "In each case it is burnt out at the end. But it never becomes 'transfigured'."
"But the God of Palestine created these things, looked at them and saw that they were very good." Here the decisive words are "honour" of God, "reign of God" and "completion"(p. 52 seq.). Ishvara is only the "eternal fisherman" who fishes for the single souls with his net of grace in order to free them from the current of samsara. At best he is ".sovereign of the world" There is even the thought of the creator, but which comes out of the "feeling of uttermost dependence" (Schleiermacher). (Bu it is still interesting that the 'liberal' R. Otto concedes th central category of faith (in Schleiermacher's definition) to India. But not only here Otto surpasses definitely Schleiermacher!) "The Christian God is but necessarily creator of the world ..." All things are "towards Him" and "through Him" and "out of Him"(p. 54).
According to Otto, also the great Augustinian theme of "God and soul" is called to mind in India (p. 54). But the religion of bhakti knows as well something about the fact that he who has found Vishnu and has reached salvation, also has a new different relation with the world and especially with the world of his fellow-beings as before"(p. 55), although the "service to God" might "be effected solely between soul and God". But the Christian service "needs ... necessarily the world of one's contemporaries and one's environment." The world of a Christian is a "world of fellow creatures" (reference to I John 4.20) (p. 55 seq.). The theme of soul-God-world reminded Otto of Ritschl's metaphor of an ellipse with the two focuses of God and world on which the soul is moving. Especially in the sense of Ritschl Otto thinks "elliptical" of India and that in the field of Shankara's advaita as in that of the bhakti (p. 56 seq.). But Luther triumphs over Augustine, Schleiermacher and Ritschl in Otto: "The Christian needs the world as something which happens to him in order to create a sphere of 'self-verification' concerning the cross, practise, discipline and school of loyalty in service"(p. 58). The occident also "respects profane labour" (thanks to St. Benedict: "ora et labora!") and knows the "nobility of work", but India doesn't.
Luther's appreciation of a civil profession is as well exerted as the excellent arrangement of the "ethics of society and culture" by Thomas Aquinas. But the theologians of the bhakti religion had never thought about that and couldn't ever have discovered it out of the motivations of their own religion (p. 58 seq.).
The sixth point deals with ethics. Again Otto reports an incident in a Indian temple of Rama where the preacher enjoined on his auditorium "the duty to be veracious up to the sacrifice of

one's life" (p. 62). The "golden rule" is also known to India: but Otto considers it to be characteristic that only Jesus gave the rule in its "positive form": "Now do all this to the people as you would like that they do to you" (p. 62). And the fact that Jesus puts the love to God and the charity on the same level must appear to the Indian rather as a blasphemy (p. 63).
After a short remark on the relation to history according to Augustine ("De Civitate Dei"), Otto comes to the central question about sin and grace in the eighth point. And finally here the die is cast contra India and pro Lutheran doctrine of sin and grace. Never has India, not even in the religion of bhakti, experienced the radical addiction to sin and the agony of sin, and, what is more, the "curse of sin" and "the burden of the curse on the conscience which is afflicted by it"(p. 82 seq.), as Luther has experienced it. Certainly India doesn't lack "the idea of a guilty failure and the pressure of the conscience"(p. 65). According to Otto, there is actually no one higher religion at all in which "sin, redemption of sin, reproach of the conscience, namely the reproach of a religously determined conscience" didn't "play a part."(p. 65). (As follows the reference to Mahayana-Buddhism.) Otto quotes a prayer of Yamuna which deals with the agony of sin and the relieving grace. Finally he mentions the word of the Gita: "Out of 'faith' a man is made, so he is as his faith is like -"(p. 67).
Indeed, Otto can say that a word from Ramanuja's commentary on the Gita "approximates"(p. 67) the Lutheran "justificatio per fidem", only to disqualify the fact as "pietism of bhakti" at the bottom of which there is still the "strangely cool notion of the old atman of India" which Ramanuja only "fills with emotions and animates with bhakti and her emotional functions of confidence and love ..."(p. 68). Atman (besides brahman and purushottama) is the "most solemn word of India" - and that is never forgotten in the bhakti as well (p. 69).
On the Christian side Otto emphasises especially the notion of life in addition to the "justificatio impii" (justification of the impious) which alone is able to lead out of the "terrores conscientiae" (terrors of the conscience). Otto cites from Luther's Small Catechism: "Where there is redemption of sins, there is also life and bliss" For Otto "life" ("abundance of life", "life and full sufficiency", "bliss") becomes - that is the peak of the argumentation - the typical counternotion to the Indian "Being .. (sat). And as central parts he contrasts the ancient Indian prayer (Brhadaranyaka-Upanishad 1, 3, 18):

