Baptists Apologize!
Category : January 2000
Published by Anonymous on Jan. 01, 2000

INTERFAITH

Baptists Apologize!

Hindu outrage over Divali pamphlet gets results

The Baptist pamphlet, "Divali, Festival of Light, Circle of Darkness," is little different than most missionary literature aimed against Hindus. But somehow the idea that the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant church in America, would issue it to coincide with the most beloved Hindu celebration of the year rankled the American press. Sensing an opportunity to fight for an underdog, the Washington Post, Associated Press and many other news media castigated the Baptists for their malicious "prayer pamphlet."

The 30,000 booklets [see excerpts below] were issued October 25 to coincide with the festival's beginning. Stunned by the reaction, the Baptists issued a rare apology. They didn't retract anything they had said, just admitted they should have been nicer about it.

The Baptists previously published booklets soliciting prayers for Muslims and Jews, also during their holy days, offending leaders of those faiths. The language in this publication is harsher, said Louis Moore, the book's editor. "There is a clearer

definition that Hindus are lost," he said. The Southern Baptist Convention [www.imb.org/frontpage.htm] is the world's largest and richest missionary-sending organization. It's also President Bill Clinton's church. He has made no comment on the pamphlet.

The Washington Post, one of America's largest and most prestigious newspapers, asked Suresh Gupta, president of the Durga Temple in Fairfax, Virginia, about the pamphlet characterizing Hindus as being in darkness. "Darkness! This is really offensive," he told the Post. "Why should they try to change us? We have a value system people crave in this country. We teach respect for others, for marriage vows, for elders. It's what every religion should teach."

"The missionary approach to Hindus has always been illiterate and offensive," said a spokesman for India's ruling BJP party. World Hindu Federation president K.G. Tandon in Nepal said, "It is to misguide people. They are claiming that they can give salvation to sinners. It is nothing but a farce."

The apology, issued October 27, defended everything in the pamphlet, but apologized for the tone. "It is distressing to us that elements of the guide may have offended our Hindu neighbors and for that we are profoundly sorry. We understand that the good news of God's saving love in Jesus may be offensive to some, but never was it our intent to express that love in an offensive way." Christian groups in India, in a delicate situation with the Pope's impending visit, sought to distance themselves from the Baptists.

It is rare that an apology would come from the Baptists, one of the most conservative Christian organizations in the world. But the media's defense of Hindus and the many reasoned statements of protest proved impossible for them to ignore.

How They Prey on Hindu's

"Divali, Festival of Light, Circle of Darkness," is a twelve-page Baptist pamphlet describing Hinduism and targeting several Hindu tribes, states or cities for special prayers over 12 days. Download the pamphlet at:

www.imb.org/resources/HPG.pdf.

Excerpts:

"More than 900 million people are lost in the hopeless darkness of Hinduism. They seek power and blessing through worship of 330 million gods and goddesses and the demonic powers that lay behind them."

"Most Hindus do not have a concept of sin or of personal responsibility, nor do they have a concept of a creator God."

"May the light of Jesus Christ break in upon the darkness which entraps these

who worship gods which are not God."

"Walking the streets of India during Divali is a sobering reminder of the power of darkness that lies over this land."

"Ask God to show Hindus that their worship of and prayers to the gods ultimately are futile."

"Mumbai is a city of spiritual darkness. Eight out of every ten people are Hindu, slaves bound by fear and tradition to false gods and goddesses."

"Praise the Lord that strong anti-conversion laws [in Orissa State]

have failed to stop the growth of the church."

"Please pray that the educated computer engineers [in Bangalore] who have many contacts with Christians will be open to the Truth."

"In spite of early missionary efforts and present ministries, Satan has retained his hold on Calcutta."

"Hindu shrines and temples stand on virtually every corner and in almost every home in Nepal. Pray that the darkness and that the power of
Satan will be broken."

"Most Balinese continue to live a life of fear, worshiping the gods of Hinduism."

"If you and your church would like to 'adopt' one of these unreached Hindu groups for extended prayer and ministry that they might receive the Gospel, please call us."