

In many religions canonical texts play an important role. Often, these texts are accorded almost absolute authority. The question itself of why people ascribe authority to canonical texts evokes a whole new field of investigation and many other questions. One such issue is how and on the basis of which arguments absolute authority is defended.

The present study is a comparative investigation of the claim that canonical texts are the only source from which salvific knowledge can be derived in order to obtain release. Several texts will be analysed, written by two defenders of the authority of canonical texts as well as by those who criticize this authority. The first thinker is Śaṅkara (an Advaita philosopher) and the second is Johann Gerhard (a Lutheran theologian). They defended themselves against their respective opponents Maṇḍana and Rahtmann. The goal of this study is to trace the arguments and motives that are used to maintain this claim as well as the dilemmas that emerge if one accepts this claim. Thus, we hope to discover the extent and limits of the authority of canonical texts as the exclusive means to release.

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