"From the non-being lead me to being, /
from the darkness lead me to light,/
from death lead me to superior than death."

with the "prime word of the Holy Scriptures" "of the Palestinian religion":

"Thou shall be holy,
for I am holy." (p. 71)

From one position to the other there is, according to Otto, no "gradual" transition, no evolutionary sequence of stages: a transition is only possible "per saltum" (jump) and by a complete "shift of the axle"(p. 71). (Therefore it is not possible to regard the religious heritage of India, as was proposed by A. J. Appasamy, Otto's famous Indian disciple. The religion of ancient India and the belief in Christ do not conduct themselves like 'promise' and 'fulfillment'.)
Once again we see God contrasted with 'god': "Ishvara is a savior of those who suffer from pain in samsara and of those who are far from home. The 'father of Jesus' is the savior of the hearts which are smashed by guilt and savior of the consciences which are struck by God"(p. 79).
After having criticised once again the Indian notion of conscience in the ninth point ("Christianity is religion of conscience per substantiam, religion of bhakti is it per accidens") (p. 81), he deals with the inter-mediating function of Jesus and his reconciliation in the tenth point: "...

also Ishvara 'forgives' and is begged for pardon. But his pardon is a wink at the lapse, out of pity for the suffering of the trouble ... It is indulgentia, compassionate lenity, release and indulgence, but not the 'Christian remission' ..."(p. 82). On the other hand the expiation of Jesus is an "extinction and cancelling of an objective counter-value"(p. 83). His work of salvation (in judgment and grace) is both a "judging overthrow and comforting raising"(p. 84). ('tremendum' and 'fascinans' are balanced in the Christian act of reconciliation.) Jesus' atonement is the plain "ineffable". India doesn't know a "curse of sin" and therefore no "'expiator', no Golgatha and no cross"(p. 85).

Does this sound so much different as in K. Barth? And if this is the result, which apparently can also be attained in a speculative dogmatic manner, why then the lifelong effort for a "understanding" of foreign religion, why at last the many voyages throughout the world in the matter of religion? [37]. Me myself am a born in Marburg, but I discovered the beauty of the small town upon the river Lahn not before 1 once have been in Paris. Maybe that the knowledge and investigation of the remotest type of religion, that the dialogue and contact with (living) representatives of the higher religions may lead first of all to the discovery of the "beauty" and the depth but also to the formation and strengthening of the own religious or spiritual position. Or is it perhaps the other way round? Maybe Otto could have shown us the distant summits of a fascinating religious world only because he stood firmly "on the native granite which carries our ground"[37 a].

It is known that Otto was also the first western scientist of religions and theologian who made personal acquaintance with Zen-Buddhism in Japan. Otto's preface to a German Zen-anthology is still considered a "classic introduction to the mysticism of Zen"[38].

Who was Otto? I don't want to add another interpretation to the ones existing by F. Heiler, H. Frick, E. Benz, G. Mensching, W. Haubold and others [39]. F. Heiler praised Otto as a "Schleiermacher redivivus"[40]. Also the word of the "protestant Benedictine" was circulating. Contemporaries of Otto have told me that even in the street he made an impressive appearance. He didn't just walk; he strode like the incarnated 'idea of the holy' through the narrow streets of the town upon the river Lahn - an entirely priestly figure. In 1922 K. Barth met him in Marburg - "the appearance of a proper Indian raja!"[41] Otto called himself a "pietistic Lutheran": He combined (according to Frick) the 'Lutheran' "acknowledgement of the existential reality and the objectivity of the essence of revelation" with the 'pietistic' element of the "personal, genuinely religious experience, a downright human-like process"[42].

