

The Cosmic Game

A comparative study between
Hinduism & Christianity



By

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Introduction

The two most ancient religions which have shaped the world are Judaism and Hinduism. Of the two, Hinduism is the older, with a literature going back to the beginning of recorded history. Hindu civilisation spread out from the banks of the Ganges into the rest of Asia, and has, through its offshoot Buddhism, profoundly influenced the cultures of Japan, China, Tibet and the entire South East Asia region. The great trade routes between India and the Middle East via the Silk Route ensured that there was a healthy exchange of ideas in addition to merchandise. The Emperor Ashoka (273 — 232 BCE) sent Buddhist missionaries to Syria, Egypt and Greece via the Silk Route. In the Middle East, there is archaeological evidence from pre-Biblical Mesopotamia, (c. 1480 BCE) of a treaty between the Hittite King *Shubiluliuma* and the Mitanni Ruler *Mattiwaja* son of *Dasratta*; the latter invokes the names of Vedic gods as witnesses to the treaty. Hindu philosophy influenced even the ancient Greeks from the time of the conquest of parts of north India by Alexander the Great (325 BCE). Plato and Socrates show marked Hindu influence in their philosophies. The first great theologians of Christianity — Clement of Alexandria (150 — 214 CE.) and Origen (185 — 254 CE.) both demonstrate familiarity with the teachings of Buddha. Origen's teacher was *Ammonius* the Saka who was in all probability a Buddhist monk (*Saka* being a reference to *Sakya Muni*, a title of the Buddha).

The ancient civilisations such as the Roman, Greek, Egyptian and Babylonian have all passed away. Even the Jewish culture has undergone many radical changes since its inception 5000 years ago — yet still the Hindu civilisation continues as a vibrant and living culture, and has remained virtually unchanged for over 6000 years.

All the major world religions are related to one of these two parent faiths. Judaism gave rise to Christianity and Islam, and from Hinduism came Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. The difference between Hinduism and Buddhism, in fact, is very similar to the schism between Catholics and Protestants. Christianity produced Martin Luther as the "Great Reformer" and Hinduism produced Lord Buddha!

Christianity today is one of the world's greatest religions and has the largest number of adherents. It has been the force behind the civilisation of the western world and has contributed socially and materially more than any of the other religious systems. Many women and men have attained to the heights of spiritual realisation and beatitude through the practice of Christianity, and their works and teachings are self-evident. The validity of Christianity as one of the many paths to God is unquestionable.

Hinduism encourages mutual respect for all other belief systems. Unfortunately this same respect is not extended to Hinduism by the adherents of some Christian persuasions. Hinduism is frequently denigrated and slandered by evangelists using the mass media such as the American TV show — the "700 Club". There is a plethora of literature written by Christians, principally of the Protestant persuasion, criticising condemning and ridiculing Hinduism. (The Protestants are all those Christian groups who broke away from the Catholic Church such as Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, etc.) In many Protestant Theological Seminaries and Christian Universities, departments have been established to study, research and criticise Hinduism and Buddhism. One such department is the "Spiritual Counterfeits Project Inc." in Berkeley California. Nowadays there are numerous Christian websites dedicated to the denigration and abuse of Hinduism. There is not one book, as far as I am aware, by any Hindu intellectual, cleric or religious order criticising Christianity or misrepresenting it. No Hindu monastery, university or seminary has a similar project

of studying other religions for the purpose of demolishing them. This is due to the respect which Hinduism extends to all religions.

With the ever growing tendency to migrate, many Hindus today find themselves a minority in Christian countries. Many are isolated from already existing Hindu communities and thus do not have the chance to cultivate their knowledge of Hinduism and Vedic culture. Large numbers of Hindus are constantly under pressure from Christian evangelicals out hunting for souls. Being a naturally non-aggressive and hospitable people, Hindus are an easy prey to evangelists. A considerable factor is the non-dogmatic and non-coercive nature of Hinduism.

Most people who claim to belong to a religious group are in fact often ignorant of the group theology and its philosophy although they may be devout and pious. So too, the vast majority of Hindus are profoundly ignorant of the tenets and doctrines of their own faith. The teachings, arguments and accusations put forward by the evangelists (who themselves are often new converts with little theological training) are met with little or no resistance.

It can be observed that the majority of those who convert to Christianity in the third world do not do so through a desire for moral upliftment or the sake of salvation, but for socio-economic reasons or through family/peer pressure. These are the so called "rice-Christians". (Known as such due to the evangelical technique of doling out groceries, education or health care in exchange for baptism.) In spite of over 200 years of rigorous evangelisation in India the number of converts remains proportionately small. The vast majority are drawn from the low castes & untouchables. These groups are now officially referred to as the "backward classes" or the "scheduled castes". The number of "caste Hindu" converts is actually negligible.

This book is written with a threefold aim. Firstly to provide Hindus with a basis upon which to defend their faith from the attacks of mainly Protestant evangelists; secondly to educate the sincere Hindu seeker about Christianity; and thirdly to educate the unprejudiced Christian about Hinduism.

A cardinal principle of Hinduism is recognition that no one has a monopoly on Truth. It is the inviolable right of every person to choose one's own path to enlightenment; to develop one's own personal relationship with God. In order to make an intelligent choice about which path or religion one wishes to follow, one must be presented with various options so that one can appraise them critically and choose a path that is suited to one's own intellectual capacity and stage of spiritual development.

In attempting to formulate a comparative study of two complex religions such as Christianity and Hinduism one is faced with the almost insurmountable problem not only of externally contrasting views but also of internal doctrinal differences within the two faiths themselves. Which group or sect is the best representative of each?

Christian Sects

There are three major groups of Christians; the Eastern Orthodox (Russian, Greek, Romanian, Syrian, Coptic and Ethiopian); the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. There are a few theological and doctrinal differences between the Catholics and the Orthodox — generally centring around the nature of the Blessed Trinity. However, there are radical and irreconcilable differences between the Catholics and the Orthodox on one hand and the Protestants on the other. Among the various Protestant Christian sects (of which there are several thousand) there are also theological differences which are quite serious and sometimes irreconcilable. Then in addition to these three mainstream bodies there are some other groups such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses who claim to be Christians but are not regarded as such by the others.

Hindu Sects

The Hindus are divided into two major defined groups;— the *Personalists* who believe in a Personal Saviour-God and the *Impersonalists* who believe in an Impersonal Absolute Reality. The Personalists are subdivided into the Saivas and the Vaishnavas, both having further sectarian subdivisions. The Impersonalists are sub-divided into the orthodox (Smarta) and the heterodox; and many further sub-divisions all professing variations on the core doctrines.

To represent the Christian position I have chosen the Holy Roman Catholic Church. The reasons for this are (1) The Church in Rome has an unbroken Apostolic succession going back to Christ Himself through His foremost apostle Peter. (2) The doctrines of Rome are well documented and uniform and (3) it is the most serious, liberal and universal of all the Christian establishments today. There are many theological similarities between Hinduism and the Catholic church and in India there has been an intimate relationship and dialogue for many years. One of the most outstanding examples of this meeting, is a "Christian" commentary on the Bhagavad Gita — the Hindu "Bible", by the late Venerable Bede Griffiths who had a Christian Ashram in South India. And the "Sermon on the Mount according to Vedanta" by Swami Prabhavananda. There is also a Hindu commentary on the Gospels (The Second Coming of Christ) by Swami Paramahansa Yogananda.

The Catholic dogmas are taken from a book entitled "Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma" by Dr. Ludwig Ott. For an alternative Christian view point I have consulted the "Articles of Religion" published by the Anglican Church. It is impossible to say anything affirmative about what the numerous other Protestant sects believe without drawing a chorus of protest from one sector or the other. Their beliefs vary from one extreme to another and as there seem to be as many groups forming, growing, dissipating almost daily as their are members — it is difficult to keep up. I appeal to those Christian readers who find that their view point is not represented adequately... to bear with me.

Both Christianity and Hinduism, like all religions are syncretic. Judaism is a development of Canaanite polytheism and Christianity is a blend of Judaic theology, Greek philosophy and pagan customs. Hinduism is a blend of Vedism and Buddhism. I have, in order to provide a counter perspective and clarity, referred to the Jewish and Islamic points of view on some of the issues.

Most Christian critiques of Hinduism ignore the theistic schools and focus on the Impersonalist/Pantheist school of thought. Therefore to represent the Hindu point of view I have taken principally, the standpoint of the Personalist/Theistic School of Vaishnavism to which the majority of Hindus are affiliated. I have tried to take a more generalised Hindu approach and have made references to the Impersonalist doctrines where necessary.

There will be many Hindu scholars belonging to other schools who would disagree with some doctrines that I defend — I beg their indulgence and refer them to the many polemic tracts that are available from revered teachers of all sects defending their respective philosophical positions.

I hope that this comparison will be the starting point of further research and study for those who are serious seekers, and that it will contribute to meaningful, unbiased inter faith dialogue. In order to facilitate the smooth reading of this book I have included a glossary of the most unusual terms at the end. This will overcome the need to keep referring to a dictionary.

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Sydney
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Points of convergence between Hinduism & Christianity

Although Hinduism has an unbroken tradition of over 6000 years and Christianity is only 2000 years old, and given the different locations and socio-historical situations in which they arose, there are several basic core doctrines on which both belief systems focus, but it is important to note that the terms are not equivalent and mean very different things. Their common doctrines are as follows;

1. Belief in One Supreme God.
2. Belief in the existence of a "soul".
3. A Revealed Scripture.
4. Sin.
5. Grace.
6. God's Incarnation and activity in salvation.
7. Eschatology – Final Judgment, life after death.
8. The final goal – Beatitude.
9. Religious life as a 'Service to God'
10. Creation.
11. Theodicy — the problem of evil.

Many of these doctrines are common to other religions as well, with varying differences of interpretation. The two most important factors which link Christianity and Hinduism are (a) the belief in the Incarnation of God and the love of God for humankind and (b) the cultivation of devotion and love for an intensely personal God.

The major divisive factor is that Christianity centres around the crucifixion, death and resurrection of an "historic" Jesus Christ — to quote Paul; "If it [the resurrection] were not so, our faith has been in vain"— Christianity is quintessentially a religion of FAITH based upon an alleged historic incident. Martin Luther the father of Protestantism claimed that reason is the enemy of Faith.

The core of Hinduism lies in "Self-realisation" — it is a systematic inquiry into the true nature of one's true being (Self) and the realisation of one's identity with the Godhead. Hinduism is primarily a religion of EMPIRICISM (on-going personal experience & realisation) based upon and fostered by reason.

Comparison of View Points

1. God

Christianity.

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, personal but without body, parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness; the Creator and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. God is separate from the world, but passionately concerned for humans. In unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Ghost.

The Athanasian Creed states;

" So the Father is God, the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three gods: but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity: to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord; So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion: to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords. "

The concept of the Trinity is rejected by some 'Christian' sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses as being unbiblical. But the doctrine of the Trinity is contained in all the creeds professed by all the mainstream churches and is based upon the teachings of the apostles. Jesus is completely divine and completely human. He was the 'Son of God' as well as being the second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Judaism

Judaism espouses an uncompromising monotheism. God, whose personal name is *Yahweh*, is described as the Supreme Being, the Creator, the Judge and Ruler of history and the Supreme Lawgiver. He has no form and is totally transcendent but compassionate and forgiving. There are three aspects of God's relationship with the world. Through CREATION God calls the world into being, through REVELATION God speaks to mankind, and through REDEMPTION God will sanctify all existence.

Islam

Like Judaism Islam is uncompromisingly monotheistic. Allah is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent and has no spatial relationship to anything but the most prominent aspect of Allah is his SELF-DETERMINATION — everything is according to his will.

Hinduism.

There is One Supreme BEING — called *Brahman* (The "Immensity") which cannot be described by words and is in fact intellectually inconceivable. Brahman is NOT what is meant by 'God' for the Abrahamic faiths. "Immensity" indicates the fact that the Godhead transcends all space and is not subject to any limitations, while "omnipresence" (Vishnu) denotes that He nevertheless fills every part of space with His entire Being. The former emphasises the transcendence, and the latter, the immanence of God. The Godhead is immanent in all its creatures, in its entire creation, but is in no way bounded by it.

The Hindu Scriptures declare;—

"The Truth is One, but the sages describe it in various ways." (Rik Veda)

There are two principle schools of philosophy with Hinduism:—

- The **Impersonalists** hold that Brahman is the Impersonal Absolute and the only Reality. The world for them is an appearance only (*maya*) with no objective reality.
- The **Personalist** school affirms that God is ‘Personal’. He possesses a transcendent divine form¹ and has absolute Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Eternity and Purity as His essential nature. His attributes such as love, compassion, mercy, solicitude, etc. are innumerable. He possesses all the good attributes imaginable and is devoid of all negative ones. Although spoken of as HIM, God being complete and perfect is conceived of as being androgynous — being the epitome of both the male and the female principles.

The Supreme Being is both transcendent and immanent. It is at once the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer/Transformer of the cosmos. Although One, It manifests in a threefold form; as **Brahma** He creates the universe, as **Vishnu** He preserves the creation and as **Siva** He dissolves and re-creates the universe. These three are not separate ‘gods’ but the embodiments of the eternal cosmic dynamics of the centrifugal, centripetal and integrating forces. The Supreme Lord is an ocean of unlimited compassion and mercy of whom we are all sparks of emanations.

"Thou art Brahma (the Creator) and verily thou art Vishnu (The Sustainer); thou art Rudra (the Redeemer) and thou art indeed Prajapati (the Lord of all Beings)". (Maitri Upanishad)

It is important to note that while in the Abrahamic religions God is male in Hinduism the Absolute Godhead is without gender. When It manifests as the trinity (*trimurti*) it manifests as both male and female. Hence each of the gods has a female counterpart. Brahma — Sarasvati, Vishnu—Lakshmi and Siva—Parvati.

It must be emphasized that “belief” in God is not an essential requisite for Hindus as it is for the Abrahamic faiths. The early schools of Hindu Philosophy were all non-theistic. Belief in God only has value insofar as it informs one’s life and renders it more ethical, spiritual and fulfilled, but it is not necessary for Liberation (*mokṣa*).

Brahman also does not demand recognition, adoration or worship. To worship or not is up to the discretion of individual devotees and aspirants. Brahman is more an object of contemplation and realisation that a Being to be adored.

¹ The “Form” of God is inconceivable as it is unlike any human form. But we tend to project onto the Divine

2. The Nature of Humankind

Christianity

All human beings are descendants of one original couple; Adam, who was created from dust, and Eve his consort who was created from his rib. There is some dissension within the various Churches as to the historicity of Adam and Eve. There are some Fundamentalist schools of thought which hold that they were a real and historical couple, and some modern rationalists consider them to be archetypes or spiritual representatives of mankind.

According to St. Paul, a human being consists of three parts — a soul, a spirit and a body. (1 Thess. 5;23. Hebrews 4;12) The soul is created by God from nothing — a new soul is created each time a baby is born. The soul, spirit and the body are inseparable. They form an intrinsic natural unit, so that the spirit soul is itself the form of the physical body. Although the spirit separates itself from the physical body at death; on the day of judgment all the bodies will be resurrected from their graves and united with their souls. The Catholics believe in the natural immortality of the soul but it is not clear exactly what becomes of the souls between death and resurrection.

Most Protestants reject the doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul. The body and the soul in their view are inseparably identical. They believe that the souls (along with the corpse) sleep in their graves until the day of resurrection. (1 Thess. 4;14, Job 14;10-12). Some Christian theologians believe in the existence of an eternal hell for the souls of non-believers, and some believe that non-believers/sinners are simply obliterated.

Some Christian schools of thought deny that the general resurrection is a physical event but affirm a belief in a spiritual resurrection of the soul.

There are those souls, which according to some Christians like the Calvinists, are predestined from birth for eternal bliss and some for eternal damnation. There are also many varying opinions on the subject of predestination. All Christians schools are of the opinion that animals have *souls* but do not have souls

Origen (circa 254 CE.) one of the first theologians of the Church also believed in the pre-existence and eternality of the souls as well as the possibility of reincarnation; but this doctrine was rejected by the Synod of Constantinople in 543 CE. (see appendix for more details of this Council). Origen was also one the earliest theologians to question the physical resurrection of the body.

Judaism

The Jews agree with the Christians that all humankind is descended from Adam and Eve. Some Rabbis teach that the soul is given to a body in order to animate it and some Rabbis under the influence of the Aristotelian philosophers believe in the immortality of an eternal and pre-existent soul. Some Rabbis in the Talmud even teach a form of reincarnation (known in Hebrew as *Gilgul-ha-neshamot*), others teach the resurrection of the bodies and some teach both a resurrection and modified form of reincarnation.

Hinduism

All schools of Hindu philosophy teach that all living entities, of which humankind is but one species, consist of a physical body and a “Self” — often mistakenly identified with *soul*.² The Self

² Sanskrit terms and Hindu philosophical concepts cannot easily be translated by Judeo-Christian terminology. The soul is something one has, and animals definitely do not have one. The jiva is a monad of consciousness that has a physical body! Every sentient being is a jiva.

(*jivatman* or *atman*) is characterised by consciousness and is an eternal indestructible part or mode of the Godhead (as sparks of a fire) and shares with God the essential attributes of Existence (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*) and Bliss (*anandam*), Eternality (*anantam*) and Holiness (*amalatvam*). Just as a sample of water from the ocean shares all the chemical properties of the ocean but is distinctly different from it in quantity, so is the jiva related to the Godhead. The number of jivas is infinite and is not related to the exact number of sentient beings present upon earth. There are many dimensions and realms of existence in the universe with countless Selves inhabiting each one of them.

The Self, being an emanation of the Divine, is naturally immortal; having no beginning and no end. In the embodied state, which has been attained through a 'fall from Grace', the natural attributive consciousness has become "contracted" and veiled by ignorance (*maya*). All sentient beings are embodied Selves and as such are essentially non different from each other in terms of their spiritual nature, the difference between them is the degree of ignorance (nescience) predominating. Animals are in a greater mode of nescience than human beings.

The body is merely a vehicle and an instrument whereby the Self experiences material existence and reaps the rewards of its past actions (*karma*). It is produced and decays after death in accordance with the bio-physical laws. The Self however transmigrates to another embryo to continue its spiritual evolution. The Self is the "I" that is referred to in relation to the universe of experience. It is the "subject" which experiences the body and mind as "objects". The body is constantly changing, but the consciousness which does not change, but perceives the physical changes is the Self. In both a corpse and a living body all the physical structures, organs and chemicals are present, in the case of a corpse the life force is absent. That conscious life force is the Self which has continued its transmigration.

3. Scriptural Revelation

Christianity.

The Bible consists of 66 books and two divisions — the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) which are comprised of the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets and Writings, and the Greek Scriptures (New Testament) which are the Four Gospels, and the Letters of St. Paul and the other Apostles. For the Christian the Bible is the revealed Word of God, but the Hebrew Scriptures referred to as the "Old Testament" are now obsolete for the Christian regarding the rites, rituals and ceremonies — only the moral precepts are still binding. Everything in the Greek Scriptures (New Testament) is relevant for the Christian. Some Protestant sects accept select injunctions of the Old Testament and reject others (e.g. the Seventh Day Adventists keep Saturday as the Sabbath in accordance with the Mosaic Law, and some fundamentalist sects celebrate versions of the Hebrew Festivals such as Pentecost, commanded by God in the Hebrew Scriptures.)

The Fundamentalist position is that everything in the Bible is the *inerrant Word of God* and everything spoken of, is literally true and historically correct. The Protestants believe that Holy Scripture contains all things necessary for salvation. The revelation is personal and on-going, and through personal readings in the Bible one can know what the Lord requires of each individual. This process of self-interpretation is based on the principle of "Liberty of Conscience".

The Catholic Bishops hold the Bible as the 'Word of God', but consider that the continued revelation is through the council of the bishops and not through self-interpretation of the Scripture. A distinction is made between that which is inspired *per se* (as it actually is) and that which is inspired *per accidens* (indirectly). As the truths of Revelation laid down in the Holy Writ are

designed to serve the ends of religious and moral teaching, inspiration *per se* extends only to the religious and moral truths. The facts of natural science and history contained in the Bible are not inspired *per se*, but only *per accidens*, that is, by virtue of their relation to the religious-moral truths.

The Hebrew Scripture was completed in its present form about 250 BCE. The actual canon it is popularly thought, was put together by Rabbi Akiva at the Synod of Yavneh in 90 CE. The New Testament was written in Greek, then translated into Latin by St. Jerome in the year 391 AD. and known as the Vulgate. After the Reformation in 1517 — 1545 it was translated into various languages under Protestant sponsorship.

