
THE DANGERS OF CONTEXTUALIZATION

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Introduction

In recent years, the idea that monotheism is found in all nations has gained significant popularity. Many progressive church leaders claim that evangelical missionaries have done a disservice to indigenous communities by not contextualizing the Bible to help explain Christianity in terms that Native Americans can better understand.

Is it possible that God revealed Himself to the nations outside the Jewish culture? Why are the Jews so special? Why can't we use the names of indigenous supreme beings to represent the God of the Bible?

The purpose of this paper is to respond to these false ideas by examining the Scriptures and to demonstrate why it is vital to our salvation (Acts 4: 12) that we ... walk in the name of the LORD of the Bible only (Micah 4:5). We will also be examining why this subject is particularly important in today's postmodern environment and what these ideas may lead to in the future.

Should We Contextualize?

The Apostle Paul *did* write, "I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it" (1 Corinthians 9:22, 23). But is

this a mandate for contextualization? Was the Apostle Paul suggesting that the gospel message could be made to accommodate people? How far do you suppose he would have been willing to go? Let's examine what the progressive church has done and then we will reevaluate scripture and Paul's ministry. ^[1]

According to the Apologetics Coordination Team website *Richard Twiss of Wiconi International* was on the *700 Club* show with *Gordon Robertson (Pat Robertson's son)* recently and in an interview he **told Gordon that the Great Spirit of the Indians is the same as the Holy Spirit**. Robertson heartily agreed. The problem with this idea is that the Great Spirit has no son, and without the son there is no redemption <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/lehmann2.html>. ^[2]

"...the Great Spirit of the Indians is the same as the Holy Spirit."

RICHARD TWISS

Religious beliefs vary between Native American tribes, but there is a widespread belief in a **Great Spirit who created the**

earth, and who pervades everything. This is a panentheist rather than a pantheist belief. It is linked to animism, which sees kindred spirits in all animals and plants (<http://members.aol.com/pantheism0/indians.htm>). [3]

The Lakota concept of Wakan Tanka (most frequently translated as Great Spirit) illustrates panentheism well:

Wakan Tanka is the Spirit over, under, and throughout all of the physical world; its guiding principle; present in individual phenomena yet not confined to it; not strictly singular nor plural; neither truly personal nor impersonal. Manitou/manitos of the Algonkians is a similar concept (<http://www.stormwind.com/common/nadoc.htm>). [4]

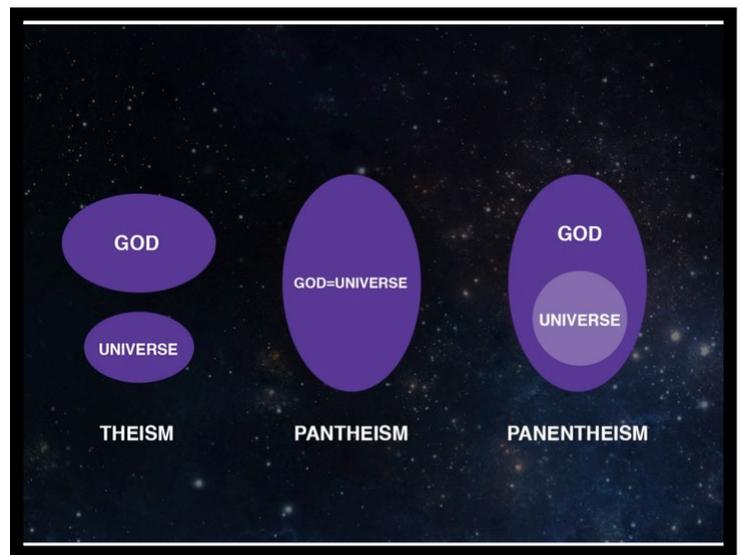
The Great Spirit required human sacrifice/suicide to lift a sickness he had sent:

"I am a very old man, my friends. I have lived through many summers and through many snows. Now I will tell you why I have lived so long. My father, who was also a great Medicine Man, told me that when I became old, the Great Spirit would send a sickness upon our people. All would die, unless a sacrifice was made to the Great Spirit. An innocent maiden of the tribe, the daughter of a chief, must willingly go to the high cliffs above the Big River and throw herself upon the rocks below. If she does this, the sickness will end." (The Great Circle of Life, Copyright 2001 - 2003. All rights reserved by Roger Kayser, <http://www.zeeone.com/Readings/Wedding/wedding.htm>) [5]

Human sacrifice is one of the main reasons why God instructed the Israelites to enter into and destroy the land of Canaan. Leviticus 20:2-5 states, "Say to the Israelites: 'Any Israelite or any foreigner

residing in Israel who sacrifices any of his children to Molek is to be put to death." It is a despicable practice in God's eyes so how can Twiss equate the God of the Bible with the Great Spirit?