Moreover, Otto, as a 'liberal', is a representative of the German Democratic Party in the parliament, together with two of his colleagues in the field of systematic theology: M. Rade and E. Troeltsch.

Philosophically Otto was a Neo-Friesian: he couldn't fraternise with the existential philosophy [43]. The intellectual world of K. Marx and S. Freud were closed to him. He neither could find access to the complex of questions concerning the sociology of religion, as it was raised in the discussion M. Weber - E. Troeltsch. A short view on the history of the Marburg faculty may be permitted: W. Herrmann (Otto's predecessor), M. Rade and R. Otto represented the "traditional" Marburg in the theological faculty, R. Bultmann, G. Wünsch, H. Frick and F. Heiler rather the "modern trend": Bultmann was open to the philosophy of Heidegger, Wünsch to the philosophy of Marxism, Frick was strongly influenced by the American "social gospel", he practised (in critical distance) world-mission, geography of religions and geopolitics[44]; Heiler finally calls for (going beyond Otto's "religious union of humanity") an "oecumenicity of the world's religions", and no other German scholar struck up the Song of Songs of the bhakti as he has done [45].

R. Otto's impact on the research in the history of religions is still much in evidence nowadays, although he never founded a school. (What I have called "Marburg School" is not the school of Otto. It is not at all as uniform as the known Marburg School of Neo-Kantianism or the school of Bultmann.) Paradoxically today Otto's impact is more sizeable abroad than it is in

Germany. E. Benz reports that on his informative trips he could notice time and again, how far the fellow experts in Japan, India and the Buddhist countries were acquainted with Otto's way of thinking and with his terminology [46].

As representatives of Otto's numerous foreign disciples I shall only mention the Swede Birger Forell, who has done a lot for Germany in hard times, and the South Indian Bishop J. S. Appasamy. His work "Christianity as Bhakti-Marga"[47] indicates a direction in which Otto's thoughts could prolifically developed.

Another two works still shall be mentioned which show how the thoughts and insights of Otto are used - in ways that are not always fortunate for the comparative study of religions - beyond the reach of the Marburg School. In his dissertation, K. Hutten [48] explicitly renounces dogmatical evaluations; he only describes the phenomena, and he does it in a way which constantly reminds one of Otto's psychological analysis. After all this work is strongly based on Otto's translations: without his "Siddhanta des Ramanuja" and his "Vishnu-Narayana" Hutten's paper, actually, could have never been written. (Except of Otto's, he only uses the translation of "Die Hymnen des Mannikka Vashagar" by H. W. Schomerus, 1923, and R. Garbe's translation of the Gita. Actually the bibliography only comprises eleven titles, three of which are by Otto.)

Hutten's description of the bhakti is very differentiated. He distinguishes between 1. "bhakti as a devotional understanding", 2. "bhakti as an affectionate cult-worship", 3. "bhakti as a completely trusting surrender", 4. "bhakti as an erotic love-affair", 5. "bhakti as ecstatic theomonism" and 6. "prapatti, calmness"[49]. The bhakti is presented partly in ardent colours (which is quite appropriate). The Christian faith seems to be rather pale in comparison to that (and Hutten explicitly says so!). For him the Christian "piety" is more interested in the "objective facts" of the "certitude of salvation". It conveys an eschatological mood and develops a "world shaping ethical power of expansion"[50]. According to Hutten, all that doesn't lead to a higher quality. His comparison of religions is (in contrast to Otto's) rather a step on the way towards a recognition of a "complete incommensurability", which was effected by G. Mensching, Otto's disciple in Bonn, in his later works.

In comparison with this the paper by J. Witte, "Die Christusbotschaft und die Religionen"[51], is an example for a total misinterpretation of a foreign religious world, including the bhakti. Witte, a formerly liberal missionary and professor of science of religions in Berlin, came to the conclusion in the wake of the "dialectic theology" to condemn all religions outside of Christianity as "night and darkness"[52], and that subsequent to Luther. Witte is an excellent example of how an extremely well-read scholar of religions may reach disastrous results when dominated by a prejudice. Where bhakti is concerned, Witte refers exactly to Otto and Hutten, but changes their statements into the negative. Hutten's description of the bhakti as an "ecstatic theomonism" serves him to damn the "Indian pan-religion". "The pan-type of Hinduism as worst aberration" is the title of a page [53]. Source material of the history of religions can't be misinterpreted any worse.