The Gospel of Mark which is considered to be the first written Gospel was completed sometime in about 65 CE. Matthew and Luke wrote their Gospels sometime in the 80's and John in the 90's. The epistles of St. Paul were written around circa 45 and the Acts of the Apostles a little after that. The Canon of the New Testament as we know it was first collated by Eusebius the bishop of Caesarea and was compiled by the orders of Emperor Constantine at the Council of Nicea (325 CE.) Many writings, stories, Gospels of the other apostles, epistles and various documents were considered and rejected by the process of vote by the 200 Bishops present at the council. These rejected works are known as the Apocrypha or Pseudographica and are presently available in English. Most Christians – laity and clergy – study the Bible in their own language without referring to the original text.³

Over the past two thousand years self-interpretation of the Scriptures has led to countless heresies through misinterpretation and misapplication of various verses. This led to various schisms in the Church, the major one being between the Catholics and the Protestants led by Martin Luther. The Protestants then continued to disagree with each other over doctrinal issues and proceeded to disintegrate into the hundreds of sects that one finds today. Each one affirming their grasp of the truth and accusing the other of heresy.

Judaism

Revelation is the act by which God reveals Himself, His will, His commandments and His saving presence to mankind. This is done through means of appearances, manifestations and celestial voices. Mosaic Law — the Torah — is the highest type of revelation. Although all the books of the Bible are considered as sacred and divinely inspired, the five books of Moses enjoy a position of pre-eminence. The present day Old Testament is only a remnant of the far larger national literature of the ancient Israelites, most of which is lost forever. (These Books are all mentioned in the Bible — 'The book of the wars of Yahweh' (Numbers 21;14), 'Book of the Generations of Adam' (Genesis 5;1), 'The Book of Yahweh' (Isaiah 34;16), 'The Book of Yasher' (Joshua 10;13, 2 Samuel 1;18) 'The Cities of Canaan' (Joshua 18;9).)

Islam

Islam accepts that Allah has revealed His laws and agenda to all people — beginning with Abraham. The Torah (Five books of Moses) was given to Moses but was later changed and altered by the rabbis. Allah then revealed the Book of Psalms (*Zabur*) to David which was again altered. He then gave the New Testament (*Injeel*) to Jesus⁴ which was again altered by the Christians. The

³ Vide Dr. Bart D. Ehrman's "Forged" Writing in the Name of God— Why the Bible's Authors Are Not Who We Think They Are

⁴ The Muslims fail to realise the fact that Jesus wrote nothing down and that the New Testament was written by a number of authors over decades beginning about 30 to 65 years after his demise. They claim that the original revelation given to him by Allah was lost or destroyed and the new one was created by later Christians.

final and most perfect and unaltered version was given to Mohammed who was the last and the most exemplary of all the prophets.

Hinduism

Hinduism does not have one book but an entire library. All schools of Hinduism accept the corpus of the Veda as the ‘revealed’ Scripture. It must be noted that a *revelation* only ever occurs to the original person who received it — thereafter it becomes ‘hearsay’ hence the Vedas are spoken of as *Shruti* — that which has been heard. The Veda (which means "Knowledge") is traditionally considered to be eternal in the sense that the metaphysical concepts contained in this repository of wisdom are eternally true and infallible. Eternality is not applied to the actual texts of the Vedas. No orthodox Hindu therefore would ever consider "dating" the Vedas. Various dates of its compilation have been advanced by western scholars ranging from 1200 BCE back to around 4000 BCE (the latter date being based upon internal astronomical references and reference to the Saraswati river which dried up over 3000 years ago).

The Veda is considered to be *apaurusheya* which means it has no human author. The Vedas are the records of the mystical experiences and insights of great sages known as Rishis into the universal truths. The corpus of the Veda is divided into four books each containing hymns (*Samhita*) and philosophical speculation (*Upanishad*) about the nature of the Ultimate Reality. These writings are considered by modern scholars to be the oldest literary compilations known to mankind.

The Veda contains all that there is to know about God and the Divine Laws of the Cosmos. The existence of ‘God’ can be inferred by deductive reasoning, but actual knowledge of Him, His qualities, His activities and His Laws comes only from the Veda. The Veda is always studied in the original Sanskrit text which has remained unchanged through millennia. The interpretation and exegesis of the Scriptures (Hermeneutics) is governed by strict rules and guidelines which have been set down thousands of years ago. No self-interpretation is permitted and the guidance of a teaching authority — guru — is of paramount importance.

The function of Scripture is to teach us about those things which are imperceptible and inconceivable — but it should not contradict perception or logic.

The Veda is not generally made accessible to the laity for the same reason that quantum physics is not accessible to those who lack the education in the necessary areas. In order to study the Vedas one has to have a preceptor, a knowledge of Sanskrit as well as a thorough grounding in Mimamsa — hermeneutics or the canons of exegesis (the rules and guidelines for interpretation).

There are also secondary Scriptures known as the *Itihasas* and *Puranas*. The *Itihasas* are the two great epics — the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*; and the *Puranas* of which there are 18. These texts are encyclopedias of religious and spiritual information. They are elaborate commentaries on the core teachings of the Vedas and contain every type of knowledge from Mythology and Cosmology to horse-grooming and gardening! These books are freely available in translation to the laity.

4. Sin



The presenting existential problem in Christianity is SIN. All humans are ‘sinners’. Being a sinner alienates one from God. The purpose of the advent of Jesus and his death on the cross was to bring about a solution to this problem.

For Hindus the presenting problem is cognitive error (*avidya or ignorance*) of our true nature — this state of ignorance leads to suffering and rebirth. The solution is wisdom. Thus for Christians the problem is *ontological* — a contamination of our very essence. For Hindus the problem is *epistemological* — that is cognitive error. So sin means different things for Christians and Hindus.

Christianity

There are two types of sin;—

1. Actions which are breaches of God's Law and are thus an offence against God.
2. Original Sin which originated with the fall of Adam the First Man. A fall occasioned by disobedience and pride. This sin has been passed down through the generations from father to son, so that each person is 'born in sin' and thus has a natural propensity to sin.

There is no common consensus amongst the Protestants as to the exact nature of Original Sin. One of the most popular views is that Original Sin is not a propensity to sin but lust. Martin Luther, following St. Augustine, taught that the presence of the sex-drive is a sign of original Sin. Thus, because all people are infected by sexual desire/lust, mankind is therefore naturally depraved and incurably corrupt, and totally incapable of performing morally good actions. Mankind's will is not free. The Anglican Church teaches that of itself Mankind can do nothing but sin and therefore deserves the wrath of God. (Article 9 of Articles of Religion)

The Catholic Church teaches that in the state of Original Sin one is deprived of sanctifying Grace, and a soul which departs from the world in this condition is excluded from the Beatific Vision of God (but not necessarily condemned to hell). Most Protestant sects teach that all who die in a state of Original Sin are condemned for all eternity to suffer torment in hell or at least to an undefined eternal separation from God.

Sin can therefore be defined as "a loss of original righteousness and its essence consists of placing something else in God's place".

Judaism.

Sin is any transgression or departure from the right path enjoined on humankind by God through the Torah. There are several types of sin such as *het* — un-wilful sin, *avon* — wilful sin, and *pesha* — rebellious sin. There are also lighter and more serious sins. Generally speaking Rabbinical theology has no formal doctrine of original sin but it is assumed that no one is completely free from sin. No sin is unpardonable however, since man's power to sin cannot be greater than God's power to forgive. Atonement requires, repentance, confession to God and restitution. For certain sins only the Holy day of Atonement and death can bring complete forgiveness.

Islam

In Islam sin is the idea of personal independence and non-submission to the will and laws of Allah. The greatest of all sins is *shirk* which is the association of anything else with God — includes any form of religion other than strict monotheism and of course atheism — this leads to automatic eternal damnation with no chance of a reprieve.

Hinduism

Sin is defined as an act, the consequences of which, hinder one's return to Godhead. It does not cause separation from God nor does it cause God any vexation whatsoever. The essence of sin is summed up as follows; — "those actions which cause hurt and suffering to any other living being

are to be considered as sin; and virtue lies in those actions which bring joy and happiness to others". (*Mahabharata*)

All sin or propensity to cause suffering to others, is traceable to individual accountability, "sin" is not original but *adventitious* (accidental) in other words it is conditioned by time, place and circumstance. The Self (*atman*) is essentially pure and latently divine. The accumulated actions of the past birth give rise to the tendencies in this birth either to act virtuously or to sin. These tendencies or natural dispositions are seated deep in the sub-conscious mind. The threefold cause of sin is (1) selfish desire, (2) anger and (3) ignorance (Bhagavad Gita 3,37). Each individual is the master of his/her own destiny. The laws given by sages in the Scriptures are guidelines for spiritual aspirants and their sole purpose is to guide one back to Godhead. Breaking these laws does not occasion retributive punishment from God but simply retards one's spiritual progress. God does not legislate laws — humans legislate their own laws according to time, place and circumstances.

The reward of virtue is not dependent on faith. Everyone will receive the fruits of their own actions (*karma*). The result of virtue is happiness and the outcome of vice is suffering — all of which is experienced here in this world. Good works (merit) cancel the effects of bad actions (demerit). The load of sinful reactions that we carry from birth to birth can be reduced by the performance of good deeds, social service, pilgrimages, and acts of piety and devotion.

5. Salvation

Definition of Salvation

Christianity

Roman Catholic — Salvation is the receiving of Grace from God either through nature or the church (via the sacraments).

Protestant — Salvation is the change of position before God from guilty to innocent.

Judaism.

Salvation is the act whereby God delivers His people from distress, and the resultant state of such deliverance.

Islam.

Both faith and good deeds are necessary for salvation.

Hinduism

'Salvation' for the sake of this essay is taken as the closest approximation to the Hindu concept of Liberation (*moksha*) which is a realisation of one's true nature as part and parcel of the Godhead and different from the physical body and the ultimate unification with the Divine Nature to which that realization leads.

Some Hindu sects hold with the idea of Divine Grace as means for salvation others rely on self-effort.

The Nature of Salvation

Christianity.

Objectively the Redemption of the soul is the work of the Redeemer; subjectively the Redemption is the realisation of the Redemption by individuals, or the application of the fruits of Redemption to individuals (known as 'justification').

Christ's work of Redemption effected the salvation of humanity from the burden of sin. Redemption signifies the freeing from the tyranny of sin and its attendant evils (servitude to the devil i.e. evil actions and death). The Redemption objectively considered, was fulfilled through the teaching and directing activity of Christ. In a supreme degree however, it was effected by the vicarious atonement and the merits of Christ in His sacrificial death on the Cross. Through the atonement (crucifixion), the insult offered to God by sin was counterbalanced, and the injury to the honour of God was repaired. Through the merits of Christ the supernatural riches of salvation were acquired, which are to be dispensed in the subjective Redemption.

Fallen man cannot redeem himself. The only way of redemption is by accepting as one's personal saviour Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified and died for the sins of mankind and was raised from the dead on the third day. Salvation is of the "elect" group — the believers, and all spiritual changes in a person are in fact brought about by the Holy Spirit. There is no salvation outside of the Church.

Judaism

The Rabbis do not teach an elaborate theology of salvation. The idea of salvation in Judaism operates on several levels; as a socio-political liberation, as freedom from sin, or it can be a general cosmic transformation, or even a mystical experience.

Islam

Salvation for Muslims is a forgiveness of past sins and admission to Paradise.

Hinduism.

Liberation (*moksha*) from negative actions and their effects (*karma*) in the form of continued reincarnation, can be obtained in several ways because there are many ways to liberation and achieve beatitude. Each individual must follow his/her own path and work out his/her own liberation under the guidance of a competent Guru or Spiritual Preceptor according to the universal Laws (*dharma*) and in harmony with his/her own natural disposition and stage of spiritual development.

The path back to Godhead has four interdependent branches; —

1. Through doing good works in a spirit of total self-abnegation and absence of motivation for the fruits of these actions, but solely as service to God. (*Karma Yoga*)
2. Mystical union born of deep meditation (*Jñana Yoga*),
3. Through loving devotion to God (*Bhakti Yoga*) or
4. Totally surrendering oneself to God and relying on His Grace (*prapatti*).

Although some do look upon these four means as different paths they are in fact inter-dependant and over-lapping. Some Hindu sects teach total self-surrender and reliance upon the Grace of a Personal God for salvation, and others emphasise self-effort through the process known as Yoga

(mystical unification) in which one meditates upon the absolute and achieves the realisation of divine identity with the Godhead.

God Himself is ultimately the only means and the goal of Liberation. Liberation or Mokṣa for the Hindu is individual not collective. There is no "elect" or "chosen" group, all sentient beings can, and ultimately *will* be liberated from the cycle of suffering known as reincarnation.

Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa considered that all things would be restored to a state of Grace and Sanctity. All the damned Angels and souls after a long period of purification would be re-established in Grace and will return to God. This was rejected at the Synod of Constantinople 543 CE. (see appendix)

6. Divine Grace

There is an on going controversy, common to both Hinduism and Christianity between justification by good works and justification by faith. Some would believe that it is good works alone which will lead one to Final Beatitude, and some stress faith alone. Then there are many degrees of permutation between these two extreme views.

Christianity

The Catholic Church teaches that the Grace of God is universal and gratuitous. God gives to those who are upright, sufficient Grace for the observation of the Divine Commandments, (Ps 32,18; Matt. 12;50; John 14,21; Rom. 5;8–10.) He gives to all the faithful who are sinners sufficient Grace for conversion (Ez. 33;11; 2 Peter 3,9; Rom. 2;4.) and He gives to all the innocent unbelievers sufficient Grace to achieve eternal salvation (1 John 2,2; 2 Cor. 5;15; 1 Tim. 2,6; Rom 5;18). God is the *Efficient Cause* of Grace and Jesus is the *Instrumental Cause*. The Catholic view is that God can and does reward good deeds regardless of faith. Scripture says;

"Knowing that whatsoever good things any man shall do, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bound or free" Eph 6;8.

According to Romans 2;14 pagans are by nature able to fulfil the prescriptions of the moral law —

"For if the Gentiles, who do not have the law (Torah), do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves."

Most Protestants hold the view that God's Grace is earned through faith in Jesus alone, there is no other way of obtaining Grace. For most Protestant sects good works of themselves are irrelevant for salvation. Good works are considered to be a fruit of Faith and follow justification (Article 12 of Articles of Religion). Protestants consider that Good Works do not *diminish* the wrath of God but if they are done as a Christian they please God. The same actions done by non-Christians are totally worthless and they do not please God at all — in actual fact they are of the nature of sin. (Articles 13 of the Articles of Religion). According to this way of thinking there is no Universal Morality, all virtue is deemed as such only through faith in Jesus, otherwise virtue is no virtue at all.

Calvin (1550's) taught that it is absolutely impossible to loose the state of Grace once it was obtained. Luther's view (1500's) was that Grace is lost only through the sin of unbelief. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) — the Catholic response to the Protestant heresies, declared that the state of Grace is lost, not by unbelief alone but also by every mortal sin.

Judaism

Does not have a defined theology of Grace but teaches that the Jews are the Chosen people and are thus ensured salvation. Non-Jews who are righteous will also have a part in the World to come.

Islam

The Quran teaches the primacy of Faith and that all those who submit (Muslims) are rewarded eternal paradise and unbelievers or those who reject faith will be consigned to everlasting torment in the fires of Hell. Good works are recommended but the sins of the believers will be forgiven but Allah dispenses His grace to whomsoever he chooses.

Hinduism

The Grace of God cannot be earned, it is a gift freely given to all beings regardless of species, religious belief, sect, gender or sexual orientation. All that is required by God is an 'excuse' (*vyaja*) to shower His Mercy and Grace; and the nature of that excuse depends entirely upon God Himself. But since the Vedas, have enjoined upon us works such as charity, compassion, austerity, worship, helpfulness etc. we can therefore assume that good works in themselves can act as channels for Divine Grace. In any case, good works certainly have a positive result of their own, regardless of faith or dogmatic persuasion because of the existence of a standard of absolute morality and the perfect justice of God. There is also a teaching about "inadvertent merit" — in which merit is obtained even from works that are not intended as "good works" but inadvertently benefit others.

More than the individual Self wishes to be reunited with God, God longs to be reunited with every Self (*jivatman*) which is part and parcel of Himself (*paramatman*). The lord will not rest until every one has been liberated from Material Nature, and thus He has been and shall continue working throughout eternity for the liberation of all sentient beings. There are two types of Grace;

1. *kripa* – turns one toward religion and awakens in one the realisation of, and the desire to serve the Lord in devotional service and
2. *prasada* – grants liberation from the cycle of rebirths. God Himself is the Efficient Cause as well as the Instrumental Cause of Grace.

The existence of the Grace of God upon any individual cannot be known with any degree of certainty. It is given by God to whom He pleases (Katha Up. 2;23). The fact that a person is attracted, however so feebly to spiritual life is considered to be evidence of the type of Grace known as *kripa*. Withdrawing from spiritual life or 'back-sliding' is not an indication that Grace has been withdrawn but merely an indication of the power of *Maya* (the deluding potency of Material Nature).

7. Faith



Christianity

The term "Faith" in Christian theology is used in several ways: in its principle sense, it signifies personal recognition of the presence of God, and response to Him in trust and obedience.

The Roman Catholic Church holds that Faith is a theological virtue along with hope and charity. Faith is unquestioning belief in the doctrines of the Church including pre-eminently faith in the

divinity of Jesus as the Messiah. Loss of faith/belief leads to the loss of Grace and the loss of Grace can result in damnation.

Protestants believe that Faith is primarily reposing one's complete trust in the person of Jesus Christ and secondarily belief in the doctrines of the particular Church to which one adheres. There is also ample Biblical testimony to show that Faith is a gift from God, given to those whom He chooses (see St. John 3:27, 15:16, Acts 2:38, Rom. 8:30, 1 Cor. 12:3, Gal. 1:15)

Judaism.

In the view of the Rabbis, devout observance of the Sacred Law is more important than "faith" in the sense of formal assent to theological doctrines or "belief". Everyone will be judged by his/her actions with regard to the Biblical injunctions and not by faith or the creed that one professes.

Islam.

Faith is the formal and unquestioning acceptance of the dogma that "there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Messenger." Faith is also a gift which is arbitrarily given by Allah to whomsoever he pleases⁵.

Hinduism

Faith (*sraaddha*) is defined as a conviction which is grounded in logic and reason and must be consistent as far as possible with reality as it is perceived. *Sraaddha* is a helpful factor in one's spiritual practice. Without a conviction in the teachings of the Dharma there is no incentive to practice, and without practice there is no progress.

Conviction arises essentially from a realisation of the unsatisfactory and fleeting nature of consumerism which leads to disenchantment (*vairagya*) and a search for real happiness which is found in the Spiritual path alone. The presence of this spiritual awareness in the psyche arises from the accumulated impressions of realisations in past births. The absence of *faith* does not lead to damnation but simply to deeper attachment to Material Nature and a hankering for sense gratification which perpetuates suffering and the cycle of rebirth.

Whatever faith one has, in whatever form of God, the Lord Himself strengthens that faith and causes one ultimately to come to Him. (Bhagavad Gita 4.11) God reciprocates in whatever way the sincere seeker approaches Him. The existence of faith and devotion to God is due to meritorious works and spiritual practices done in the previous life as well as to the unsolicited Grace of God.

8. God's Incarnation



Both Christianity and Hinduism teach that God actively participates in the salvation of world. For this purpose He incarnates Himself in a material form. Christianity like the other Abrahamic religions are History-centric with a linear concept of time.

⁵ Those whom Allah (in His plan) wills to guide, He opens their hearts to Islam; those whom He wills to leave straying, He makes their heart close and constricted. 6:125.

Christianity

The Lord's incarnations are known to Christians with certainty as only two. Once in Bethlehem 2000 years ago in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and again some time in the future (the 'Second Coming') when He will preside over the "end of the world" and inaugurate the Day of Judgment. The purpose of the Incarnation is to act as a sacrifice through which fallen and corrupt mankind is justified before God.

Catholics teach that Jesus is the second Person of the Blessed Trinity and has a dual nature;— he is completely divine as well as completely human. He existed eternally before creation and was born without the intervention of a man through the blessed Virgin Mary who herself was born without sin. He is also conceived of as the "second" Adam. Through Adam, the first man, sin came into the world and contaminated all mankind. Through the sacrifice of Jesus, redemption from sin became possible. He is also conceived as the High Priest [of the order of Melchizedek] who is the unblemished sacrificial victim as well as the pure sacrificer.

In addition to holding the above doctrines concerning Jesus, the Catholics also give a special place to his mother Mary. It is taught that Mary was the "immaculate conception" in that she was born free of the taint of original sin and led a completely sin free life. (Finally declared as Dogma in 1854 by Pope Pius IX). The concept of the immaculate nature of the Virgin Mary developed from the doctrine of Mary as the "Mother of God" (confirmed at the council of Ephesus 431 AD). Mary according to Catholic teaching was a perpetual virgin;— prior to conception, during the birth process and afterwards.