According to GotQuestions.org panentheism is most definitely not biblical. In fact, it is extreme heresy that impugns the character of God and makes Him more like a man. God is present everywhere (Psalm 139:7-8), but God is not everything. God knows everything, whether actual or possible (Psalm 139:1-6; Romans 11:33-35). God does not learn because He already has all knowledge. God is "affected" by things that occur in the universe, but only in that sin angers Him and holiness pleases Him. Our actions do not change God or impact His essential being. [6]



The Bible presents God as holy (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), sovereign (1 Chronicles 29:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 37:20), omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscient (Job 28:24; Psalm 147:4-5), omnipotent (Job 42:1-2), self-existent (Exodus

Panentheism: God interpenetrates every part of the universe and extends, timelessly beyond it. [1]

“The Great Spirit required human sacrifice to lift a sickness he had sent...”

ROGER KAYSER

3:14; *Psalm 36:9*), eternal (*Psalm 90:2*; *Habakkuk 1:12*), immutable (*Psalm 33:11*; *James 1:17*), perfect (*Deuteronomy 32:3-4*), and infinite (*Job 5:9*; *9:10*). None of these attributes are compatible with panentheism. God transcends all of His creation, and is in no sense limited or changed by events in His creation. ^[7]

Paul preached the gospel exactly as he had received it “as of first importance” (1 *Corinthians 15:3*). Paul preached that Jesus was the Son of God and our Savior from our sins. And that God was loving and just. The fact that Paul was stoned and left for dead (*Acts 14:19*), beaten, imprisoned, and finally killed for the truth’s sake ought to demonstrate that he didn’t adapt the message to make it pleasing to his hearers! ^[8]

In Galatians 2, Paul is instructing the church at Corinth that Jews could remain Jewish in order to maintain their culture, but that it’s not necessary for gentiles to become Jewish in order to gain salvation. This is clear evidence that God does not redeem cultures, but sinners who accept him as Lord and Savior.

Speaking in the Name of Other Supreme Beings

Amon of Egypt (*Jer 46:25*), Hadad of the Arameans (*1 Kings 20:28*), and Marduk of Babylon (*Daniel 3:16-18*) are all examples of supreme beings of other nations that were considered detestable in the eyes of the Lord. He commanded His people to turn away from these false gods and to seek salvation through Him (*Lev 18:3*, *1 Kings 14:29*, *17:7-9*, *Acts 15: 20,29* and *Gal 4:8-9*). ^[9]

God makes it plainly clear in Scripture that “salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (*Acts 4:12*).

The Bible also makes it clear that there is no other way for men to believe in Jesus Christ without having heard the gospel (*Eph 1:13*, *2:12*, *Rom 10:14-15*).

Contextualizing the Bible puts indigenous groups at risk of never hearing the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul also warns us in *Acts 17: 30-31* that God overlooks people’s ignorance, but not people’s lack of repentance. By contextualizing we are allowing native peoples to continue to worship in the name of their former god (Theos in Greek) not YHWH; thereby, risking their salvation. ^[10]

“for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved”

ACTS 4:12

Why are the Jews so Important?