Which guide-post for the solution of the problems of religions can we expect from R. Otto? How can we deal with the plurality of the claims on absolute truth? In my opinion we have to go beyond Otto while further developing his ideas! The world has become an ecumenical village. There should be no fear to come into contact with believers of other religions. We must leave behind the fear of syncretistic approximations. (After all, according to A. v. Harnack and H. Gunkel, Christianity itself has been a syncretistic religion from the very beginning.) In a global view there is a constant process of assimilation and exchange between religions and cultures which we can't stop. The world-wide boom of meditation and psychotherapy supports his process. Mysticism is in great demand again. The comparison of religions in Otto's way is furthermore suggestive, as far as it leads to a deeper understanding of foreign religion (and one's own position). To learn to understand and comment on foreign religions - that has to be the goal of future comparative research in religions.

Notes

1] München 1926, 1971 3rd ed.
2] Stuttgart 1978
3] Phil. Diss. Gießen 1919 (Leipzig 1919)
4] Cf. also H. Röhr, Buddha and Jesus in ihren Gleichnissen, Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie, 1973, p. 65 seqq. - For H. Frick see H. Röhr, Der Einfluß der Religionswissenschaft auf die Missionstheorie H. Fricks, Theol. Diss. Marburg 1959.
5] München 1918, 1922 2nd ed.
6] 1917 and numerous editions in many languages. (Engl. ed. 1923.)
7] München 1918, 1969
8] Stuttgart 1969
9] "Weltmission heute" No. 26/27 ed. by E. Dammann, Stuttgart 1969
10] Holder of Ottols chair.
11] Stuttgart 1930 (= Abhandlungen zur orientalischen Philologie und Religionsgeschichte, ed. by. E. Littmann and J. W. Hauer, H. 1. K. Hutten was, for many years, the head of the 11protestant central office for ideological questions" in Stuttgart and is internationally known for his book on sect~5ianism "Seher, Grübler, Enthusiasten", Stuttgart 1950, 1982 2nd ed.
12] F. Weinrich, Die Liebe im Buddhismus und im Christentum, Berlin 1935 (= Aus der Welt der Religion, in cooperation with H. Frick and R. Otto, ed. by E. Fascher and G. Mensching, Rel.-Wiss. Reihe Heft 23).
13] Tübingen 1914, p. 228 seq.: "Die Bhagavadgita und die Lehre von der Gottesliebe".
14] München & Basel 1966
15] Freiburg 1950
16] J. M. Kitagawa, Gibt es ein Verstehen fremder Religion? Leiden 1963 (= Joachim-Wach-Vorlesungen Vol. 1, ed. by E. Benz)
17] R. Otto, Ist eine Universalreligion wünschenswert und möglich?, lecture held in 1913 to the "World-Congress for a Free Christianity and Rel. Progress", in the appendix of: "Vishnu-Narayana", Texte zur indischen Gottesmystik I, Jena 1917, p. 152 seqq.; 156
18] Kirchliche Dogmatik, 1, 2, 1932, 1960 5th ed., p. 374 seq.
19] Ibid. p. 376
20] N. Söderblom, Der lebendige Gott im Zeugnis der Religionsgeschichte, München & Basel 1966, p. 129
21] R. Otto, Vishnu-Narayana, p. 151
22] Aller Meister Lehren, Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft (ZMR) 1916, p. 73 seqq.; p. 97 seqq.; Artha-Pancaka oder die fünf Artikel, translated and explained, Theol. Studien und Kritiken, 1916, p. 352 seqq.; Dipika des Nivasa, Eine indische Heilslehre aus dem Sanskrit, Tübingen 1916; Vishnu-Narayana, Texte zur indischen Gottesmystik I, Jena 1917, 1923 2nd ed.; Siddhanta des Ramnia, Texte zur indischen Gottesmystik II, Jena 1917, 1932; Tagores Bekenntnis, Tübingen 1931; Die Katha-Upanishad, transl. and expl. Berlin 1936; Der Sang des Hehr-Erhabenen, die Bhagavad-Gita, transl. and expl., Stuttgart 1935
23] Siddhanta des Ramanuja, p. 2
24] H. von Glasenapp, Bhagavadgita, in: RGG 3rd ed. (1957), 1118. - Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, Die Bhagavadgita (dt. mit Erläuterungen), Wiesbaden (n.d.)
25] F. Heiler, Die Religionen der Menschheit, Stuttgart 1959, 1980, 3rd ed., p. 245
26] Cf. R. Otto, R. Tagores Bekenntnis, Tübingen 1931. - About Otto's voyage to India cf. R. Schinzer, R. Otto - Entwurf einer Biographie, in: E. Benz (Ed.), R. Ottos Bedeutung für die Religionswissenschaft und Theologie heute, Leiden 1971, p. 1 seqq., p. 18 seqq.
27] R. Otto, Indiens Gnadenreligion und das Christentum, Vergleich und Unterscheidung, München 1930, p. 15; Engl. ed.: - , India's Religion of Grace and Christianity, compared and contrasted, London 1930. This paper shall be examined more precisely in the following. The numeration of the pages in the text corresponds to the German edition.
28] Ibid. p. 15 seq. - Cf. also Otto's brilliant interpretation "König Varuna - Das Werden eines Gottes", in: Gefühl des Überweltlichen, München 1932, p. 125 seqq.