The Protestants reject the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and accept only the Virgin birth of Jesus, they also do not accept that she remained a virgin after the birth as there is mention of the brothers and sisters of Jesus in the Bible (see Mark 6;3)⁶

Not all Christians have always been in agreement over the nature of Jesus (Christology), and right from the start there have been fervent arguments over this theological concern. The three most prominent strains of thought are as follows:—

Adoptionist	Arian	Nestorian
circa AD. 190	circa AD. 320	circa AD. 451
The Adoptionists argued that Jesus was born human in a natural way but became the 'adopted' son of God at his baptism by St. John the Baptist when the spirit of God descended upon him. He was equipped with Divine Power in extraordinary measure.	The Arians believed that there is only One God the father who is eternal. Jesus was the first and the highest created being and was one in essence with the father, he is subordinate to the Father and is called God only as an honorific title.	The Nestorians reject the divinity of Jesus declaring him to be the Messiah — a human who was specifically chosen by God to act as the redeemer. The historic, human Jesus acted as the vehicle for the Incarnation.

The purpose for which the Council of Nicea (CE. 325) was convened was to debate and decide once and for all the nature of Christ, and to compile the canon of the Bible. The teaching of Arius was condemned and he and his followers were declared heretics.

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus is a created spirit from heaven.

⁶ Muslims also accept the Virgin Birth of Jesus whom they regard as a prophet only and not the Son of God.

Judaism & Islam

The rabbis & mullahs categorically reject the concept of God incarnating, but accept that He can manifest Himself (theophany) in various ways — through fire, or in a cloud, or through angels etc. They both also agree that God acts in History for the benefit of his chosen people.

Hinduism

Hindus, holding with the notion of circular time believe the that Supreme Being's incarnations are innumerable and repeated in every cycle of Time⁷. God never limits His participation in the liberation of the beings & has promised to incarnate Himself whenever the need arises (Bhagavad Gita 4.7). The purpose of the Incarnation is to re-establish the principles of righteousness, to destroy evil-doers and to bestow Grace upon the righteous and to be personally accessible to all sentient beings. As long as there are sentient beings to liberate the Lord will continue to incarnate Himself and work for their upliftment.

There are three degrees of Divine Incarnation;—

- (1) God chooses a human being and endows him/her with extraordinary powers for accomplishing some purpose. (e.g. Parasurama or the Buddha)
- (2) God personally incarnates but with a fraction of His total being (e.g. Rama) and
- (3) the complete incarnation with all the Divine Energy (e.g. Krishna).

The advent of the first two degrees of Incarnation occurs in the normal biological way through a normal couple who have been chosen because of their exceptional merit.

In the case of Krishna, who is the only *complete* incarnation of the Supreme Godhead, the birth was miraculous in that He manifested Himself as an adult and then took the form of a baby. Krishna's physical body was not of flesh and blood but comprised of an entirely spiritual substance — He is completely God.

9. Eschatology — "Final Things"



Eschatology is the teaching concerning the "final things" and has to do with the consummation of the purpose of creation and particularly of humankind.

Christianity.

Adam, the first created being transgressed the divine commandment and God punished him with death which he transmitted to all his descendants. Death and decay in the present order of salvation is a punishment for sin. At an appointed time in the future Jesus will return (the 'second coming'), then there will be a 'Day of Judgment' and all the dead will then be resurrected from their graves and be judged. There will be a creation of a new heaven and new earth. The 'elect' will enter into a state or place called heaven to receive their eternal reward of bliss and the non-believers will be cast into hell for the rest of eternity. This condition of damnation is permanent and there is no second chance.

⁷ Only the Vaishnava sect among Hindus believe in the incarnations, the other sects such as the Saivites and the Arya Samajis reject the doctrine.

The Catholic Church teaches that immediately after death one experiences 'Particular Judgment', in which one's eternal fate is decided by a Divine Sentence of Judgment. Christ on his second coming will judge all mankind — this is known as the 'General Judgment'. According to the Catholics there is a place or state called *hell* but the Church has never taught that there is actually anyone there. The souls of the just which are burdened with venial (minor) sins at the time of death enter into *Purgatory*. This is a place of purification and lasts until the General Judgment. This doctrine of Purgatory is rejected by the Protestants in favour of an *eternal hell*.

The dead will arise with the same bodies as they had on earth (4th Lateran Council 1215). The bodies of the just will be remodelled and transfigured to the pattern of the risen Christ (Phil 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:42–44.). In other words they will be transformed into spiritual bodies. The bodies of the godless will also become incorrupt and immortal but will not be transfigured (Matt 18:8 et seq.). Their incorruptibility and immortality is an indispensable pre-condition for the eternal punishment of the body in hell.

Most mainstream Christian Churches profess that Christ *actually* died on the cross and was *physically* resurrected from the dead and ascended to heaven in a physical body. The Catholics also hold that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. Since she was the immaculate conception and full of grace she was preserved from the threefold curse of sin (labour pains, dependence on a husband, and toil), and therefore also from the effects of sin which is physical death.

Not all modern Christian theologians accept the doctrine of resurrection of physical bodies from their graves. Many rationalists are now of the belief that the resurrection is a purely *spiritual* event and not a biological re-organisation of the physical body. The historical, physical resurrection of Jesus himself is now in dispute among many modern theologians.

Until its condemnation in the 6th century 'Universalism' was the orthodox view of the Greek theologians. According to this doctrine, every human being shall finally be saved through the sovereign mercy of God. It is also known as 'the doctrine of Restoration'. During the middle ages it was a teaching associated with sectarian groups and pietists. It has now again found serious support among many theologians. In defence of this doctrine Rom. 11:32 is often quoted:—

For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

Judaism.

In Jewish thought the final days of the universe will include (a) the ingathering of all the Jewish exiles into the land of Israel, (b) the last great conflict between the forces of righteousness and the powers of evil [the war between Gog and Magog], (c) the Day of Judgement, (d) the advent of the reign of the Messiah, (e) the resurrection of the dead, and (f) the re-establishment of the original paradise upon earth. The fate of non-believers (gentiles) is regarded entirely as a matter for God's discretion and irrelevant to believing Jews — it is very seldom, if ever discussed. The Rabbis generally teach that the righteous of all nations do indeed have a part in the world to come.

Islam

Islam holds with a final day of judgement when all the bodies will be physically resurrected from the graves to be judged according to their belief (*iman*) & deeds. Believers going to eternal reward in heaven, and unbelievers going to eternal punishment in hell.

Hinduism

Death is a natural state and is the result of being born. Everything that is born must die and everything that dies will certainly be reborn (Bhagavad Gita 2:27). All created things must

eventually meet with destruction and the bodies decay and disintegrate according to the natural laws of dissolution. The ‘Day of Judgment’ for each person occurs immediately after death. It is judgment of the spirit and not of the body which is only an insentient vehicle — with no intrinsic powers of agency.

Hinduism teaches the existence of the states of both heaven and hell. Heaven being a state of superlative enjoyment and hell a state of extreme suffering. An extraordinarily wicked person who has constantly and consistently caused suffering to other beings will be assigned to hell to suffer for a period of time. The punishment is suited to the sin and is rehabilitative in nature. The extremely pious will attain to one of the seven heavenly realms to enjoy the fruits of their piety until their merit is exhausted; thereafter both these classes of beings will return to earth to continue their spiritual evolution. Life on earth is viewed as a school, if we have studied hard and learnt our lessons well, then we will enjoy a pleasant vacation and return to this world to continue our education. If we have failed and wasted our time in frivolous pursuits, then we will be subjected to certain disciplinary measures after which we will return to our previous class to re-do the lifetime.

Those who are neither very wicked nor very pious (which includes the vast majority of people), incarnate soon after death in other bodies according to their stock of merit (*karma*) in order to continue their spiritual evolution.

Liberation (*Moksha* or *Nirvana*) is a transcendental, purely spiritual state beyond that of both hell and heaven and is the only permanent state of no return. Earth, heaven and hell, all being created and conditioned phenomena are therefore limited in time and space and are impermanent. The causes of heaven and hell — in terms of sin and virtue, are conditioned and limited and so therefore, are their results — suffering and happiness.

Liberation is certain for all sentient beings, there is no state of eternal separation from God as all sentient beings are intrinsically parts and parcels of the Godhead and therefore belong exclusively to Him. The question of the one's reconciliation with God is not ‘conditional’ but *inevitable*, the limiting factor in this reconciliation is time not belief.

10. Beatitude — The Supreme State of Bliss

Christianity

The Catholic Church teaches that the resurrected bodies of the just and virtuous will possess four properties:—

- *Incability of suffering* — that is devoid of sorrow, sickness, death etc. (Apoc. 21:4. Luke 20,36.)
- *Subtlety* — a spiritualised nature which is not to be conceived of as a transformation of the body into a spiritual essence or the refinement of matter into an ethereal body. (Luke 24,39)
- *Agility* — the capability of the body to obey the soul with the greatest of ease and speed of movement. It forms a contrast to the heaviness of the earthly body which is conditioned by the Laws of Gravity. (John 20,19,26; Luke 24,31)
- *Clarity* — being free from everything deformed and being filled with radiance and beauty. (Matt. 13;43)

In these resurrected bodies the "elect" will enjoy eternal joy [beatitude] in the presence of God — the Beatific Vision.

Judaism

After death the souls of the righteous dwell in a celestial realm of spiritual delights. There is no eating or drinking, sexual activity or business, or rivalry, or hatred, the righteous sit with crowns on their heads enjoying the radiance of the Divine Presence.

Islam

The ultimate state of bliss for Muslims is eternal sojourn in a paradise (*janat*) of a decidedly hedonistic nature.

1. It will consist of gardens and vineyards (78:31)
2. The Muslims will lie on couches arranged in rows (52:17)
3. Every Muslim will be wed to beautiful virgins with large eyes (78:31, 44:51, 52:17-20, 55:56-58, 56:7-40, 55:70-77) although the number is not stated in the Quran, the Hadith says it will be 72 for each believer.
4. Every Muslim will also be served by a number of beautiful boys. (52:24, 56:17, 76:19)
5. There will be plenty of running water and fountains. (13:35 etc.)
6. There will be rivers of wine (47:15) and fountains of non-alcoholic wine (37:40-48)
7. And plenty of fruit. (13:35, 37:40-48 etc.)
8. The believers will be served with chicken flesh. (56:7-40)
9. They will have wealth, gold and silver ornaments, green silk garments and brocades in abundance. (22:23, 43:68-73, 55:70-77, 76:13-21 etc.)

Hinduism.

There are four different grades of liberation (Moksha).

1. Dwelling in the spiritual realm (*salokya*)
2. Abiding in the presence of the Divine (*samipya*).
3. Attaining a form similar to that of God. (*sarupya*).
4. Unification with the Godhead. (*sayujya*).

God is so merciful and caring that whatever spiritual state a devotee earnestly desires and strives for, He grants it. Although final Liberation (*Moksha*) from the cycle of births and deaths is a certainty, our sages teach us that it should not be made the goal of spiritual life. The purpose of life is to love and serve God for His sake alone — not for any reward He may bestow. The ultimate goal in the religious life is the attainment of unmotivated devotion (*bhakti*) NOT Liberation.

11. The Religious Life

Christianity.

The religious life is a life of service to God through service to humankind. This takes the form predominantly of social service and charity. Through hospitals, schools, soup-kitchens, caring for the poor, out-reach centres etc. The Catholics also believe in personal spiritual growth through penance, confession, fasting, meditation, saying the rosary, pilgrimages, vows, renunciation and monasticism. Protestants also consider prayer as an essential part of personal spiritual growth, together with reading and self-interpreting the Bible.

The rendering of "Christian charity" ranges from the absolutely selfless, like the unconditional type demonstrated by Mother Teresa of Calcutta or the Salvation Army, to evangelicals buying converts by offering incentives such as food, housing, medical aid and education (these are popularly known as 'Rice Christians'). The Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are dedicated to spreading the word by going from door to door.

Preaching & Converting.

The Catholics leave proselytising to specially trained members of the clergy who generally spend several years at theological training seminaries. Any candidates for conversion are required to spend at least a year in study and contemplation of the dogmas of the Church before baptism. Lay Catholics generally do not regard witnessing, preaching and proselytising as part of their personal duty. The authority to teach is vested in the clergy and this function is performed by the priests and Bishops who have had extensive theological and scriptural training.

Protestants in general and evangelicals in particular believe that witnessing and proselytising is an essential part of the religious life (if not the whole of it!). Every one who has "seen the light" is expected to share their faith with everyone they meet and to convert them if possible. Salvation is instantaneous, occurring the moment of baptism, requiring no personal effort on the part of the candidate except a declaration of faith in Jesus. Preaching can be done by anyone with an elementary knowledge of Scripture — usually based upon one's own personal interpretation and insights therein.

Judaism

The religious life consists of following the Holy Law (*halakha*) as laid down in the Torah and interpreted by the Rabbis. There is no active proselytising or preaching and conversion is allowed only after a thorough scrutinising of the prospective applicant and 2 years of study.

Islam

The religious life consists of following the Holy Law (*sharia*) as laid down in the Qur'an and interpreted by the Imams. There are five pillars — 5 times daily prayer, pilgrimage to Mecca, giving charity, fasting during Ramadan month.

Every Muslim is encouraged to engage in Da'wa (invitation to convert⁸) proactive proselytising or preaching.

⁸ Muslim missionaries nowadays refer to this as "reversion" affirming that everyone is naturally a Muslim but belongs to other faiths due to social conditioning.

Hinduism.

The religious life consists primarily of dedicating oneself to Self/God-realisation. It is a system of personal spiritual development through the medium of unmotivated social work (*karma yoga*) for the benefit of other sentient beings; through study & meditation (*jñana yoga*); through devotion (*bhakti yoga*). Vows, pilgrimages, fasting, ceremonial worship of icons, praying the rosary (*japa yoga*), and meditation all lead to mental purification and make the mind/body complex a suitable vessel for the realisation of the true nature of the Self and God who already exists within the heart of everyone.

Although social service does certainly play a part in any serious religious system, its religious institutionalisation is not stressed in Hinduism. One should first perfect oneself before attempting to reform others. Only those who have crossed over the ocean of ignorance and rebirth can lead others to the light. God has created the entire cosmos and has been preserving it and maintaining it alone for billions of years. He certainly does not need our help in running things! Social services are the duty of the democratically elected government which collects taxes for this purpose. The duty of the religious institutes is to teach morals, faith and to guide aspirants in their spiritual development. The duty of the individual is to perfect oneself morally. Every individual is called upon to practice loving kindness, compassion and charity to every sentient being that one comes across, every moment of his/her life!

Renunciation and monasteries (*ashrams*) play an extremely important part in Hinduism. The monks (*sanyasis*) and nuns are among the most important sustainers and propagators of the faith.

Preaching & Converting.

Hinduism is not an actively proselytising faith. There are no conversion programs or agendas. At the beginning of the Christian Era the entire South East Asian region up to Borneo and including parts of Southern China professed the Hindu faith. Conversion is by the process of adoption of the teachings on the part of the aspirant. The Sacred Law (Dharma) is not binding on non-Hindus, but whatever precepts of the Holy Law they choose to follow will bring them merit.

Preaching falls into two categories; exoteric and esoteric. Exoteric preaching is done in public and includes homilies on morals, compassion, charity and virtue. Esoteric preaching of the inner wisdom, is done in private to select disciples and aspirants. There is no instant salvation, the spiritual path is long and arduous — “like a razor's edge” according to the Upanishads.

12. Creation (Cosmogony)

Christianity

All that exists in the universe was produced out of nothing, by God alone (*ex nihilo*). God was moved by His Goodness to create the world for His own glorification. He created the world free from exterior compulsion and inner necessity. It is a good world but eventually God will destroy the world on the Last Day and create a new world (New Jerusalem) which will be eternal.

The Fundamentalists believe that the world was created in 6 days as stated in the Bible even though it is contradicted by science. In 1654 a Protestant divine Dr. John Lightfoot, using the ages of the patriarchs, and the ruling period of Kings given in the Bible calculated the date of creation to be at 9 am. 26 October 4004 B.C.! For the past 2000 years Fundamentalist groups have been regularly

predicting the end of the world using clues given in the Bible (particularly the Apocalyptic Books of Daniel and Revelations). The failure of the cataclysm to occur on each of the predicted dates, only spurs them on to even more frenzied attempts at Scriptural decoding!

The Catholic Church gives no positive decisions regarding purely scientific questions, but limits itself to rejecting theories which endanger faith. Other Protestant views range from modified Darwinianism to unquestioning belief in the 6 day Biblical account of creation.

Origen, an early father of the church was of the view that creation is eternal and that there is no reason to posit a beginning (or presumably an end) of the world. This idea was revived by Idealism in the nineteenth century. Modern Anglican theologians like Temple and W. R. Matthews have also advocated the eternity of creation.

Judaism

The basic principles of cosmogony (creation) in Judaism are determined by the first chapter of the Bible. Most traditional Jewish theologians have insisted that the creation came from nothing (*ex nihilo*). But some Jewish philosophers found evidence in the Bible itself to support the theory of creation from some pre-existent formless matter. Although there is much cosmological speculation in the Talmud and the Midrash, most Rabbis restricted the study thereof to initiates only, for fear of dualist and gnostic heresies creeping in. In general, speculation on the subject of cosmogony is avoided and most rabbinical authorities today agree that the biblical account of creation is to be read for its moral and religious message rather than for its "scientific" data.

Hinduism

The Supreme Being (Brahman) is the efficient cause as well as the material cause of the universe. The universe is an *emanation* or *projection* of the Brahman into existence. Through His power of omnipresence, Brahman pervades the entire cosmos from within and without. Nothing can be created from nothing, so Brahman Himself is the primordial substance from which the material universe arises, it exists in the Brahman and is withdrawn back into the Brahman at the end of the Creation cycle. The process of Creation is cyclic and is followed by a period of withdrawal and then re-emanation — it is an endless and eternal cycle.

Hinduism is pantheistic. The Created universe is related to Brahman as the physical body is related to the Self. The body is totally dependant upon the Self for its existence and exists purely for the purpose of the Self. So too the Universe is dependant upon, and exists solely for the purpose of the Creator.

Hindus have no issue with Darwinian concept of physical evolution but the focus is on a spiritual evolution in which the Selves animate lower forms of life and gradually evolve through various life forms until they attain the human state which is the highest and most desirable birth in the Universe. Birth in the heavenly realms or as gods (devas) is not desirable because only in the human form can one work out one's karma and attain Self-realization.

The purpose of the projection of the universe is essentially a mystery. Brahman has no external compulsion or inner necessity to project the universe because He is full and complete in Himself. So Hindus believe that the purpose of creation is *Divine Pass-time* (*Lila*) a cosmic sport in which Brahman manifests and world and enters into it in order to experience — an act which is an end in itself — it has no purpose other than delight (*rasa*).

13. Theodicy — the Problem of Evil

Christianity

Most Christian theologians teach the actual positive existence of "evil" and "the Devil". The Devil is a fallen angel called Lucifer who along with his minions, the demons, were created good by God and became evil through their own fault. Their principle sin seems to be that of pride and a refusal to serve. The Devil was installed as the *Prince of this world*. It is he and his host of fallen angels that are responsible for all the negativity, terror, and suffering that is experienced in the world.

The Devil and his minions possess a certain dominion over mankind by reason of Adam's sin. These evil spirits seek to do moral injury to mankind through tempting one to sin. The forces of evil can only tempt a person to that extent, which God in His wisdom permits (Cor.10:13.) They reside for eternity in Hell and are forever separated from God (Matt. 25,41). Part of Jesus' ministry was given to combating these forces of evil and exorcising them, for example the story of the Gadarene swine (St. Mark 5). Even Jesus himself was tempted by Satan (St. Matt. 4). Jesus also gave authority and power to the Apostles to cast out demons in his name (St. Mark 17). It is affirmed in Luke 22:3 that Satan entered into Judas Iscariot and caused him to betray Jesus (thus acting as a catalyst for salvation of humankind.)

In Christian teaching the supreme dynamic of human life is based upon the fact that each human being is the most cherished objective of these two external agents, God and Lucifer, no one can escape the constant attentions of both of them and one must of necessity choose one over the other. This perpetual cosmic struggle continues until the end of the world. All Christians by the act of baptism personally and actively join in this cosmic tussle between the forces of good and evil.

Judaism

In general Judaism accepts that everything created by God is good (Gen 1:31). However, the rabbis affirm the existence of evil through the operation of mankind's *bad inclinations*. Most Jewish theologians agree that evil is not a positive existence in itself but merely the absence of good. According to Judaism it is the motive which determines the good or bad nature of an action. Belief in demons or forces of evil plays a very unimportant role in official Judaism, and whatever their influence over mankind may be, it is reduced by the total omnipotence of God. The Devil never possesses any kind of adversarial role to God and certainly has no jurisdiction over the world.

Islam

Everything that happens in the world is due to the absolutely independent will of Allah. But there is also a firm belief in Satan, a fallen angel and demons (*jinns*). Allah both guides and misleads mankind according to his inscrutable will.

Hinduism

Hindu theologians reject the doctrine of the real existence of evil and the concept of a Satan. Nothing can be manifest in the finite world without its opposite. The entire spectrum of human experience and consciousness is qualified by contrasts — pairs of opposites. Good and evil, heat and cold, joy and sorrow are all finite, relative concepts which are limited to the psycho-physical experience. The transcendental state is beyond all dichotomies and is therefore indescribable. Our human experience is limited to the pairs of opposites and expression of that experience to comparisons. Everything in the world is conditioned by time, place, circumstance and participants.