After the fall of the Tower of Babel, virtually every ancient culture had male and female supreme beings and an associated pantheon of gods. For Babylon it was Nimrod and Semiramis. Therefore, it was impossible for any gentile to have any knowledge of God according to the Bible (Gal 4:8, 1 Cor 1:21, Rom 1:28, Eh 2:12-13, 1 Thess 4:5, 2 Thess 1:8, 1 John 3:1).^[11]

Jesus is a direct descendant of Jacob's son Judah. Therefore, Scripture states boldly that salvation is not possible apart from the Jews and that all other gods are false gods (Duet 32:17, 1 Cor 10:20, Jer 16:19, Amos 2:4). Cultures are the traditions of men (Mark 7:8-9,13, Col 2:8) and only the Jews will be redeemed by God according to the Bible (Psl 130:8). And, this is only because they will come to faith in Christ (Rev 7:3-4, 14:3, John 3:3) during the tribulation (Zech 13:1).^[12]

Why It's Important to not Contextualize the Bible in Today's Society

David E. Anderson writes in his book *Myth: A Response to the Arguments Against Jesus' Historicity* that "websites and even popular movies such as 'Religulous' and 'Zeitgeist' have claimed that Jesus' story has its roots in Egyptian, Greek, Persian and Roman mythology. They propose that a God-man who was virgin-born, walked on water, was crucified and resurrected was nothing new - that Jesus was just one more in a long line of such characters." Jesus has been equated to Horus, Buddha, Krishna, Mithras, Dionysus, and numerous other



Maitreya in
Nairobi,
Kenya. 11
June 1988^[2]

mythical characters.^[13] So how are we to know that Jesus really existed? How do we know His story didn't originate from a supreme being in a pantheon of Native American gods?

Share International claims that the coming of Maitreya fulfills not only Buddhist prophecies about the appearance of a future great teacher named Maitreya, but also the prophecies of a number of other world religions including Christianity (the second coming of Christ), Hinduism (the Kalki avatar of Vishnu), Islam (the Imam Mahdi) and Judaism (the Jewish Messiah). Benjamin Creme, a British artist and long-time student of esoteric philosophy, has become the principal source of information about the emergence of Maitreya.^[14]

Maitreya supposedly appeared before a Christian gathering of 6,000 people on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya on 11 June 1988. Since then, it is claimed that he has made many more appearances. From 1991

to 2002, Maitreya appeared before gatherings of orthodox religious groups worldwide and addressed them briefly in their own language and was recognized by the majority of people in attendance as their awaited Teacher. Maitreya also apparently created healing springs of water in Mexico, Germany, and India, which drew millions of visitors. ^[15]

Other literature on Maitreya has equated him to indigenous deities such as Elder Brother, Antsa Qoetsapava Powatanica of the Hopi Indian prophecy. ^[16] The Hopi people settled in northeastern Arizona, in an area called the Four Corners. This legend is about two brothers, one of whom goes east, and the other is instructed to travel all over the land of "Turtle Island" (America) and mark it wherever he and his companions walk. The older brother who went east promised to return. He took a piece of tablet with him and said he would bring it back when he returned so that his people could recognize him. It is prophesied that he will come back and help his people when all appears hopeless for them. Believers in Maitreya think that time is at hand. ^[17]

This all sounds eerily like that of the antichrist: ^[18]

- his authority will have similarities to the ancient Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks (Daniel 7:24; Rev 13:2 / Daniel 7:7)
- he will blaspheme God, (Daniel 7:25; 11:36; Rev 13:5) slandering His Name (Rev 13:6)
- his arrival on the world scene will be accompanied by miracles, signs and wonders (2 Thess 2:9)

- either he, or his companion (The False Prophet), will claim to be Christ (Matt 24:21-28)
- He will claim that Jesus did not come in the flesh, or that Jesus did not rise bodily from the grave (2 John 7).
- He will deny that Jesus is the Messiah (1 John 2:22)

Conclusion

If we start equating Jesus with other gods and supreme beings not only are we disobeying the strict instructions specified in the Bible not to do this, but we are also contributing to the denial of universal truth in our postmodern society. It is not logical to assume that because a figure from history has one or two historical traits slightly similar to Jesus' that their story must have been the source of the Jesus story. However, in today's world, which is more in tune with esoteric philosophy people look for any excuse to make the story of Jesus' death and resurrection unreliable and just another myth.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is unique and as we have seen in the Scripture referenced in this paper there is no other way to be saved except to hear His Name and His Name alone. The bypassing of the Jewish culture by the progressive church is tantamount to heresy, for salvation is not possible apart from the Jews. Our Savior who died for us should never be equated to a "great spirit" that calls for human sacrifice, but rather He should be called Abba Father (Gal 4:6) and we should glorify His name forever (Psalm 86:12).

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