29] Ibid. p. 15.
30] According to Otto's preference for "individual psychology" contrary to a "psychology of peoples", (Gefühl des Überweltlichen p. 12).
31] Cf. the Marburg philosophical dissertation written under F. Heiler by W. Haubold, Die Bedeutung der Religionsgeschichte für die Theologie R. Ottos, Leipzig 1940, p. 31 seqq.
32] Cf. G. Mensching's emphasis on the importance of a "profane science of religions" (contrary to Otto's position): G. Mensching, R. Otto und die Religionsgeschichte, in: E. Benz, op. cit. (cf. note 26), p. 49 seqq.; p. 64
33]H. Frick, R. Otto-Gedächtnisfeier der Theologischen Fakultät der Philipps-Universität (Marburg), Berlin 1938, p. 18
34]R. Schinzer, op. cit., (note 26), p. 28
35] H. Frick, op. cit., p. 18
36] Vishnu-Narayana, p. 151
37] Cf. R. Schinzer, op. cit., and B. Forell, R. Ottos Persönlichkeit, in: B. Forell, H. Frick, F. Heiler, Religionswissenschaft in neuer Sicht, Marburg 1951, p. 1 seq. Forell emphasises, how everywhere during the voyage through India the Indians got the impression: "He is one of us!" Also on his trips in Italy, Switzerland, in the Netherlands and Sweden he always was accepted warmly as ambassador of Germany.
37a] H. Frick, op. cit., p. 21
38] E. Benz, R. Otto als Theologe und Persönlichkeit, in: E. Benz (Ed.), op. cit. (note 26), p. 41
39] Cf. the works mentioned in notes 26, 31 and 37.
40] F. Heiler, op. cit.- (note 37), p. 25
41] Cit. in: E. Busch, K. Barths Lebenslauf, München 1978, p. 149
42] H. Frick, R. Otto innerhalb der theol. Situation, Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche (ZThK) 1938, p. 3 seqq. (= Sonderheft für R. Otto).
43] Cf. the strict refusal of any doctrine of a "destiny (Geworfenheit) towards death", a pure profane feeling, by means of which it was thought to pave the way to Christianity. That's probably a clear comment against Heidegger and Bultmann! R. Otto, Indiens Gnadenreligion, p. 70
44] H. Frick, Deutschland innerhalb der religiösen Weltlage, Berlin 1936, 1941 2nd ed.
45] F. Heiler, in: Die Religionen (see note 25), p. 244 seqq.
46] E. Benz, op. cit. (note 26), p. 35
47] Madras 1928, 1930 2nd ed.
48] "Die Bhakti-Religion in Indien und der christliche Glaube im NT" (see note 11).
49] Ibid. p. 52 seqq.
50] Ibid. p. 78 seqq.
51] Göttingen 1936
52] Ibid. p. 58
53] Ibid. p. 178

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