Nothing is of itself either good or evil. It is the motive which is the determining moral factor not the action itself.

Radhakrishnan a one time President of India and a great philosopher says;—

Evil, error and ugliness are not ultimate. Evil has reference to the distance which good has to traverse. Ugliness is halfway to beauty. Error is a stage on the road to truth. They all have to be outgrown. No view is so utterly erroneous, no man so absolutely evil as to deserve complete castigation in a continuously evolving universe, evil and error are inevitable, though they are gradually diminishing. (The Hindu view of life — page 88)

There are five types of sentient beings in the Universe; animals, humans, earth-bound souls, gods (angels) and demons. One can take birth in any one of these species. The animals are characterised by ignorance and sloth, gods (*Devas* — lit. "Shining Ones") are characterised by compassion, goodness, holiness and purity; demons (*Asuras* — lit. "Anti-gods") are characterised by selfishness, egoism and self-gratification; and humans are a mixture of all of these qualities. Some human beings display the characteristics of gods and a few are totally demonic in their deeds. All categories of sentient beings are given countless opportunities for liberation. Spiritual teachers (gurus) are sent even to the demons and those in purgatory.

The "demons" are considered to be mischievous entities that cause chaos in the world but they have no power whatsoever to tempt humankind to sin. The motivating force of the demons is selfishness and egoism; the harm they are capable of doing to mortals is not moral damage but economical or psychological; incidental to achieving their own personal aims. They are simply another species of beings which co-exist with us. These demonic beings too will eventually all be redeemed and liberated and no being will be separated from God for eternity no matter how many millions of births it may take. Hindu mythology is replete with accounts of wars between the gods and the anti-gods. No Hindu theologian would accept these as historical accounts. They are cosmic verities, interpreted metaphorically as the internal spiritual battle of the soul striving to overcome the "demonic" forces of desire, anger, greed, pride, envy, delusion, ignorance, etc. lead by the "invincible" primary devil — the ego.

14. Attitudes to Other Religions

Christianity

Catholics believe (according to Vatican 2) that there is good in all religions, and all truth is a revelation from God. Catholicism does not reject what is good and holy in other faiths but claims that it represents the shortest and the direct approach to salvation. In fact some Catholic theologians say that there is no salvation outside of the Church.

Most Protestants concede that although there is some good and morality in other religions there is only *salvation through Jesus Christ*. Right wing Christians hold that the only true religion is Protestant Christianity (whatever form that may take). Many T.V. evangelicals (like Pat Robinson) demonise their opponents and denounce all other religions as forms of Satanism, (including Catholicism and contending forms of Protestantism!) and further claim that whatever good there may be in other religious systems is an artifice of the devil to delude people and lead them away from the true faith — Protestant Christianity — as they understand it. According to the traditional teaching of the Anglican Church whatever good non-Christians do, it does not please God, but in fact is a form of sin, good deeds only become such, after one has been justified by faith in Jesus.

Judaism

The righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come.

The righteous are considered to be those who obey the seven Noachian Laws which are:— 1. refraining from blasphemy, 2. rejection of idolatry, 3. practice of sexual morality, 4. refraining from committing murder, 5. avoidance of robbery, 6. abstention from eating a portion of a living animal, and 7. the administration of justice. Anybody who observes these seven laws will attain salvation irrespective of their theological or philosophical beliefs.

Islam

The “Religions of the Book” i.e. Judaism and Christianity are tolerated as redundant revelations. Islam being the last and the finest and the only true religion — all unbelievers especially idolaters i.e. Hindus, Buddhists animists et al. will burn for eternity in hell.

Some Jews, Christians and Sabians may be saved as Allah wishes.

Hinduism

Hinduism teaches that all religions have only a partial grasp of Truth. The reception and comprehension of the Truth is filtered through the mind of the individual which has been conditioned by various physical and psycho-social experiences. It is then expressed through the unique socio-political structures that exist in a particular society or social group. These relative differences of comprehension, expression and transference of spiritual experience and concomitant interpretation by others, results in the emergence of various philosophical schools, theological doctrines, mythology and varieties of rites and ceremonies — all are true and valid in certain respects.

According to the Hindu view, all religions and ideologies are acceptable insofar as they satisfy 4 criteria:—

- ❖ *Satyam* — Truth — their philosophy/ideology must be intellectually satisfying and be logical and able to sustain rational criticism.
- ❖ *Shivam* — Benevolence — they must contain a universally beneficial ethical code which is directed to the welfare of *all* sentient beings, and not applicable to the *elect* group only — there cannot be a double moral standard.
- ❖ *Sundaram* — Beauty — they must fulfil the human need for aesthetic fulfilment, through dance, music, architecture, sculpture, painting etc.
- ❖ *Shanti* — Peace — they must contribute to personal, communal, environmental and universal peace and harmony.

People and nations are different. It is clearly impossible for there ever to be ONE religion for all people, and it is immature to even think that there could be, yet there is a universal code which forms the basis of all civilised societies. These are the Universal Laws or Dharma, which, when followed, will certainly lead to spiritual growth regardless of one's faith, philosophy or theological convictions.

The 14 Hindu "Noachian Laws" are known as the *Loka Dharma* and are applicable to all humankind —

Self Development	Social contract
1. truthfulness	8. justice
2. self-control	9. non- stealing and cheating
3. pursuit of knowledge	10. monogamy
4. pursuit of wisdom [concerning Ultimate things]	11. abstention from anger
5. modesty	12 compassion to all beings
6. patience	13. forgiveness
7. contentment	14. absence of malice

(Bhagavad Gita 13:7 —11, Manu 7;92. Mahabharata Vana Parva 297;35 & Santi Parva).



APOLOGETICS

Critique of Christian Doctrines

All Hindus appreciate the ethical teachings of Jesus and admire the charitable work of the Church. The greatest problem for the Hindu in accepting Dogmatic Christianity is its claim to exclusiveness and the monopoly on Truth and Salvation. Hindus completely accept "spiritual" Christianity as embodied in the Sermon on the Mount, or in the teachings of Thomas A 'Kempis (14th century) in his book — 'Imitation of Christ'. Hindus also accept, and can in fact strongly identify with the teachings and experiences of the saints like St. Teresa of Avila (16th century) and St. John of the Cross (16th century) and the great Christian mystics like Meister Eckhart (15th century) and Hildegard von Bingen (13th century); but reject "dogmatic" evangelical Christianity — *Christo-fascism*.

The word "apologetics" is derived from the Greek *apologia* which means "to present a defence for". In this section the most common Christian dogmas are taken and examined from a Hindu theological point of view. Christians constantly use the word TRUTH to describe their stuff. The one, *True*, living God, the Bible is the *true* word of God etc. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof but when many of these claims are put to the test they are found wanting. The Christian rejoinder to this polemic is that these doctrines are a great "mystery". They cannot be examined or explained through finite human logic. They are the subject of Church teaching and remain matters of faith alone. If one's doctrines are based upon blind-faith then one does *not* have the right to assert those doctrines as absolute universal TRUTH, nor does that give one the right to claim superiority over other views. Yet there is no religious group more adamant about their elect status nor more thoroughly convinced of their own superiority than the Christians!

There are indeed many schools of thought under the vast umbrella of "the Christian Church". The doctrines of the Church were decided through various councils over centuries and are still evolving and changing.

Many of the beliefs of the first century Christians were very different from those of the 19th century and even modern theologians have views which differ quite radically from the commonly held beliefs of the pew-sitters. Moreover, modern Biblical scholarship is sometimes quite critical of the Bible itself in terms of authorship of books and historical content etc.

The doctrines here under criticism are *not* held by all Churches, taught by most theologians or even believed by the majority of Christians. They are *commonly* held beliefs which are actively promulgated by fundamentalists, evangelicals and charismatic missionaries. Even within the Church itself over the centuries many bishops, doctors, priests, deacons and theologians have themselves raised these questions, and they have often been, and indeed still are the subject of debate in ecumenical gatherings. Many of the early heresies focused on these enigmatic dogmas of the Church.

Why Critique?

When criticising Hinduism, Christian scholars show a remarkable and commendable depth of knowledge and breadth of acquaintance with the subject. Rigorous logical reasoning, scientific reckoning and anthropological and sociological principles are consistently applied to denigrate and to demolish Hinduism from 'within'. The most astonishing thing is that these same scholarly

and incisive methods are never applied to their own doctrines which are held to be self-manifestly correct, perfect and unimpeachable!

St Augustine (5th century) the father of Western Christian Theology enjoins;

"It is the duty then, of the interpreter and teacher of Holy Scripture, the defender of the true faith and the opponent of error, both to teach what is right and to refute what is wrong, and in the performance of this task to conciliate the hostile, to rouse the careless, and to tell the ignorant both what is occurring at the present and what is probable in the future..... Here entreaties and reproaches, exhortations and upbraiding and all the other means of arousing the emotions are necessary". (On Christian Doctrine Book 4; Chap. 4)

Hindus too are enjoined by their Sages and Scriptures to examine all teachings and doctrines, regardless of the source, by means of dialectics and logic in order to discern between doctrines that are true and those that are false. A teaching should only be accepted if it is logical and reasonable.

The Bible itself warns against false preachers and doctrines.

Eph. 5:9,10 For the fruits of light are found in all goodness and righteousness and truth; and so you must discern that which is acceptable before our Lord.

Col. 2:8 Beware lest any man mislead you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the teachings of men, after the principles of the world, and not after Christ.

2 Peter 2:1 even as there will be false teachers among you, who shall bring in damnable heresies,

So we begin our exposition with the encouragement and support of St Augustine one of the greatest of the Church Theologians and with the sanction of the Bible itself!

The Hindu Dialectic

Hindus believe that the Ultimate Nature of the Godhead (Brahman) is unknowable and inexpressible — primarily because God is the Supreme Subject and we, the objects without number are circumscribed by countless limitations, physical as well as intellectual. We are inseparable parts of the Godhead (Genesis 1:26.) and He has revealed Himself to us through the Holy Scriptures the Vedas. It is certainly possible to deduce for oneself the existence of God through the use of the intellect, but it is impossible to logically prove or demonstrate His existence to another! Wisdom and discernment between the real and the unreal and introspection through meditation are the means to Self/God-realisation.

The Veda emphatically declares ;

"The knower of Brahman attains the Supreme"! (Taittiriya Upanishad)

By knowing one's Self one can also know God because the Self is a reflection of the Godhead. The cosmos with its natural laws is a reflection (although somewhat distorted) of the transcendental Spiritual World. This intellectual approach is not foreign to the Bible.

Proverbs 19:2 He who has no knowledge of his own soul, it is not good for him."

Proverbs 2; 1-13. "If you will ... incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding. Yea if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice to understanding. If you seek it as silver, and search for it as for hidden treasure; then you will understand how to worship the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For it is God that gives wisdom; out of

His mouth come knowledge and understanding..... Then you will understand righteousness and justice and the uprightness of all good ways. When wisdom enters into your heart and knowledge is pleasant to your soul. Intelligence shall preserve you, and the understanding of the pious men shall deliver you; that you might be delivered from evil ways, from men who speak perverse things, who forsake the path of uprightness to walk in the way of darkness."

Proverbs 4;7. "Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom; with all your substance get understanding".

So when a doctrine is presented to us by another group as the 'Ultimate and *Only Truth*', it is our right and necessity to question its validity in terms of our own empirical religious experience. In the teachings of other faiths and masters there are many points of convergence, and also many doctrines upon which there is a possible compromise, but there are also certain doctrines and dogmas which we could never accept, principally because they are irrational and inconsistent.

The Hindu Premise — The Nature of God⁹.

"God... is absolutely auspicious and is opposed to all that is evil. His essential nature consists of infinity, knowledge and bliss absolute, and these characteristics distinguish between Him and all other beings. God is a great ocean of innumerable auspicious attributes which are intrinsic to His nature and cannot be surpassed — some of them being knowledge, power, lordship, immutability, creative potency and splendour.

God has a divine form, but this form is inconceivable (by the human mind) divine, indescribable, eternal and immaculate. God is a treasure-house of limitless perfections such as radiance, beauty, fragrance, tenderness, pervading sweetness and youthfulness.... The nature and qualities of God transcend all thought and words.... The Supreme Being, Narayana, projected the entire universe, beginning with Brahma (the Demi-urge) down to plants and minerals. Being inaccessible in His transcendent form for meditation and worship by (conscious) beings and being an ocean of compassion and loving condescension, maternal affection and generosity — He took forms in the likeness of the various kinds of creatures.

In this act of self-embodiment, His own supreme nature was not compromised. Thus the Supreme Lord took birth in the world in order to receive the worship of devotees and in order to grant them their desired goals comprising of *Dharma* (righteousness, duty), *Artha* (material prosperity), *Kama* (Love) and *Moksha* (Liberation), each in accordance with his/her individual desires.

Under the pretext of relieving the earth of its burdens but really in order to make Himself available for us (frail humans) to take refuge in Him, the Lord incarnated on the earth as Sri Krishna. He thus manifested Himself to all beings. He engaged in divine pastimes which captivated the minds and hearts of all, high and low. He spread joy and beatitude over the entire world with the nectar of His glances and speech, demonstrating His boundless compassion, friendliness and love for all. The Yoga of Devotion has been taught [by God Himself] as the pathway to the Ultimate goal of Liberation/salvation".

⁹ This is a description of Ramanuja who was one of the greatest of the theologians advocating the path of devotion to a Personal God.

This decisive and comprehensive description of God is by the Great 11th century saint & theologian Ramanuja and it sums up the Hindu position. Any teaching that is contrary to this affirmation and which imputes imperfection or evil to God is anathema to Hindus.

There are many Protestant Christians who aver that only Christians worship the "Living God". Whatever we Hindus call "God" or worship as the Supreme Lord is not the "Living God". It is either a "false god" or "the devil" (1 Cor 10:19-21). This doctrine is absurd in the extreme.

There is One Creator of the Universe, One Supreme Being referred to in Hebrew as *EL* or as *Elohim* — which means 'gods' (The plural form is unusual and enigmatic). El was the High God of the Phoenician pantheon and was in fact the most important god of all the Semitic people of the Middle East prior to, and during the consolidation of the Hebrew tribes.

In English this Being is called 'God', in Latin— *Deus*, in Greek — *Theos*. We refer to the Supreme Lord as *Brahman* — the Immensity, *Siva* — the Auspicious One or *Vishnu* — the All-Pervading One. Nomenclature may differ but the Being referred to is ONE. This view is supported by the Bible itself.

Psalm 22:28 For the kingdom is the Lord's and He is ruler over the nations (i.e. non-Jews).

1 Cor. 8:6 To us there is One God, the father from whom comes every thing.

Rom. 3:29 Why? Is God the God of the Jews only? Is He not also God of the Gentiles? Yes, He is God of the gentiles also.

Those who claim to have a monopoly on God are deluding themselves if not others. Demonising that which others call God leads to the general demonization of that God's followers — one's opponents, in order to justify treating them as sub-human — a process which rapidly leads to enslavement, colonisation, dispossession, oppression and ultimately even genocide. Christendom has had 2000 years in which to perfect these particularly nasty traits.

2. The Doctrine of substitutionary suffering or vicarious sacrifice

The doctrine that Jesus the "Son of God" died for our sins is contrary to the cosmic law of Justice (as you sow so shall you reap) and causes one to question the rectitude of God and to doubt His omnipotence.

This doctrine is based upon the Judaic sacrificial ideology. In the first dispensation (before Jesus) forgiveness of sins is "bought" with the blood of sacrificed animals. In the new dispensation the substitutionary sacrifice culminates in the dogma of the ultimate sacrifice — the human sacrifice — and even goes one step further; the sacrifice of God Himself! *God as High-priest sacrifices Himself to Himself in order to appease Himself.* How does one reconcile this theory with the witness of Peter;

1 Peter 1:17 Because it is written be ye holy, even as I am holy, and if you call on the Father who is impartial and who judges every man according to his works.

If God is impartial and just, and judges every person according to his works, then how can the guilt of millions be expiated by the death of one man who is perfectly sinless? Redemption as the regenerative act of the innocent Son of God being sacrificed for all humanity is theological sadomasochism — absurd, inadequate and limited in historical time-space.

It is illogical and incomprehensible to a Hindu that God should become inconsolably enraged because of humankind's errors, then incarnate, and atone for the sins of mankind through sacrificing

himself to himself, to appease himself, when all he need do is cast one loving glance over all humanity!

Moreover, if the alleged Christ who died such a death was the pre-existent Son of God and the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, what could death mean to Him? The alleged *sacrifice* would therefore be nothing but a farce because he knew he would arise again in three days. A sacrifice means that something is given up — in this instance nothing was given, nothing lost. How can an omniscient and omnipotent being suffer? The rejoinder is that he was totally human and totally divine — but these two are contradictory characteristics and cannot exist logically in one being in fullness.

If redemption is only through the blood shed by the allegedly historical Jesus¹⁰ what is the fate of the billions of souls born prior to Jesus in the 198,000 years that homo sapiens has been on the earth? Or those who were born later without ever having been given an opportunity to hear about this sacrifice and to accept or reject it?

Matt. 18;14 Even so your Father in heaven does not want one of these little ones to be lost.

One of the orthodox Christian views of the death of Jesus is that it was a "ransom" paid to the Devil. (Matthew 20;28) In human terms a ransom is paid to a person over whom one has no control and is unable to defeat. This would imply that Satan is more powerful than God. God pays a ransom to Satan (The Prince of this World) through the torture and murder of his only begotten Son (who is himself). God, we are told, could not tolerate Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac, how could he thus tolerate the sacrifice of his own Son when he could destroy Satan with one puff of his breath?

If God has created this Universe and all in it from *nothing* and if he truly desires the salvation of all souls surely he could provide other means for redemption. If God, before the incarnation of Jesus, forgave sins through animal sacrifices and redeemed souls through fulfilment of his Holy Law, what external factor has now compelled him to redeem only those who believe in the historical Jesus — his son? If there is no external compelling factor one must attribute the defect of malevolence or capriciousness to God!

Rudolph Bultmann a contemporary Christian Theologian says;—

How can the guilt of one man be expiated by the death of another who is sinless — if indeed one may speak of a sinless man at all? What primitive notions of guilt and righteousness does this imply? And what a primitive idea of God? The rationale of sacrifice in general may of course throw some light on the theory of the atonement, but even so, what a primitive mythology it is, that a divine Being should become incarnate, and atone for the sins of men through his own blood!

Or again, one might adopt an analogy from the law courts, and explain the death of Christ as a transaction between God and man through which God's claims on man were satisfied. But that would make sin a juridical matter; it would be no more than an external transgression of a commandment, and it would make nonsense of all our ethical standards. (Kerygma and Myth, ed. H.W. Bartsch, Vol 1 SCM Press)

St. Thomas Aquinas, (1225-1274 AD.) like St. Augustine (354-430 AD.) taught that God, through his omnipotence, could have redeemed mankind in many other ways. It would be undue limitation of the divine omnipotence, wisdom and mercy, if the incarnation (Jesus) were to be the sole means

¹⁰ There is absolutely no independent historical evidence that Jesus actually existed. There are only passing references made in Josephus which most scholars now consider as interpolations of a later date. Even St Paul makes no reference to Jesus' physical virgin birth, nor to his earthly life.

of redemption. God can without injury to his justice, bestow forgiveness and grace on the sinner even without adequate atonement or any atonement at all.

3. The doctrine of the 'Elect' — Free-Will & Predestination

This doctrine of the "Chosen People" which is common to the Abrahamic coalition viz. Judaism, Christianity and Islam is dogmatic, coercive and monopolist. It is a dangerous doctrine because if one accepts the significance of God's "chosen" the next step is to accept the insignificance of God's "un-chosen", and then follows a justification of persecution against those "rejected" by God and therefore in league with the Devil. Most of the genocide that we have witnessed is derived from this idea of "the elect".

The historical reality of this pernicious doctrine can be seen in the genocide of the Canaanites and total extermination of the other six nations of indigenous people by the Israelites, the dreadful persecution of the Jews by Christians for 2000 years, the unspeakable horrors of the Crusades and the massacres and pillaging of the "unbelievers" by the hordes of Islam.

The doctrine of the "elect" leads to the doctrine of predestination in which people are ear-marked from birth or the creation of the world, either for redemption or damnation. This clearly contradicts the much vaunted doctrine of free-will.

Rom. 8:30 Moreover those whom He has marked in advance, He has called.

Gal. 1:15 But when it pleased God, who had chosen me from my birth and called me by His grace.

Eph 1:11 By whom we have been chosen as He had marked us from the beginning so He wanted to carry out everything according to the good judgment of His will.

If certain souls are predestined for heaven or hell from the beginning of time what is the point of preaching, religious instruction, repentance and the Sacrifice on Calvary? Every individual is born with different potential, talents, intelligence, understanding, skills, instincts and tendencies. Why does a just God produce an endless variety of different souls, making some Christian, some Jewish, some Hindu and then condemn most of them to eternal damnation on the basis of following their own instincts or national and socio-economic conditioning?

Election of the faithful to eternal bliss and appointment of eternal damnation for unbelievers is disgusting, chauvinistic, despotic and vindictive. It contradicts the doctrine of a Universal Saviour and imputes partisanship, bias and wilfulness to God.

It is repeatedly stated in the Bible that Faith is a gift from God;

John 15:16 You did not choose me, *but I chose you*, and I have appointed you.

Acts 2:38.. so that you may receive *the gift of the Holy Spirit ..*

Rom. 8:30 Moreover those whom *He has marked in advance* , He has called ...

1 Cor. 12:3 no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit .

and that unbelief is also from God;

Rom. 11:18 As it is written, God has given them a stubborn spirit, eyes that cannot see, and ears that cannot hear, to this very day.

What then is the point of preaching and converting? Where is the justice of God? If God has purposely withheld from us the gift of faith in Jesus and the blessings of the Church, will He then condemn us to eternal damnation because we are powerless to do anything else? If the all-compassionate God sincerely wishes to save everyone why can He not simply make everyone accept the form of Christianity which He most favours?

4. The doctrine of one single birth

When compared to infinity, the span of human life is a split second. How can the results of this exceedingly short life span mean anything in eternity in terms of the after-life which is said to be eternal. How does one explain the moral injustices accruing in cases of un-merited suffering? Why does a compassionate God allow innocent people to suffer? Why are people born with handicaps? Why do so many people prosper with relative ease and others live a life of constant sorrow and hardship? Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper? Why are there wars, massacres, droughts, floods, epidemics and so on? The general explanation is that it is the work of the devil or perhaps the [capricious] will of God.

Reincarnation and the doctrine of karma (as you sow so shall you reap) is the only rational explanation for the variegated human conditions. It is the only explanation that does not lead to imputation of imperfection and capriciousness to God.

5. The doctrine of the mortality of the soul

There are those Protestants who hold that the soul is not naturally immortal. The soul dies with the death of the body and will be resurrected on the day of judgment. (1 Thess 4:14, Job 14:10-12 Ecc 9:5,10). There are also teachings to the contrary;

Gen. 2:7. "And God formed Adam out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being."

Here we have the account of the origination of the soul. The physical body is created from dust which God had created from nothing. He then infuses it with the soul which comes from His Being just as the breath which we exhale has permeated our whole body.

Gen. 6:3 Then the Lord said, My spirit (*ruhi*) shall not dwell in men forever, because he is flesh; let his days be a hundred and twenty years.

Here the soul (*ruah*) is identified as the spirit of God. The body is simply flesh a material entity, whereas the spirit is of God. God is immortal therefore the spirit or soul too which is from God must be immortal.

I Kings 17:21,23 O Lord my God, let this boy's soul return to him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the boy returned to him again and he revived.

This verse indicates that the soul had left the body. (An "out of body" experience the occurrence of which has been confirmed by medical science — see "Life after Life" by Dr. Raymond Moody MD.) If the soul can exist outside of the body then it is not bound by the laws which govern the physical body. In this incident the boy was not resurrected he was revived after having stopped breathing.

Job 12:10 Because in His hand are the souls of every living thing and the spirit of all mankind.

Eccl. 12:7 Then the dust shall return to the earth as it was; and the soul shall return to God who gave it.

Here it is clearly stated that the souls belong to God they are different from the body. The body dies and the soul returns to God. God is eternal and therefore whatever is with God can also be assumed to be eternal. The very words of Jesus are;

Matt. 10;28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but who cannot kill the soul.

The Lord Jesus himself has thus stated that death of the body is not synonymous with the death of the soul.

6. *The Doctrine of Eternal Damnation*

The existence of a permanent state of eternal suffering called Hell contradicts the concept of a God of infinite mercy, compassion and love. The two are mutually exclusive. The Bible gives the following descriptions of God's attributes;

Psalm 86;15 But thou, O Lord God, *art full of compassion* and gracious, long-suffering and bountiful in love and Truth.

Psalm 85;2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou has pardoned all their sin.

Psalm 78;38 He was *full of compassion*, the Forgiver of sins, and destroys not; yea, many a time did he turn His anger away not stirring up all His wrath.

Psalm 36;7 How abundant is thy loving kindness, O God.

Psalm 37;28 For the Lord loves justice, and He forsakes not the righteous ones; he keeps them forever.

1 John 4;8 He who does not love does not know God; for *God is love*.

The purpose of punishment is to reform the offender and to teach him the error of his way. Any punishment which does not contribute to the rehabilitation of the offender is malicious and sadistic. The concept of eternal retribution for sins (principally the sin of non-belief in the sole redeeming potency of Jesus) indicates a wicked, nasty, vengeful, despotic and malicious God. This doctrine is incompatible with the teaching of Jesus to Peter.

Matt. 18;22 Then Peter said to him; "My Lord, if my brother sins against me, how many times should I forgive? till seven times?" Jesus said to him; "I do not say to you up to seven times but up to seven times seventy seven!"

It is blasphemy to teach that the Lord who forgave and prayed for those who crucified Him, would be incapable of forgiving those who do not believe in Him. (Luke 23;34. And Jesus said; O Father forgive them for they know not what they do.)

Jesus famously said "turn the other cheek", "if someone takes your jacket – give him also your shirt," "love your enemies", "forgive them that hate you" etc.

But the prince of peace also said:—

Luke 19:27 But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be a king over them — bring them here and kill them in front of me."

Matt. 25; 41-46 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.....'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

If the Lord is incapable of forgiving, then He falls short of the standard that He Himself sets for the believers on earth! Apparently the cosmic hell would be infinitely worse than a concentration camp

as there would never again be death to release the victims from their indescribable slow sadistic torment!

7. The doctrine of Original Sin — Sexual desire & Death the result of sin.

This doctrine invented in the 5th century by St. Augustine teaches that as a result of the sin of the first man Adam; all mankind is infected with an inherent, radical, natural depravity. This *infection* is passed down from parents to children and is manifested as sexual desire and eventual death.

This foolish teaching is an insult to the divine nature of the soul. Why does God create the soul pure and perfect in His own image and then immediately infuse it into a sinful and corrupt entity with natural cravings which He abhors?

The myth of Adam & Eve was taken from the Jewish Scriptures, and the Jews do not have a doctrine of original sin and there is in fact no sound Biblical basis for it.

The doctrine that "the wages of sin is death" is also unsubstantiated. If we read Genesis 3 we learn that the punishment for Adam's sin of disobedience is **toil**.

Gen. 3:19 *In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread until you return to the ground.*

Eve was punished with labour pains and subjugation to her husband;

Gen. 3:16 *in pain you shall bring forth children, and you shall be dependent on your husband and he shall rule over you.*

This clearly shows the result of Adam's sin is not a contagious condition of original sin which is the cause of death but the curse of every man having to sweat for a living. In fact in modern society most men do not "sweat" for a living and so this divine curse has been annulled by the industrial revolution and social improvement.

The divine punishment for Eve's sin has also effectively been annulled by improved obstetric care, so there is also no longer any need for women to suffer in labour. Modern society has also improved the lot of women who are independent of their husbands and share equality with them.

There is no mention here of any original sin infecting all their descendants. This doctrine is unethical, irrational and absurd. Jesus Himself acknowledges that all men are *not* sinners;

Mark 2:17 *When Jesus heard it He said to them. Those who are healthy need no doctors, but those who are seriously ill; I came not to call the righteous but sinners.*

or are we to presume that Jesus was being cynical and sarcastic?

To quote Rudolph Bultmann;—

Again, the biblical doctrine that death is the punishment of sin is equally abhorrent to naturalism and idealism, since they both regard death as a simple and necessary process of nature. To the naturalist death is no problem at all, and to the idealist it is a problem for that very reason, for so far from arising out of man's essential spiritual being it actually destroys it.

The Christian idealist is faced with a paradox. On the one hand man is a spiritual being, and therefore essentially different from plants and animals and on the other hand he is the prisoner of nature, whose birth, life, and death are just the same as those of the animals. Death may present him with a problem, but he cannot see how it can be a punishment for sin. Human beings are subject to death even before they have committed any sin.

And to attribute human mortality to the fall of Adam is sheer nonsense, for guilt implies personal responsibility, and the idea of original sin as an inherited infection is sub-ethical, irrational, and absurd.

Animals are also subjected to sexual desire and death — are we to assume that they are also participants in the Original Sin? This foolish doctrine was vehemently opposed in the 5th century by many bishops, clergy and doctors of the Church led by Bishop Pelagius. Eventually through bribery, royal influence and false accusations the proponents of this doctrine (St Augustine and his followers) had Pelagius declared an heretic and excommunicated. It then took another 60 years until this doctrine was finally accepted as the official Church teaching.

8. The Doctrine of the Day of Judgment and the Resurrection.

The mythical eschatology (teaching about final things) of the Bible is untenable for the simple reason that the second coming (*parousia*) of Christ never took place as the New Testament expected. All the apostles including Paul expected the second coming and the Day of Judgment within their life-times. ("Truly I say unto you, this generation will not pass away until all these things happen" — St. Luke 21:32). This did not happen, as every school child knows, the world continues and will still continue for many thousands of years to come.

The concept of a Universal Day of Judgment at some unspecified future time is unreasonable and unintelligible as it serves no purpose. Some people are exempt from this future Day of Judgment. Moses and Elijah were seen transfigured along with Christ, (St. Mark 9:4) presumably because of their saintly character. Elijah bypassed both the resurrection and the day of Judgment and was transported bodily into heaven in a chariot of fire. (Elijah was also personally responsible for the deaths of 552 men, see 1 Kings 18:40, 2 Kings 1:10-12.) Jesus resurrected a young man on his way to the grave-yard, the Bible does not tell us if he remained immortal or whether he died again. One of the bandits crucified with Christ was also exempt from resurrection and the Day of Judgment, and immediately attained paradise. Enoch and several others were also exempt. Lazarus was resurrected from the dead after he had begun to decompose, he was gathered we are informed, to Abraham's bosom when he finally died, without having to sleep in his grave until resurrection, (presumably because this had already been accomplished once).

Resurrection of corpses from their graves is crude materialism and contradicts the natural laws of biology. If God only makes eternal life available to mankind through the resuscitation of corpses, then His actions are inextricably involved in a nature miracle. Why should salvation take this particular bizarre form? How can this horrible event possibly be the fulfilment of human life and the realisation of mankind's true being? One can directly perceive a difference between the consciousness which is a sign of the soul and the physical body which consists of chemical interaction. The doctrine of physical biological resurrection is even brought into question by the testament of the Scriptures themselves;

Eccl. 12:7 Then the dust shall return to the earth and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.

John 3:6 What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit

John 6:63 It is the spirit that gives life; the body is of no account; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

1 Cor. 15:44 It is sown a natural body and is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.

1 Cor. 15:50 Now this I say my brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit in-corruption.

These verses demonstrate that there is a distinction between body and soul, between the physical and the spiritual; they cannot be one and the same – they are inter-dependent but not ONE entity. The material resurrection of dead bodies is an illogical doctrine as well as being of dubious scriptural testimony. Even at the time of Christ there were schools of thought — namely the Saducees who rejected the doctrine of resurrection.

In the Bible we come across a description of a scene from a Steven Spielberg movie;

Matt. 27:52,53 And the tombs opened; and the bodies of a great many saints who were sleeping in death rose up and went out; and after his resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared to a great many.

It is remarkable that such a horrific phenomena such as the graves spewing out the dead and them marching into Jerusalem and appearing to many, left the populace unaffected. Josephus a contemporary historian makes no mention of it, neither does the great philosopher Philo of Alexandria, and there is no record whatsoever in Jewish tradition! Besides how is it possible that there were saints before Jesus — is it not the teachings of Jesus that makes one a saint? After rising out of their graves, marching into the city and appearing to many, what happened to them? Did they all die again?

We have already established on the basis of the Biblical texts the real doctrine that the soul does not die when the body dies. This is also the opinion of the Rabbis who are certainly not lacking in understanding of the Bible. The next question to be faced then, by the Protestant divines is what happens to the soul between death and the final day of Judgment at the end of the world?

Many would speculate that they simply lie in a state of suspended animation in their graves while others contend that the soul remains in the presence of Christ until the resurrection. In truth there can be no answer to this question. No doubt evangelical thinkers can produce many arguments in relation to this question, but there is no answer. The whole framework of evangelical "theology" is internally inconsistent and riddled with insuperable obstacles for the intelligent, questioning and spiritually inclined seekers: both Christian and non-Christian.

9. The Doctrine of Evil & Satan.

Most reasonable people would agree that genocide or "ethnic cleansing", murdering women and babies, raping (virgin) girls, maiming or slaughtering herds of animals, destroying fruit-bearing trees and polluting wells is objectively wicked and evil. Yet all these things were done under the explicit command and direction of the God of the Bible as any Protestant will immediately affirm as historical "fact."

Num. 31:17 Now therefore kill every male among the little ones and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. But all the female children who have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.

Joshua 6:21 And they utterly destroyed all that were in the city, both men and women, young and old and oxen and sheep and asses, with the edge of the sword.

2. Kings 3:19 The Lord shall deliver the Moabites also into your hands. And you shall destroy every fortified city, and shall fell every good tree and pollute all the springs of water and mar every piece of land with stones.

The usual answer is that these people were wicked, degenerate idolaters and were likely to lead the children of Israel astray — but are the babies and children also guilty? What was the moral danger posed by fruit-bearing trees or wells or sheep and cattle?

When faced with a proposition such as this, one realises that in the Bible there is no *objective* standard of good and evil. Whatever 'pleases' God is good and whatever 'offends' Him is evil. One then concludes that God is not objectively good and just but subjectively capricious. So therefore our own standards of good and evil depend upon what we *think* will please God. A very hazardous doctrine indeed with unthinkable consequences — which indeed led to the total extermination of seven whole nations by the Children of Israel. (see Deut. 20;16,17) This horror was matched by the Christians during the Crusades and the conquests of the Americas.

The problem of good and evil is not solved by proposing an embodiment of evil such as Satan to account for the supposed real existence of evil. Satan was allegedly created good by God but became evil of his own accord. If Satan is the embodiment of evil then God is in fact the manager of evil since He created Satan, controls him, appoints him as Prince of this world, and often makes use of his services (not unlike a Mafia Godfather)! This is revealed by the following scriptural testimony;

I Sam. 18;10 And it came to pass after some days that *an evil spirit from God* came upon Saul.

3 Chron. 18;22 Now behold therefore, *the Lord has put a lying spirit* in the mouth of these your prophets, and the Lord has decreed evil against you.

The concept of a Satan and his legions wandering about tempting the faithful to sin is conspiratorial and escapist. It leads to false self-justification and abrogation of blame while demonising one's critics. "Conspiracy theology" is not at all helpful for spiritual advancement because it gives rise to paranoia, distrust, fear, hatred, persecution and even violence. If evil exists as a real force the question arises; why does God allow evil to exist? If He can't destroy evil then He is not omnipotent. If He can but chooses not to, He lacks compassion. Both propositions lead to the attribution of imperfection to God — a proposition which is totally repugnant to the Hindu concept of God. If God is the sole Creator and Possessor of the Universe as is attested by;

Psalm 24;1 The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and all that dwell therein.

Then one must concede that God is the source, as well as the one who sanctions evil. Evil exists not because of Satan but because God allows it to exist and in fact uses Satan as His agent provocateur.

Isa. 45;7 I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil (*ra'*); I the Lord do all these things.

In some English versions of the Bible the Hebrew word *ra'* is translated as hardship but the actual meaning is "evil". The Bible also states that God is the source of all things and if so, one must also conclude therefore of evil.

1 Cor. 8;6 To us there is One God, the father from whom comes every thing.

Acts 17;24,25 For the God who made the world and all things therein, and who is the Lord of heaven and earth,

If God sends His agent Satan to tempt us and then withdraws the gift of grace to withstand temptations what hope is there? We are merely pawns in a diabolic game — this is a theology of complete hopelessness and despair.

Luke 4;1,2 And the (Holy) Spirit carried him (Jesus) away into the wilderness for forty days in order that he might be tempted by Satan.

So God carried God off and delivered himself to be tempted by his own agent, the devil — a totally absurd and meaningless exercise by an omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient Being.

The doctrine of Satan raises another question; What was the part played by Satan in the agenda of Salvation. we read;

John 13;26, 27 Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. "What you are about to do, do quickly,"

The Passion, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension where the crucial elements in the agenda for the reconciliation of souls with God and for Universal Salvation. Because of his unbounded love for the world God had gone to the trouble to bring forth his only begotten son to be a human sacrifice, yet the catalyst for this sequence of universally beneficent events was *Satan*. And in view of the fact that God frequently employs Satan as his agent, one realises that Judas was powerless to refuse his role in the scenario that God had planned. Jesus, knowing the inevitability and necessity of the events about to unfold, gives him the bread, and with the bread Satan enters into Judas, the Lord then gives him an injunction to go and betray him! But also curses him for doing it;—

Mark 14;21 The Son of man will go, as it is written of him; but woe to the man by whose hand the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been far better for that man (Judas Iscariot) never to have been born.

The logical conclusion is that if God is omnipotent and had the whole agenda carefully planned, then both Satan and Judas were pawns in the game. If Satan is totally independent and acted on his own volition, then he is an essential accomplice in the salvific agenda and as such can't be the wicked character that he is portrayed to be — Salvation was precipitated by the alleged Prince of Darkness.

10. The concept of Tribulation as a Test from God.

The purpose of testing someone is to ascertain something which was previously unknown or of a dubious nature. If God is omniscient then He would know the outcome of any given scenario before it even began.

Luke 16;15 but God knows your hearts.

So has God somehow become deficient in the knowledge of His creation that He has need to test His creatures? A test has two outcomes; one either passes or fails. If one passes then presumably one receives a celestial pat on the back. If one fails the test then what happens? Is one given a second chance or is one rejected and damned for ever?

Very often a crisis is too much for an individual to bear and one understandably breaks, even to the point of blaspheming. If humans can understand psychological crisis, be non-judgmental and develop a therapeutic system of support, counselling and de-briefing how is it that God lacks these simple management skills? It is quite evident that every person gets what he/she deserves, if the cause is lacking in this present life-time one must postulate the existence of previous lives.

Matt. 12;35 A good man brings out good things from good treasures, and a bad man brings out bad things from bad treasures.

Eph. 6; 7 Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that shall he reap.

11. The Doctrine of Justification by Faith alone.

Martin Luther, the leader of the Protestant Reformation declared SOLA FIDE — through *faith alone* are we saved. Although there are many verses in the Bible that stress the efficacy of faith there are also many verses which stress the necessity for good works and the fact that everyone will be judged by his/her actions and not by faith alone. Again there are verses which advocate faith and good works.

Justification by Works	Justification by Faith	Faith & Works
Rom. 2;5-11 the righteous judgment of God who will render to every man according to his deeds	Mark 16:16. He who believes and is baptised shall be saved; and he who does not believe shall be condemned.	James 2:14 Though a man say he has faith, what profit is it my brethren, if he does not have works? Can faith save him?
Eph. 6:8 Knowing that whatever good thing any man does, the same shall he receive from our Lord, whether he be a slave or a free man.	1 Cor 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.	James 2:17 Even so by itself faith without works is dead.
Col. 3:25 But the wrongdoer shall be rewarded according to the wrong which he has done; and there is no respect of persons.	Rom. 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, Eph 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- Gal. 2:16, Jas 5:15 Rom. 3:28	James 2:26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without good works is dead.
Vide: — James 2:21 Rev. 2:23 Rev. 20:13, Rom. 2:13, 1 Peter 1:17		

The Protestants' belief that one is justified by faith alone is certainly not given the unequivocal support by the Bible as can be seen from the above quotations. The Protestant doctrine that any good works are only considered good if they are done with faith, and that without faith good works are of the nature of sin (article 13 of the Articles of Religion of the Anglican Church) is a monstrous doctrine and easily refuted by Scriptural testimony as well as simple logic.

If good works devoid of faith in Christ are not virtue, then sin is not sin either. It therefore matters not whether non-Christians feed the poor or murder them! If unbelievers are exempt from all moral constraints and then they must be exempt from judgment as well. This is obviously a pernicious doctrine and is itself controverted by Scripture — see Psalm 15 and St. Matthew 25; 31-46.

The ultimate objective statement of what God actually requires of a person is —

Mic 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Jesus declares unequivocally that if one has the smallest amount of faith (the size of a mustard seed) one can command mountains to move away and relocate (Matt 17:20) or transplant mulberry bushes in the sea (Luke 17:5). Seeing that no Christian has ever relocated mountains (although the necessity to do so frequently arises) nor transplanted bushes into the sea (universally very beneficial) we can assume that either no believer has ever had even the tiniest degree of faith or that

Jesus was exaggerating. If the latter be the case how can we put our faith in the spurious doctrine that faith (no matter how little) will give us *salvation*. If the physical result of faith cannot be achieved how can we be certain that the metaphysical result will be successful? One of Martin Luther's more memorable quotations is "reason is the enemy of faith".

12. The Doctrine of Monopoly on Revelation.

The teaching that God has limited His self-revelation to the Jews first and then to the Christians is perhaps the greatest of the Protestant deceptions. The concept that mortals can presume to know, and to emphatically and dogmatically declare what God can and cannot do is anathema to Hindus.

If we turn to the book of Jonah we are told the story of the city of Nineveh a Pagan Babylonian metropolis of three days journey in extent with a population of more than a 120,000 people. The Lord was disturbed by their wickedness and sent the reluctant prophet Jonah to appraise them of the Lord's intention to exterminate them if they did not mend their ways. The King of Nineveh and all his naughty subjects immediately repented and fasted with sack-cloth and ashes, the Lord was pacified, relaxed and turned away his anger. The would be prophet was so upset that the destruction had not occurred that he went into a state of reactionary depression! He became even more depressed and grieved when the vine that God had planted to shade him was eaten by a worm and withered. The Lord comforted Him by saying;—

Jonah 4:11 Are you exceedingly aggrieved over the gourd? And Jonah said, I am exceedingly grieved, even unto death. Then the Lord said to him; "You have had pity upon a gourd for which you did not labour nor did you cultivate, which sprung up in a night and withered in a night; And should not I have pity upon Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle? "

We notice that they all "feared God" but not one of them became Jewish and certainly not Christian; yet their improved ways met with the approval of the Lord and he turned his anger away from them. If God was able to do this once could he not repeat it as many time as he wished?

It is also worthy of note that the celebrated Job was not an Israelite nor was he even Jewish.

Job 1:1 ¶ There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.....so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.



Rejoinders to Common Denunciations

Although it would be unthinkable in today's climate of political correctness and multiculturalism for most civil and polite Christians to make the following remarks about Hinduism, I personally have read them in books written by Christian imperialist missionaries and have heard these accusations made to me and other members of the Hindu faith by evangelicals. The most zealous amongst the detractors of Hinduism are the recent converts who vie with each other to prove their allegiance to their new found faith by denigrating their previous one.

Charge # 1 *Hindus worship idols.*

The images or icons worshiped by Hindus are considered to be material manifestations of God. God is omnipotent, omnipresent and an ocean of compassion and grace. In order to bestow His grace upon us and in answer to our supplications, by a fraction of His limitless potency, He manifests in these specially consecrated icons in order to bestow Grace and to respond to our devotion. God uses the icons as channels for blessing us.

The Bible instructs us that God has the power to create the universe from nothing and to make snakes (Genesis 3:1) and donkeys speak (Num. 22:28). It also informs us that God manifests himself in burning bushes, pillars of fire and smoke. So what is the problem in understanding that the Supreme Lord can therefore manifest wherever he pleases and can shower his Grace without limitation through whatever channel He chooses. The Lord is omniscient and knows our most intimate thoughts, surely He should know that it is Him alone that we worship through the medium of the icon and not the stone itself?

The Bible too has some rather ridiculous descriptions of God:—

2 Samuel 22; 9 -15 Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet. He mounted the cherubim and flew; he soared on the wings of the wind..... 15 He shot arrows and scattered the enemies, bolts of lightning and routed them.

Deut. 11:12 It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.

2 Chronicles 16; 9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth,

Zech. 4:10 "These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range throughout the earth."

Rev. 4; 6 - 9 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and behind. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever,

The Catholic and Orthodox churches teach that it is permissible and profitable to venerate images, icons and relics. Although the making of idols is forbidden by the Bible an exception was made in the case of the Ark of the Covenant —

Exodus 25, 22. "And you shall make two cherubim (angels) of gold, of cast work shall you make them, on the two sides of the mercy seat"

Exodus 25.18 "And I will commune with you from the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim"

Charge # 2 *Hindus are polytheists.*

Firstly this assumes that monotheism as a belief system is superior to polytheism or even atheism. In retrospect we find that everything universally beneficial which we enjoy today originated either in atheism or polytheism — science, medicine, law, human rights, multi-culturalism etc. The unique contribution of monotheism is conflict, death, destruction and cultural annihilation.

The beings that are referred to as gods we call *devas* which means Beings-of-light. They are exactly the same entities as the Judeo-Christian angels which have administrative and protective functions in the universe under the direction of the One Supreme Personality of Godhead. They are capable of being propitiated and can grant limited material and spiritual favours but only God himself can grant salvation.

The "gods" can be viewed as mates in the Town Hall. They are good for getting building permits but can do very little regarding the major issues of life, death and salvation.

Ganesha, Sarasvati, Subrahmania and all the other deities that are commonly seen are in fact personifications of various attributes of the Godhead. Ganesha is the personification of wisdom, Sarasvati of learning, Subrahmania of valour etc. They are not separate beings. For similar concepts in the Bible see Proverbs Chapter 8 where Wisdom as an entity stands at the side of God and speaks to Him.

One of the most common terms used for God in the Bible is *elohim* which means *gods*. This term is equally applied to the gods of the other nations as well as to the god of Israel.

2 Kings 1;3 And the angel of the Lord said to Elijahsay to the messenger of the King of Samaria; "Is there no god [elohim] in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebul the god [elohim] of Ekron?"

Joshua 22;22 For the Lord (Yahweh) is God (EL) of gods (elohim), the God of gods is the Lord, and He is our God.

Even the Bible itself attests to the existence of many gods —

1 Cor 8:5 For though there be many that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many, and lords many,

Christian theology posits the theory that God is one but has three personalities — God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost; three distinct personalities in one entity, one in three and three in one. Hindus say that there are 333 thousand personalities in one Godhead. One in 333 thousand and 333 thousand in one. The argument ultimately is not of monotheism versus polytheism but of the possible extent of the Godhead's numerically expansive potential. The difference between three and three hundred and thirty three thousand is merely numerical.

Charge # 3 Hindus worship cows and snakes!

Cows are not *worshipped* but venerated. They give us milk upon which we and our children are brought up. It is cruel and demonic to kill and eat the animal that is a substitute for one's mother. The Sanskrit word for cow is *pashu*, which by extension means animals in general. By showing love and veneration for the cow we extend it to include all the animal kingdom. All orthodox Hindus are vegetarians out of compassion for animals.

Regarding snakes and the power of images, in the Bible the following passage is found;

"And the Lord said to Moses, make a fiery serpent of brass and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass that everyone who is bitten by a serpent shall look upon it and live".
Exodus 21,8.

Christians also use animal symbology. The four evangelists are shown as four animals; a lion, a calf, an animal with the face of a man and an eagle (Revelations 4:7) each having 6 wings. Jesus is called the Lamb of God, and the fish is the predominant symbol of born-again Christians. Shells in the early church were symbolic of paradise. Are we to infer from this that Christians conceive of God as a fish, or a lamb? Revelations speaks of the "marriage" of the lamb! What are non-Christians to make of lambs having their marriage performed in heaven?

Charge # 4 Hindus pray to fire. Butter and other food stuffs are offered into the fire which is a total waste of resources and it would be better given to the poor.

The fire is symbol of the Divine and is a vehicle for prayers. Substances that are offered into the fire benefit the entire creation not only the sacrificers.

"And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire" Exodus 3;2 and Then I beheld and lo, a likeness of the appearance of fire; from the loins downward, fire; and from his loins and upwards brightness, as the appearance of God." Ezekiel Chap 8.2

And in the sight of all the children of Israel, he saw the glory of the Lord like a burning fire on the top of the mountain. Exodus 24;17

"His appearance is full of light, and His eyes are like rays of the dawn. Out of His mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out". His breath kindles coals and a flame goes out of His mouth." Job 41; 20, 21, 22

On Holy Saturday night before Easter Sunday the Catholics have a ceremony called *the Blessing of the Holy Fire*. In which the fire is blessed and candles are lit from it to symbolise the overcoming of death and the triumph of redemption. The fire is an ancient Christian symbol going back to Apostolic time.

Fire is a common and universal religious symbol, From fire we get light and warmth and fire purifies, it is also the only element that rise upwards. It is necessary in the preparation of things that we need to grow and the making of tools. So fire is central to psychological life of all human beings. In this sense it is an appropriate symbol for the Godhead which is the ground of all human existence. God gives detailed instructions for offerings made by fire;

Levi. 1,7 & 9. "And the priests shall put fire upon the altar and lay the wood in order upon the fire it is a burnt offering, an offering of a sweet savour made by fire to the Lord."

Charge # 5 *An integral part of Hinduism is the caste system with its attendant iniquity of untouchability. The untouchables are discriminated against by the caste Hindus and kept in virtual slavery.*

No reasonable person would ever justify discrimination based upon birth. The system of stratification exists in every society. In the West it is called 'class', and for social suffering due to inequalities of class and race one need only observe the social conditions in America — a Christian society. The caste system needs to be discussed in the context of the conditions of the serfs in Christian Europe in the Middle Ages, in the context of the Slave trade too, which was controlled by the governments of Britain, America, Spain, Portugal and Holland. Slavery was only abolished in 1833 in Britain and in America in 1864. In the Bible slavery is taken for granted and God endorses and gives instructions about the buying and selling of slaves as well as their treatment;

Exodus 21;2 When you buy a Hebrew slave, six years shall he serve you; and in the seventh year he shall go out from your house without a price.

Exodus 21;7 And when a man sells his daughter into slavery, she shall not go free as the male slaves do.

One should also not forget that for centuries slavery was supported and justified by the Church. In fact many of the American slave owners and traders were Christian preachers. In the words of Saint Paul the founder of Christianity;—

Col. 3;22 "Slaves obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not with eye service, as pleasers of men, but in singleness of heart"

1 Cor. 7;20,21 Let every man remain in the station of life in which he is called. If you were a slave when you were called, do not feel concerned about it; but even though you can be made free, choose rather to serve.

According to the Hindu Scriptures caste is based upon character and vocation. Caste in Indian society is like the Professional Guilds of Medieval Europe. Each one had its own administrative and ethical structure, and people married and kept the art or profession in the family.

Hinduism teaches that all jobs, occupations and profession are callings and one should work in that which is suited to ones character and abilities. There is no disgrace in menial work and all work should ideally be done as service to God. Inter-caste restrictions in actual fact apply only to inter-marriage and inter-dining. These two activities are carried out only with people from the same or compatible castes.

Even in Western Christian society we see these two social patterns. One should not over simplify social norms due to some fantasy of a utopia or egalitarianism. There is no example of a truly just society anywhere on earth.

There are many facets of the caste system which are social in nature and are not sanctioned by the faith. Just as in Christian societies there are many social inequalities which do not have a foundation in Scripture and which are in fact opposed by the Church.

Charge # 6 *Hindus have so many superstitious rituals which consume time and resources.*

Ritual is the expression of an emotion. All daily human interaction takes place through the medium of social rituals. Verbal statements are not taken seriously without some form of gesture, some action which demonstrates the thought. Actions are far stronger than words and 60 - 70 % of our daily communication is in fact non-verbal. So it is in the religious field as well. The philosophy of

a religion is expressed through its rituals. Every serious religious group such as the Catholics and the Jews have their rituals. The rituals are replete with symbology which one should take time to understand and not reject at face value. The Eucharist is the supreme Christian ritual — it is symbolic cannibalism.

Secular rituals and diversions consume a lot more resources and are in fact multi-billion dollar businesses. No one criticizes the gaming industry or the sport industry or the spending of money on stadiums, casinos and other facilities — so why denounce religions for what they spend on their own diversions and entertainment?

Charge # 7 Hindus worship the phallus and have disgusting sexual imagery on their temples!

According to Hinduism sex is a natural and sacred act. Through the act of procreation a couple actually participate along with God in the act of universal creation. The phallus and the womb are the tools of creation on this earthly plane and are therefore appropriate symbols of the act of creation on a Universal and cosmic plane. All living species propagate themselves by the union of male and female, what is so disgusting in this?

Even in the Bible God exhorts Adam and Eve to go forth and multiply. How would it be possible to multiply without sex? It is therefore a sacrament which is enjoined on humans by God and a Divine injunction cannot be considered as disgusting except by depraved and wicked persons.

Sex is along with hunger and thirst one of the most powerful driving forces of the human psyche. So this tremendous energy can also be harnessed and directed toward the Divine. Repressing the sex drive is unnatural and leads to all kind of psychological and psychiatric problems.

Charge # 8 Hindus worship the Sun.

Hindus do indeed worship the Sun because it is the visible presence of the Divine in the universe. The planet earth originates from the Sun and all forms of life that we know of, are dependant upon the Sun for their existence. The Sun is to our universe what the soul is to the body — it is the source of life. Thus it is the most appropriate focus for devotion and worship of God the Creator. Once again we can turn to the Bible for support;

Psalm 84:11 For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and honour, no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly

Mal 4:2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

When Christianity became the state religion of Rome the annual festival of the Sun God — Invictus Sol on the 25th December was taken over as the Birthday of Jesus. Jesus himself was declared to be the "light of the world" and seen as the New Sun God.

Charge # 9 There is no forgiveness of sins from God in Hinduism — only eternal punishment upon the wheel of karma.

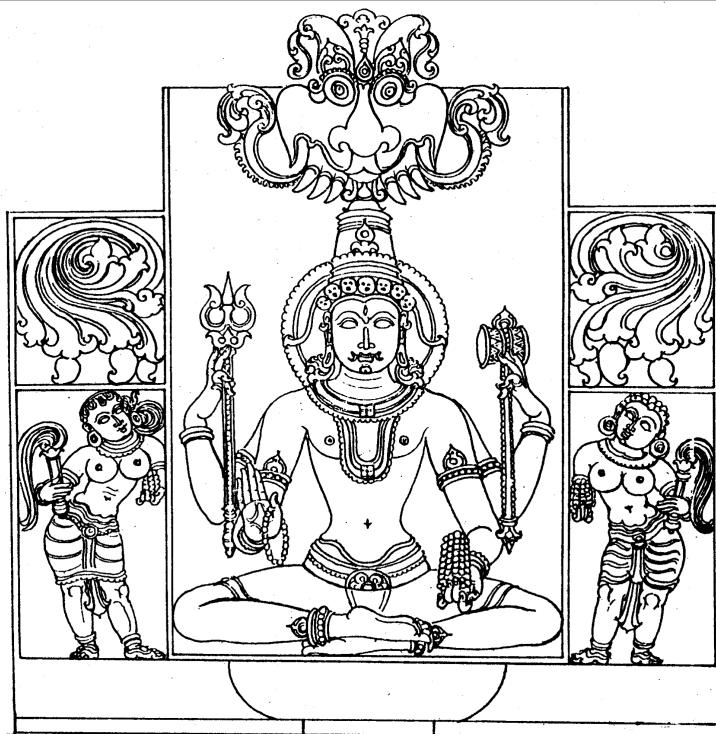
Firstly forgiveness is required from a person whom we have wronged. God is not *offended* by our transgressions, our negative acts impact upon us alone. Sin is seen simply as unskilful actions which retard our spiritual progress, not as something for which forgiveness is required from God. Forgiveness is certainly required from those of our associates whom we hurt! When we fail

ourselves we need to recognise, regret and rectify through improved performance — a systematic program for personal reformation is required not forgiveness.

The daily liturgy which is performed at sun-rise, midday and sun-set known as *sandhya-vandana* is for the sole purpose of self-appraisal and for rectification of negative acts performed during the day or night.

Lord Krishna's ultimate teaching in the Bhagavad Gita 18;66 is;

Simply abandon all types of self-initiated attempts at liberation and take refuge in Me alone; I shall free you from the effects of all your accumulated negative acts. Grieve not!



Appendix II.

Hinduism and Astrology

Hindus believe that Astrology is a divine science which was revealed for the guidance of human kind. The Hindu view of life is that of a university. We are all here to study and to improve and to progress back to Godhead. A compassionate and beneficent God would not have sent us into this complex and difficult world university without some form of guidance, a curriculum by which to direct our potential. Astrology shows us the karmic potential which each of us has brought over from the previous life. It is the greatest tool for self-realisation, self-mastery and spiritual development.

The Anker Series — a series of books published in America by the evangelist John Ankerberg and John Weldon have produced a polemic publication entitled "The Facts on Astrology". Astrology is an integral and inseparable part of Hindu Culture and Religion and therefore an attack on Astrology is a direct assault on Hinduism.

In their denunciation of Astrology, Christians posit three basic premises;

1. Astrology is condemned by the Bible.
2. Astrology has been disproved by Science.
3. Whatever truth or benefit there is in Astrology is the work of demonic forces.

What does the Bible really say about Astrology.

We read in the Bible;

"And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; and the stars also" Genesis 1:16.

The Hebrew word for "rule" – *mshl* – means "an ethical exercise of authority". Some objectors would say that this is merely poetry. Hebrew has a specific vocabulary and there is a word for shine, so why use an unrelated word here? The Scriptures were passed down orally for hundreds of years before they were written. The form is therefore terse with a minimum use of unnecessary words. And any Hebrew scholar would verify that Genesis has the least poetry of any book of the Bible. There are many verses in the Bible which suggest that the Stars are intelligent beings and capable of praising God and bearing witness to his greatness —

Proverbs 3:19 "By His understanding He established the heavens"

Jeremiah 2:12 "Be astonished at this O Heavens, and tremble, be exceedingly afraid, says the Lord"

Psalm 50:6 "And the heavens shall declare His righteousness; for God Himself is the judge."

Psalm 148:3,4. "Praise Him Sun and Moon; praise Him all stars and light. Praise Him, heaven of heavens and waters that are above the heavens."

God is often referred to as the 'Lord of Hosts'. The hosts being the planets and their attendant deities – see Nehemia 9:6.

Nowhere in the Bible is Astrology condemned as the work of the Devil. The most often quoted verse of the Bible to condemn Astrology is Deuteronomy 18;10,11 – We read ;—

"There shall not be found among you any one who (1) sacrifices his son or daughter into the fire, or who practices (2) divination, (3) a soothsayer, or an (4) enchanter or a (5) witch, or (6) charmer or a (7) medium, or a (8) sorcerer or a (9) necromancer."

2. *qesem* — one who casts spells
3. *'anan* — one who forecasts by looking at clouds.
4. *nakhash* — one who guesses or takes as an omen
5. *qashaf* — one who practises sorcery
6. *hawbar* — a magician
7. *sha'al* — one who asks questions of a spirit
8. *yide'oni* — consultant with a familiar spirit.
9. *darash* — necromancer

In this section 9 specific types of occult practices are singled out to be condemned. Astrology is conspicuous by its absence. If the Bible meant to include Astrology among the forbidden practices, there are good Hebrew words that could have been used such as *habrai shamayim*. ('The Dividers of the heavens' — Isaiah 47;13). That the Bible in its specificity excludes Astrology from its list of 'abominations' is ample evidence that Astrology is an accepted and valid discipline.

The Rabbinical view of Astrology

The Rabbis who are the unquestionable authorities on the Hebrew Scriptures have never condemned Astrology and in fact in the middle ages the greatest practitioners of the art were the Jews. (For the Jewish views on Astrology I refer my readers to a book entitled "The Astrological Secrets of the Hebrew Sages" by Rabbi Joel C. Dobbin). The Talmud is filled with Astrological references and symbology. Moses Maimonides who was undoubtedly one of the greatest Biblical Scholars of all times who lived in the 12th Century vindicated astrology with Biblical proof texts (see "Guide for the Perplexed").

St. Thomas Aquinas promoted Astrology as a legitimate science worthy to be studied. And a few of the early Popes were themselves astrologers.

The astrologers – Magi – where the first to welcome Jesus into the world and to present Him with gifts. It is obvious that the Lord Himself had no problem with Astrologers.

The Scientific Argument.

It is an astonishing display of hypocrisy that an evangelist would, with hypocritical fervour and ardour accept absolutely the alleged scientific "debunking" of Astrology; but categorically reject the scientific debunking of the "Genesis Myth" of creation or the alleged resurrection or any other of their firmly held beliefs!

Most 'scientists' who dismiss Astrology as baseless also reject the Adam and Eve theory of the origin of the species. No serious intellectual would publicly support the Biblical account of the origin of languages. No doctor practising today (Christian or otherwise) would accept the Biblical theory of disease, or the aetiology of epilepsy as being due to demonic possession. Evangelicals in their pseudo-scholarship shamelessly quote the 'scientific' conclusions which support their

prejudices and need to persecute others; but howl in protest and evoke the 'self-evident truth' of the bible when those same scientific methods are applied to their own doctrines and belief-system!

Astrological Truths and Demons.

Ankerberg claims that any Truth revealed through Astrology is the product of demonic forces. It is very strange that in a document which purports to be a "scientific approach" to the subject and appears to be based upon modern scientific methodology, there are frequent references to a Ptolemaic and animistic world-view of 'demons' loitering around in the ether waiting for opportunities to play their pranks upon the unsuspecting faithful! I quote his conclusion in his own words;—

But if it is not possible to distinguish between astrological self-disclosures and those given through the spirit world in general, then in the light of all that we have seen, it is more logical to conclude that these amazing disclosures derive from spiritistic sources — not from the stars. (pg. 39)

The Bible tells us that truth comes from the "light";—

Eph. 5:9,10. For the fruits of light are found in all goodness and righteousness and truth; and so you must discern that which is acceptable before our Lord.

And the following is a description of the limitations of the demonic forces;—

Joh 8:44 You belong to your father, the devil, He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Therefore, according to St. John, no demonic entity can reveal truth because they are incapable of doing so. Furthermore just to complicate matters, God too makes use of lying spirits;—

I Sam. 19:9 And an evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his javelin in hand.

3 Chron. 18:22 Now behold therefore, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets, and the Lord has decreed evil against you.

And the Lord is also the author of evil;—

Isaiah 45:7 I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil (ra'); I the Lord do all these things.

I leave my gentle readers to draw their own conclusions from these quotations.

Evangelical Conclusions

In this remarkable example of trite polemics, John Ankerberg concludes that Astrology is a generally harmful practice and should be condemned for the following reasons.

1. Physical Damage — due to following the wrong advice regarding health.

Every year there are thousands of cases of the wrong diagnosis made by doctors who are skilled in their profession. There are many cases of permanent damage caused due to mistakes during surgery or other forms of inappropriate treatment. The vast majority of people consult doctors about their health not Astrologers!

2. Inducements to crime — Astrology has been responsible for a number of suicides, murder and cases of embezzlement.

I do not think any criminologist or sociologist would present this proposition at a conference on the causes of crime. The majority of murders, suicides and embezzlement are related to drugs, alcohol, poverty and unemployment. The crime resulting from a misinterpretation of Astrology would not even represent a statistic!

3. Economic Loss — due to misguided financial and punting advice.

The majority of punters at the casinos or race-tracks do not use Astrologers.

4. Spiritual Damage — leads to dabbling in the occult (Satanism).

The majority of "occultists" & "Satanists" were born and brought up in Christian families in Christian countries indoctrinated with Christian ethics. Satanism is essential a rejection of, and a parody of Christianity. Surely a more direct cause and effect relationship could be demonstrated between Christianity itself and Satanism.

5. Psychological damage — due to "faulty" counselling.

One of the predominant causes of the plethora of psychological problems in the West has been the ultimate control-device wielded for 2000 years by the Church — GUILT. More psychological damage has been caused through the complexes engendered by guilt than any other factor; probably with the exception of the "tyranny of the ideal" in which people are driven to aspire to the perfect ideal but cannot reach due to natural limitations.

Astrological counselling helps one to live within the limits of one's own potential and to achieve fullness thereby avoiding the striving for the unattainable.

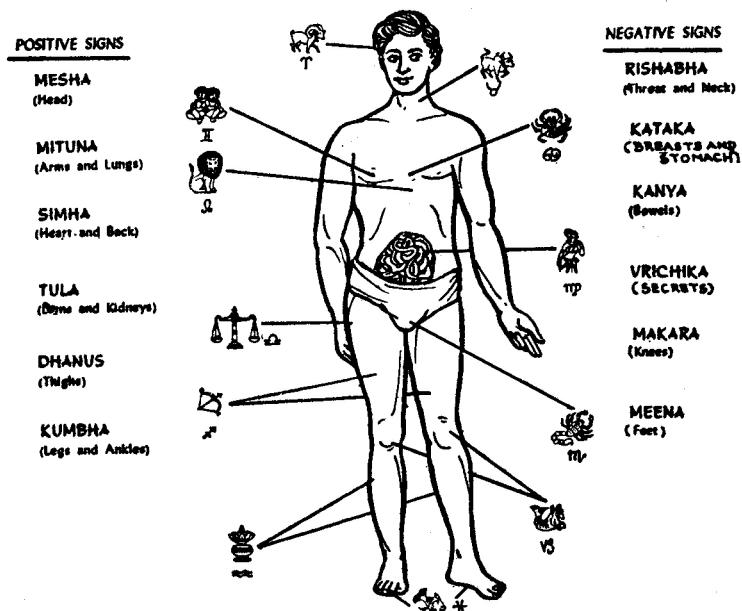
6. Moral damage — there is no absolute standard of morality in Astrology, Astrologers reject moral values, and choose not to morally educate the public.

Contrary to popular misconception, there is no absolute standard of morality in the Bible either. The Bible certainly cannot be held up as a guide to morality. In the Bible God commands his votaries to murder babies (Num. 31;18). The murder of babies is glorified (Psalm 137;9), God sanctions slavery (Ex. 21;2), a man is given divine permission to sell his daughter. (Ex. 21; 7) A girl should be put to death for the loss of virginity, or for natural or accidental perforation of the hymen. (Deut. 22;20,21). God sanctions the rape of little girls (Num. 31;18). Forced cannibalism of one's own children is God's revenge for backsliding (Levi. 26;28, 29.). Forty-two children are torn apart by bears for teasing Elisha a prophet of God (2 Kings 2;23). Women and Children are considered as booty and divided up. (Num. 31; 17— 47.) God will appease his own desire for revenge by causing children to be murdered & wives to be raped (Isaiah 13;16, Zec 14:2, 2 Sam. 12;11, Jeremiah 8;10, Deut 28;30). God burns his people to death for complaining. (Num. 11;1)

Further, God complies in the massacre of a whole nation. (Deut. 2;30, 34. Deut. 3;6.). God commands the total genocide of the seven nations that inhabited Canaan, men, women and babies and commanded their land to be expropriated by the "chosen" people. (Deut. 7; 1-6. Deut. 20;16,17) God's children faithfully obey their loving Father's command to massacre innocent babes, women, and men indiscriminately (Josh. 10: 40). Polygamy & sex-slavery has divine sanction (Exo 21;10, Deut 21; 15 , 2 Sam. 5;12) Abraham hands his wife Sarah over to strange men to have sex with her (Gen 12; 12, Gen 20; 1 —18). Abraham takes a Concubine (Gen 16 ;2) Lot commits incest with his daughters (Gen 18;30). Rachel demands that her husband have sex with her handmaid (Gen 30;1—6). Leah follows her sister's lead and makes her maid servant have sex with Jacob (Gen. 30;9 —10). A man may by the command of God divorce his wife at will (Deut. 24;1, Deut. 21; 14)

Human sacrifice is even commanded by God (Levi; 27; 28,29). Heterosexual gang rape of virgins girls is Scripturally permissible if it prevents homosexual rape (Gen. 19;5-8) and so on ad nauseam.

I don't think many Astrologers, no matter how degenerate, would encourage this type of behaviour. In fact no major religion in the world has been guilty of more bloodshed, hatred, discrimination and universal suffering than Christianity.



Appendix III.

Scriptural Comparisons

Both Hinduism and Christianity claim Revelation as their basis. The Protestants generally would take the view that the Bible ALONE is the revelation of God. One God, One Revelation, One Elect people and One salvific plan. They assert that the Bible is the historic testimony of God's working through history. It is impossible today to actually prove the historical accuracy of the Old Testament (the Gospels too have their divergences from the actual contemporary historical records).

The existence of the great personages like Abraham, Moses, Solomon and David that we all take for granted, cannot be confirmed from any contemporaneous source or even archaeological evidence. There is also no evidence whatsoever of the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt. The vast exodus of over three million people with all their vast herds of animals and baggage has not been confirmed archaeologically.

The obsession with history is a major factor of the Abrahamic faiths. Hindus were never interested in historical facts but in Eternal Spiritual Truths. History is the record of mankind's political machinating, technological achievements and entrepreneurial activities. It is written by warriors and merchants, usually of the winning faction; and tells of their conquests and expansion.

Hinduism is an intensely spiritual religion with no regard for worldly conquests and material achievements. The sacred literature of India is a record of the spiritual evolution of mankind. It records the highest spiritual achievements as well as the lowest moral degradation. Hindu Scriptures do not teach historical, cosmogonic or biological facts (although there are many sprinkled liberally throughout the tomes). They impart eternal spiritual truths and moral values. They teach the true nature of the soul, the Supreme Goal, the means to achieve that Goal and the pitfalls on the spiritual path. What transpires in the collective consciousness of man is of far more practical use for spiritual evolution than knowing about the rise and fall of dynasties.

Models of Revelation

Christian Theology has various models of revelation each having its adherents.

1. *Revelation as doctrine.* The Bible is the very 'Word of God' (*ipsissima verba*) in both form and content. (Evangelical Protestants, Charismatics, Southern Baptists et al.)
2. *Revelation as historical.* The Bible is an historical document which is the actual history of God's Self-revelation through the totality of His activity in history. (Most Protestants)
3. *Revelation as Inner Experience.* The Bible contains the word of God intermingled with mythical narratives and human history (error and fact). The truth can only be apprehended by illumination by a teaching authority (Catholics).
4. *Revelation as New Awareness.* The Bible is a means through which self-transformation and transcendence may be achieved. It is a ladder as it were to greater awareness. (Christian rationalists and Universalists)

The Hindu epistemology (theory of knowledge) posits three means of knowing. 1. Direct experience, 2. inference and 3. verbal or Scriptural testimony.

Scripture as "Revelation" is concerned with things which are unknowable by direct experience or inference. The nature of the Godhead, the means to attain Him, and moral & ethical laws of the universe are only known through the means of Scriptural testimony. Therefore, Revelation in order to be valid and relevant must fulfil three conditions.

1. It must be interpreted according to rational canons of interpretation (hermeneutics),
2. The information given should not contradict direct, objective perception or inference.
3. It should be internally consistent.
4. It should supply us with knowledge not accessible through other sources.

The content of the Hindu Scriptures is further divided into four categories;

1. *Theology and Injunctions* — passages which describe the attributes of God and give injunctions in the matters of faith and morals. This is the kernel of Scripture all else is the husk.
2. *Eulogistic or Declamatory texts* — these are texts which exhort to greater virtue and piety by offering rewards of heaven or good rebirth, and texts which discourage wickedness by threats of suffering and purgatory. These texts are not to be taken seriously but as a bolster for irresolute souls. Like a child who is bribed to take a medication with promises of sweets or toys.
3. *Doxology* — prayers, hymns and ritual formulae for use in the liturgy.
4. *Parables* — fables and legends of the doings of gods, sages, Kings and heroes which usually have some moral principle as their objective. They may, or may not be based on actual historical accounts. The form of these stories is irrelevant what matters is the content and message.

In the 19th century when Sir William Jones visited India he is on record as saying "That the devil foreseeing the advent of Christ, originated a system of religion in advance of His, and just like it!"

One of the justifications amongst the Victorian English for their imperialism in India was that they were bringing the Gospel of Jesus to the heathens. If these Christian men and women ever admitted that the Hindus were a highly civilised nation with a valid religion and not "benighted heathen" a major strut of their imperial adventure, along with the profits and status, would have been removed. Imperialists generally do not approve of the dismantling of their empires.

Following on from the view of the early Christians that all pagan religion was devil worship, all goodness and truth in Hinduism was either ignored or said to be an inspiration of Satan. The universality of God's Revelation can be attested to by the following quotes;

Tim 3:16 All Scripture written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

When this was written the "New Testament" had not yet been compiled, it's primary reference therefore is to the Jewish Scriptures.

Titus 2:11 For the Grace of God that brings salvation has been revealed to all men. It teaches us to renounce ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live in this world soberly, righteously, and in godliness.

James 3;17 The wisdom that is from above is pure, then full of peace, and is gentle, obedient, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

In this section some quotations from the Bible are compared to quotes from Hindu Scriptures. The Bhagavad Gita is considered as the Hindu "Bible" and is the most popular of all the sacred texts of India. It takes the form of a dialogue between the Supreme Being incarnated as Lord Krishna and His disciple and friend Arjuna. This comparison is by no means exhaustive and I hope that this will inspire the interested reader to study further.

God

The Bible	Hindu Scriptures
I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things. (Isa. 45:7)	I give heat. I hold back and send forth the rain. I am immortality as well as death, O Arjuna. I am being, as also non-being. (Gita 9:19)
He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Mt 5:45)	
To us there is One God, the father from whom comes every thing. (1 Cor 8:6)	I am the source of everything, every thing proceeds from Me (Krishna). (Gita 10:8)
Wonderful counsellor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6)	Father of all, Master Supreme. Power supreme in all the worlds. Who is like unto Thee? Who is beyond Thee? (Gita 11:43)
Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)	He is the Light of lights which shines beyond all darkness. It is the vision, the goal of vision, to be reached by vision, dwelling in the heart of all beings. (Gita 13:17)
The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and all that dwell therein. (Psalm 24:1)	Everything that exists in this Universe is all governed and owned by the Lord, therefore do not covet the wealth of anyone. (Isa Up. 1)
He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. (1 John 4:8)	Only by love can people see Me, and know Me, and come unto Me. (Gita 11:54)
In whom (Jesus) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:3)	Thou (Krishna) art the great treasure house of this universe. (Gita 11:18)
And He is before all things, and by Him are all things sustained. (Col. 1:17)	In this entire universe there is nothing higher than I. All the worlds have their rest in Me, like pearls upon a string. (Gita 7:7)

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give freely of the fountain of living water to him who is thirsty. (Rev 21;6)

Among the letters of the alphabet I am the letter "A" ; of compounds I am coordination, I am Time, never ending Time. I am the Creator who sees all. (Gita 10;33)

The Word

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. (John 1;1)

The Word is all this, All that is in the past, the present and the future, all this is the Word. (Man. Up. 1;1)

The Indweller

Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that Spirit of God dwells within you? (1 Cor. 3;16)

The Supreme Lord is situated in every one's heart, O Arjuna. (Gita 18;61)

For behold, the Kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17;21)

Both the Supreme Lord and the individual soul are situated within all living beings. (Katha Up. 1.2.20)

Spiritual Vision

The eye is the light of the body, if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. (Matt. 6;22)

But thou canst not see Me with these thy mortal eyes; I will give thee divine sight. Behold my wonder and glory. (Gita 11;8)

End of Time

The Day of the Lord will come like a thief and the heavens will pass away with a loud noise and the elements will be dissolved with fire and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. (2 Pet. 3;10)

Like the fire at the end of Time burns all in the last day, I see Thy vast mouths and Thy terrible teeth. Where am I? Where is my refuge? Have mercy on me God of gods, Refuge Supreme of the universe! (Gita 11;25)

Divine Incarnation

If God were your Father, ye would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself but he sent me. (St. John 8;42)

Though I am birthless, of changeless nature and Lord of beings, I am born in human form through my own inscrutable power. (Gita 4;6)

For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3;7)

For the salvation of the righteous, and for the destruction of the wicked, for the establishment of religion, I come into this world in every age. (Gita 4;8)

God's Graciousness

For every one who asks, receives, and he who seeks finds, and he who knocks, it is opened to him. (Luke 11;10)

And if you call on the Father who is impartial and who judges every man according to his works. (1 Peter 1;17)

So that you may become sons of your Father who is in heaven, who causes his sun to shine upon the good and the bad, and who pours down rain upon the just and the unjust. (Matt. 5;45)

But to those who adore me with pure unwavering devotion, thinking of none other, I increase what they have and give them what they do not have. (Gita 9;22)

I am the same to all beings, and my love is same; but those who worship me with devotion, they are in Me and I am in them. (Gita 9;29)

The Way

Jesus said to him, I am the Way and the Truth and the Life, no man comes to my Father except by me. (John 14;6)

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. (Re 1:8)

I am the Father of this universe, and even the source of the Father, I am the Mother of this universe and the Creator of all, I am the Highest to be known, the path of purification, the Word and all revelation. I am the Way, and the Master who watches in silence, thy friend, thy shelter, and thy abode of peace. I am the beginning and the middle and the end of all things; their seed of Eternity, their Treasure Supreme. (Gita 9;17,18)

The Holy Name

Make a joyful noise unto God all lands. Sing the honour of His name; sing the honour of His majesty. (Psalm 66;1)

And it shall come to pass that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2;21)

For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. (Psalm 33;21)

Always singing my glories, endeavouring with great determination, bowing down before me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with great devotion. (Gita 9;14)

In this age of strife and hypocrisy, the only means of salvation is the reciting of the Lord's Holy Name, there is no other way. (Brhad. Narada P. 3.8.126)

Unification with God

But he who unites himself with our Lord becomes one with Him in spirit. (1 Cor. 6;17)

I am with my Father, and you are with Me and I am with you. He who has my commandments with him and obeys them is the one who loves me; he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him. (John 14;20,21)

But the great souls, O Arjuna, partaking of My divine nature, worship Me with single minded devotion, realising Me as the source of all beings. (Gita 9;13)

And when he sees Me in all and all in Me, then I never leave him and he never leaves Me. He who in the oneness of love, loves in Me whatever he sees, wherever this man may live, in truth this man lives in Me. (Gita 6;30,31)

Devotion

And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. (Mark. 12;30)

the knowledge of the love of God which surpasses knowledge. (Eph. 3;19)

But they for whom I am the Supreme Goal, who surrender all their works to Me, and who with pure love meditate on Me and adore Me — these I very soon deliver from the ocean of birth and death, because they have set their heart on Me. Set thy heart on Me alone, and give to Me thy understanding; thou shalt in truth live in Me hereafter. (Gita 12;6-8)

By love he knows Me in truth, and when he knows Me in truth he enters into Me. (Gita 18;55)

Dedication to God

Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the Glory of God. (1 Cor 10;31)

Whatever you do, or eat, or give, or offer in adoration, whatever austerity you practice let it be as an offering to Me. (Gita 9;27.)

Others

You must love your neighbour as yourself. (Mark 12;31)

Love your enemies and do good to them. (Luke 6;35)

Truly I tell you, inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these, my brethren, you did it to Me. (Matt. 25;40)

Having subdued their senses, having the same loving mind for all; who find joy in the good of all beings — they reach in truth My very Self. (Gita 12;4)

The man whose love is the same to his friends and enemies, whose mind is the same in honour and disgrace, who has transcended heat and cold, pleasure and pain, who is free from attachment is dear to Me. (Gita 12;18)

Renunciation

He who wishes to follow Me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. (Matt. 16;24)

And every man who leaves houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, wife, children or fields for my sake shall inherit everlasting life. (Matt. 19;29)

For the materialist rejects spiritual things; they are a foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But the spiritual man discerns everything, and yet no man can discern him. (1 Cor. 2;14,15)

Not by work, not by progeny, not by wealth, have they attained immortality. It is by renunciation alone that immortality is attained. (Ma. Na. Up)

Leave all things behind, and come to Me alone for thy salvation, I will free thee from the bondage of all sins. Fear no more. (Gita 18;66)

In the dark night of (materialism) the tranquil sage awakes to the Light, but what is day to other beings is night for the sage who discerns. (Gita 2;69)

Works of the Flesh

For the works of the flesh are well known, which are these; adultery, impurity, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, stubbornness, seditions, heresies, envy, murder, drunkenness, revelling and all such things. (Gal. 5;19-21)

Deceitfulness, insolence, self-conceit, anger, harshness and ignorance — these qualities belong to one who is destined for hell. In their haughtiness of vainglory, drunk with the pride of their wealth they offer sacrifices contrary to divine law, in their bonds of selfishness and arrogance, of violence, anger and lust, these wicked men hate Me, in themselves and in others. (Gita 16;4,17,18.)

Virtues

Therefore as the elect of God Holy and Beloved, put on mercy, kindness, gentleness, humbleness of mind, meekness, patience, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another. (Co. 3;12,13.)

But the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. (Gal. 5;22,23.)

Humbleness, sincerity, harmlessness, forgiveness, uprightness, devotion to the spiritual preceptor, purity, steadiness, self-harmony, freedom from the lusts of the senses, absence of thoughts of "I", perception of the sorrows of birth, death, old age, disease, and suffering, freedom from attachment to one's children, wife or home; equanimity of mind in joy and in sorrow, a single oneness of pure love, of unwavering devotion to Me, solitude and avoidance of crowds, and constant yearning for the inner Spirit and reflection upon spiritual truths; this is the way to wisdom, all else is ignorance. (Gita 13; 7-11)

Appendix IV

Is the Bible the Perfect Word of God and the Absolute Standard for all Humanity ?

A book, especially one that is claimed to be a revelation from the Supreme Lord of the Universe, must be judged by its contents. Most people, Christians included, would agree that a genuine revelation from God must contain the highest moral and ethical teachings possible — like those of the Bhagavad Gita.

There are, as I have demonstrated many similar teachings found in both the Bible and the Gita. But the Gita is truly a HOLY Scripture dealing with the nature of the soul, the nature of the Godhead, our relationship with Him and the path of virtue and love. Nowhere in all the sacred revelation of India — the Vedas, the Upanishads or the Gita is there to be found anything comparable to the most appalling and repulsive teachings and injunctions which are found in the Bible.

Those teachings found in the Bible with which our Scriptures agree, we accept as “revelation”, but the rest we reject. A detailed account of the atrocities, absurdities and immorality found in the Bible is available in my publication “The Bible Unmasked”, but here I shall give only the most outstanding examples. I shall give no commentary but allow the “Holy Scripture” to speak for itself. It will be noted by the interested reader that the New International Version of the Bible differs somewhat from the King James version which is in fact closer to the original Hebrew and Greek texts. The NIV version is not a literal but an interpretive translation, and many of the following atrocities are glossed over as well as can be, by well meaning Doctors of the Scripture.

1. Death for unchastity, or for natural or accidental perforation of the hymen.

Deut. 22:20,21 If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the girl's virginity can be found, she shall be brought to the door of her father's house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death.

2. Murder of babies glorified

Psalm 137:9 Happy shall he be, that takes and dashes thy little ones against the stones.

3. God commands the murder of babies

Num. 31:18. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, (*this is a frequently repeated divine injunction*)

4. Little boys that are not circumcised must be killed

Gen. 17:14 And the uncircumcised male child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people¹¹; he hath broken my covenant.

5. God sanctions the rape of little girls.

Num. 31:18. and kill every woman that is not a virgin, but all the female children, that are still virgins keep alive for yourselves.

¹¹ “Cut off from his people” is a euphemism for “executed”.

6. Forced cannibalism of one's children is God's revenge for backsliding.

Levi. 26:28, 29. Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.

7. Women and Children considered as Booty and divided up.

Num. 31; 17—47. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves. The plunder remaining from the spoils that the soldiers took was 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys and 32,000 women who had never slept with a man. Moses gave the tribute to Eleazar the priest as the LORD's share, as the LORD commanded Moses. From the Israelites' half, Moses selected one out of every fifty persons and animals, as the LORD commanded him, and gave them to the Levites, who were responsible for the care of the LORD's tabernacle.

8. God will cause children to be murdered & wives to be raped

Isaiah 13:16 Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives raped.

Zec 14:2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses looted, and the women raped;

2 Samuel 12:11 "This is what the LORD says: Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight.

Jeremiah 8:10 Therefore I will give their wives to other men,

Deut 28:30 You will be pledged to be married to a woman, but another will take her and ravish her.

9. God burns his chosen people to death for complaining.

Num. 11:1 And when the people complained it displeased the Lord; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.

10. God's complicity in the massacre of a whole nation.

Deut. 2:30, 34. But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain.

11. God commands the total genocide of the Seven nations of Canaan and their land to be expropriated by this "chosen" people .

Deut. 7; 1-6. Seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them..... For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God.

Deut. 20:16,17 But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breaths: but thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely,

the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.

12. Divorce at will by the husband

Deut. 24;1 ¶ If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he shall write her a certificate of divorce, give it to her and send her from his house.

Deut. 21; 14 And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.

13. God's disgusting revenge on the people who captured the Ark

1 Samuel 5; 6 ¶ YAHWEH's hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod and its vicinity; he brought devastation upon them and afflicted them with haemorrhoids.

14. A bride-price of foreskins

1 Samuel 18;25 Saul replied, "Say to David, 'The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies. 27 David and his men went out and killed two hundred Philistines. He brought their foreskins and presented the full number to the king so that he might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage. 28 When Saul realised that YAHWEH was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David,

15. Human sacrifice commanded by God.

Levi; 27; 28,29 Notwithstanding no devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, both of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; but shall surely be put to death.

16. Some disgusting threats by God.

Malakhi. 2; 3 Behold, I will corrupt your semen, and spread faeces upon your faces,

Ezekiel 4;12 Eat the food as you would a barley cake; bake it in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel."

17. Pissing against a wall!

1 Kings 21:21 Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel.

The Legacy of the Bible

When the Christian Europeans first arrived in the Americas in 1492, it is estimated that there were about 80 million native inhabitants. By the year 1550 only 10 million remained.

In Mexico on the eve of the Christian invasion, 1519, there were about 25 million native people; by the year 1600 only 1 million remained alive.

In 1492 in Santo Domingo the population was estimated at about 1,100,000, by 1530 only 10 thousand remained alive.

In Cuba there were about 600,000 people in 1492, by 1570 only 270 households remained. In the West Indies almost the entire native population was exterminated.

Many of these people died from diseases introduced by the Europeans, by slavery, forced labour and the destruction of their cultural system. Thousands were simply murdered.

The native peoples of North America were deceived, disposed and decimated by the advancing Baptist immigrants. The Tasmanian aborigines were exterminated by righteous Anglicans and the Hottentots of South Africa were wiped out by pious Calvinists.

The Christian imperial expansion into America, Africa and Asia was justified on Biblical grounds — bringing the Gospel to the heathen. Murdering, dispossessing and looting the benighted heathen was necessary in order to demonstrate to them that God loved them so much that he sent His only begotten son to die for them, and they for Him.



Appendix V.

Comparison Between the Lives of Jesus, Krishna & Buddha

Jesus is believed by his follow to be the historical incarnated Son of God — being both fully God and fully human. Yet historically speaking the only hard facts about Jesus that can be confirmed by independent sources are:—

1. Jesus was a native of Galilee,
2. He had a following to whom he preached,
3. He was crucified on the charge of sedition by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate.

The earliest Christian writings were those of St. Paul who mentions nothing about the biography of the Lord and only claims to believe in his spiritual resurrection from the dead (not physical). All the rest is hearsay and ‘pious fraud’ incorporating bits and pieces from the myths and legends of other Gods and God-men of the Near East. Such as :—

- Hadad of Assyria
- Alcides of Thebes
- Attis of Phrygia
- Baal of Phoenicia
- Buddha of India
- Crite of Chaldea
- Adonis, Apollo, Heracle ("Hercules"), and Zeus of Greece
- Horus, Osiris, and Serapis of Egypt, whose long-haired, bearded appearance was adopted for the Christ character
- Krishna of India
- Mithra of Persia
- Prometheus of Caucasus
- Tammuz of Syria (who was, in a typical mythmaking move, later turned into the disciple Thomas)
- Xamolxis of Thrace
- Zarathustra/Zoroaster of Persia

Although every one of these ancient Gods shares identical pastimes with Jesus they are declared to be Myths and Jesus an historical fact!

In actuality, the legend of Jesus nearly identically parallels the story of Krishna, even in some small details, as was presented by noted mythologist and scholar Gerald Massey over 100 years ago, as well as by Rev. Robert Taylor 160 years ago, among others. The Krishna tale as told in the Hindu Scriptures has been dated to at least as far back as 1400 B.C.E. According to Dr. Alex Harris, modern Hinduism and the stories of Krishna are derived from Christian sources as is the Bhagavad Gita.

There are so many similarities between the lives and the teachings of Jesus and the two great Incarnations of God that appeared in India — Krishna and Buddha that one must come to the conclusion that the older influenced the newer. Even Lord Buddha lived 500 years before Jesus.

Krishna	Christos
Heavenly voice announces the birth of Krishna to his mother. Bhag 10;1;34	Angel announces the future birth of Jesus to Mary. Luke 1;28
Devaki's co-wife conceives Balarama who helps Krishna to fulfil his mission. Bhag. 10;1;7	Elizabeth, Mary's cousin falls pregnant with John the Baptist who aids in the fulfilment of his mission. Luke 1;36
Krishna born in a prison. Bhag. 10; 1; 48	Jesus born in a manger Luke 2;7
Shepherds who adopt Krishna are the first to celebrate the birth of Krishna. Bhag. 10;5	Shepherds are the first to be informed of the birth of Jesus. Luke 2;8
Kamsa tries to kill Krishna by slaughtering all new-born infants. Bhag 10;4;31	Herod tries to kill Jesus by the same means. Matt. 2;16
Krishna is taken to Vraja for safety. Bhag. 10;3;47	Jesus is taken to Egypt for safety. Matt. 2;13
Yasoda the mother of Krishna is purified according to the custom. Bhag; 10;5;1	Mary is purified according to the custom and Jesus is presented in the temple. Luke 2;21
Garga blesses Krishna and confirms his mission. Bhag. 10;8;1;	Simeon blesses the infant Jesus and confirms his mission. Luke 2;34
Krishna exorcises demons and evil spirits.	Jesus does the same.
Krishna heals the sick	Jesus does the same.
Krishna is anointed by a woman with expensive perfume. Bhag. 10;42	Jesus is also thus anointed. Matt. 26;6
Krishna heals and blesses a prostitute. Bhag. 10;42	Jesus forgives a woman taken in adultery. John 8;4
Krishna is transfigured. Gita. 11.	Jesus is transfigured. Matt. 17;2
Krishna dies an ignoble death by being shot by a hunter. Bhag. 11;30;25	Jesus dies an ignoble death on the cross.
Krishna ascends into heaven.	Jesus ascends into heaven.



Buddha	Jesus
An angel announces the birth of the future Buddha to Queen Maya	An angel announces the future birth to Mary
The Buddha (pre-monastically known as Siddhartha Gautama) appears through a virgin birth.	Jesus also appears through a virgin birth
The sage Asita blesses Siddhartha the future Buddha and confirms his mission.	Simeon blesses the infant Jesus and also confirms his mission.
As a child Siddhartha astounds his learned teachers with his profound scriptural knowledge and proclivity for meditating,	Jesus astounds the learned elders in the temple with his scriptural knowledge.
Before his enlightenment the Buddha is subjected to the temptations of Mara.	After his baptism Jesus is tempted by Satan.
The Buddha begins his teaching career at about the age of thirty.	Jesus also starts off at about the same age.
The Buddha condemns the corrupt priestly establishment and criticises their blind clinging to orthodoxy.	Jesus does the same.
The Buddha puts an end to the sacrificial cult of the priests	Jesus does the same.
The Buddha teaches renunciation and travels around the country-side begging alms and bringing the Good News.	Jesus does the same.
The Buddha teaches through the medium of parables	Jesus does the same and many of the parables are almost exact copies.
The Buddha performs miracles of healing etc.	Jesus does the same.
The Buddha has one beloved disciple Ananda.	Jesus shares the same sentiment in regard to John.
The Buddha has a disciple who attempts to walk on water and succeeds until he loses his faith, he is saved when his contemplative concentration in the Master is re-established.	Peter tries to walk on water to reach Jesus and also starts sinking. Peter was saved by the supporting words and arms of his Master.
The Buddha tells the story of a widow who in the company of the wealthy donated a tiny coin, her sole possession and is praised above the wealthy for her virtue of charity.	Jesus tells the same story about the widow's mite. (Mark 12:41-44)
The Buddha is betrayed by a disciple named Devadatta — the plot fails	Jesus is betrayed by a disciple named Judas — the plot succeeds.

Appendix VI.

The Church, Reincarnation & The Council of Constantinople.

Apart from the worship of icons the greatest hurdle facing a conciliation between Hinduism and Christianity is the doctrine of reincarnation. Few Christians today are aware of the fact that reincarnation was a commonly held doctrine for the first 500 years of Christianity. Some of the first theologians of the Church taught reincarnation. Clement of Alexandria (c 150-214) explains his view of the transmigration of the soul as follows;

Yet we exist before the foundation of the world, we who are already present even before then, through our being in God; we, the creatures given the knowledge of the divine Logos, through whom we are most ancient (Admonition 1,6)

For as each such birth follows the previous one, we are led in gradual progression to Immortality. (Stromateis IV, 160:3)

Clement's pupil and successor was Origen who was the founder of systematic Christian theology and the most important theologian of Christianity after St. Augustine. Unfortunately most of his writings were destroyed by subsequent Church authorities because of his tolerant and universal views. What remains is his major work *De Principiis* — an attempt at a systematic presentation of Christian teachings, a treatise entitled *contra Celsum* and a commentary of the Gospel of Matthew. Two passages of his writings are enough to indicate his belief in the pre-existence of the souls and the karmic consequences of actions.

Every soul enters this world strengthened by the victories or weakened by the stumbling of its previous life. Its place in this world is determined by what it has earlier gained or discarded. (De Principiis)

Does it not make absolute sense that every soul ... is guided into a body, and this in accordance with deeds done earlier?.... The soul makes use of a body for a certain duration but as it changes, the body becomes less suited to it and it then exchanges it for another one. (Contra Celsum)

Many other theologians of the church made similar statements in the first 500 years of Christian teaching before the Council of Constantinople. One of them was Gregory of Nyssa (334-391);—

The soul needs to undergo a kind of healing process in order to be cleansed of stains caused by sin. In the present life, virtue is the remedy that is applied to heal these scars. If they remain incurable in the present life then the healing treatment is continued in a future life. (The Catechetical Oration VIII,9)

Almost every Christian historian to date has been of the view that the doctrine of reincarnation was declared an heresy (anathematised) at the Council of Constantinople in the year 533. A closer examination of the circumstances and proceedings of the council reveals that there was no such formal declaration by the council at all. The alleged anathema was merely a denial of reincarnation by the emperor Justinian under pressure from his wife the Empress Theodora.

The Empress Theodora began her career (according to the historian Procopius) as a courtesan whose favourite act was to have geese pick corn kernels, stuck with honey, off her naked body in the presence of delighted spectators. When she became Empress in order to break with her past and

to foster an image of virtue and piety she had 500 of previous courtesan colleagues tortured to death. She then turned all her efforts to dismissing the doctrine of reincarnation and karma — presumably to avoid suffering the consequences of her heinous acts! Both she and the Emperor were intent on consolidating the power of Constantinople and competing with temporal and spiritual supremacy over the Pope and Rome.

Justinian and his wife Theodora, who took delight in lecturing the bishops on the nature of Christ, declared war on the teachings of Origen in 543 AD when he convened a special synod to have the teachings of Origin declared as heretical. This was all done without even bothering to consult the Pope in Rome. In the year 553 he convened the Council of Constantinople which afterwards became known as the 5th Ecumenical Council. Justinian saw himself as head of the Eastern Church and was trying desperately to consolidate this claim. There were 165 bishops present at the council with only 12 from Roman dioceses, all the other Western bishops refused to attend. Pope Vigilius himself who was visiting Constantinople at the time stayed away from the council in protest. The Eastern Orthodox bishops who were in a state of vassalage to the Emperor could hardly refuse to attend.

The Emperor had the teachings of Origen condemned and fifteen anathemata (curses of the church) were declared against him. The formal procedures required that the official protocols of the council, which lasted for four weeks, were presented to the Pope for ratification. Vigilius had been made Pope in the year 537 upon the insistence of the Empress Theodora and thus buckled under pressure and signed the documents that were presented to him.

The interesting thing is that the documents that were signed contained an indictment against three scholars against whom the Emperor had issued edicts and had declared heretics four years earlier. Origen's name and teachings were not mentioned. The three succeeding Popes were to mention the Fifth Council without ever once mentioning the name of Origen. Thus the notion that reincarnation was anathematized with the words — *"Eternal damnation on anyone who preaches the spurious pre-existence of the soul and its natural rebirth"* — at the fifth council with the support of the Pope and the bishops of the Church is erroneous, but somehow became fixed in Church law and was taken for granted ever since.

Still the belief in reincarnation persisted amongst Christian sects such as the Albigensians, Cathars and the Bogomils all of whom were finally exterminated in the Middle Ages by the Church. Today there is a revival of the early Christian spirituality and belief in reincarnation by the Gnostic Christian sects.



Appendix VII.

Summary of World Views.

Protestant Christian	Vaishnava Hindu
1. God is eternally transcendent, different from the creation (although he is also immanent or omnipresent — Acts 17:28). Humans are individual and unique (Col 1:16-17; 1 Cor 4:7; Is 55:8-9; 48:11)	1. God is transcendent, different from the creation and also immanent or omnipresent. God is intimately related to the creation like a soul to a body. All conscious beings are individual and unique and related to God like sparks to a fire.
2. God is a personality or an Infinite Supreme Person. He is holy and worthy of worship (Rev 4:11). The One God consists of three persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.	2. God is the Supreme Being. He is perfect in every way, all-attractive and the only worthy goal to be sought. He has a dual nature — male and female.
3. God's perfection is not affected by the imperfection of the world, but he is moved to compassion (Jas 1:17; Jn 11:35).	3. God's perfection is not affected by the imperfection of the world, he is infinitely compassionate and desires the salvation of all beings without reserve.
4. Scripture — the Bible is the only and complete means whereby God transmits his message to humanity.	4. Scripture — the Vedas are the complete means whereby God reveals his transcendental qualities and pastimes. His message for humanity is revealed to all mankind at all times and places in a manner in which they can understand — through their own Scriptures.
5. Jesus is the unique and single incarnation of God (Heb 9:25-28).	5. God incarnates repeatedly, whenever the necessity arises; Krishna is the only complete and perfect incarnation of God.
6. Humanity is fallen and sinful but is created in the image of God, therefore, as the best thing within His creation it has great value in the eyes of God.	6. All sentient beings are sparks of the divine and latently perfect. The separation from God is due to the illusory identification of the soul with the material universe. The value of the soul to God lies in it being an essential part of Himself.

<p>7. Moral evil is a reality and Satan is a real person who is very wicked and is antagonistic towards God until the end of creation (Jer 17:5-9; Is 64:6; Rom 3:23; Jn 3:19; 8:44). Satan is the Prince of this World and as such has the power to interfere in the spiritual progress of the individual and the world affairs in general.</p>	<p>7. Moral evil is relative and not absolutely real. God is the cause of all causes and the Supreme Ruler and Controller of the Universe; as such there is no power in the universe that is capable of being antagonistic towards God. Humanity is led astray by the powerful attraction of sense-gratification and the chimera of material life.</p>
<p>8. The essential problem of life is sin and the existence of evil. The real existence of evil necessitates God's intervention. Forgiveness of sins is offered only via the death of Jesus. A sacrifice of the Son of God which was made in order to atone for sin (Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8).</p>	<p>8. The existence problem is suffering. The perpetual existence of suffering in the world and a yearning for reunion with the soul actuates God's intervention. Forgiveness of sins and reconciliation are offered free of any conditions to any soul that surrenders itself to God.</p>
<p>9. The view of creation and life in general is linear. The problem of evil and sin is permanently solved by the redemption offered through Christ and by the creation of a New World Order — a New heaven and a New Earth (Rev 21:1-4; Heb 7:25 - 28; 9:12, 25-28) which are to be permanent.</p>	<p>9. The view of creation and life in general is cyclical (Samsara). All negativity and suffering is due to the inexorable law of action and reaction (karma). The only permanent state is Liberation (Moksha) from the cycle of death and rebirth. Liberation is unification with the Godhead</p>
<p>10. The world is real and good although fallen. It should not be discounted, but has spiritual potential which has to be integrated with the spiritual reality</p>	<p>10. The world is real but transitory, unsubstantial and morally neutral. It is in fact the body, as it were, of the Supreme Person who pervades the universe from within and without.</p>
<p>11. Grace, atonement and forgiveness for sins are free gifts of God. (Eph 2:8-9). All humanity is saved by the mercy and initiative of God — God gives them to the minority whom he chooses, but the majority of mankind will be excluded from salvation for eternity (Matt 22:14).</p>	<p>11. Grace and forgiveness for sins are free gifts of God. All beings are saved by the mercy and initiative of God — God saves whom he pleases when he pleases, but ultimately he desires the liberation of all beings because all souls are integral parts of Himself. All sentient beings will eventually receive grace and liberation.</p>

The Christian vs Hindu Paradigm of Salvation

	Christian	Hindu
Basic Human Problem	Sin — all human beings are born in sin and also sin by disobeying the laws of God	Suffering — by virtue of being embodied all sentient beings are suffering in various ways. Suffering arises through ignorance of our true nature. The existential problem therefore is ignorance (<i>avidya</i>)
Result of this problem	The condition of sin angers God and leads ultimately to eternal damnation and separation from God.	The clinging to material existence and sense gratification and the identification with the body leads to repeated rebirth and continued suffering.
Solution to the human problem	In order to forgive sin God demands a blood sacrifice. God Himself in His mercy has provided the highest sacrifice — the human sacrifice in the form of His only begotten son Jesus.	Liberation from suffering requires the realisation of the true nature of one's essential spiritual being (<i>jivatman</i>) and an understanding of the temporary and conditioned nature of the universe around us.
Method of Salvation	Acknowledgement of the sacrifice of Jesus and the joining of a Christian community.	Personal and individual surrender to God and the continued working for the welfare of all sentient beings.
Desired outcome	Eternal bliss in heaven	Eternal service to God, and the opportunity to liberate other suffering beings.
Alternative	Eternal damnation and slow roasting in the fires of Hell.	Rebirth and the continuation of the cycle of craving, attachment, loss, suffering etc.

EPILOGUE

The heart of popular Christianity rests ultimately not on theology or philosophy or ethics, but on *faith* in the historic death and resurrection of Jesus. Many theologians and doctors of the church are turning way from this ‘historic’ Jesus who is so illusive and reposing their faith instead upon the ‘Cosmic Christ’ who transcends mundane history. Belief in an ‘historic’ Jesus is fraught with academic difficulties. In order for this ‘historic revelation’ to be universal it has to be proven to be objectively true. In the writings of contemporary historians of the life of Jesus the only three sound, indisputable historic facts are:—

- a. there was a man called Jesus,
- b. he gathered about himself a group of people whom he led,
- c. he was executed under the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate.

Everything else that is said about him is the collective, personal interpretation by his followers, of the events that occurred, in order to give meaning to the life and death of Jesus. The description of the events of the birth, life and death of Jesus is nothing but prophesy historicised.¹² The apostles, in order to make sense of what they had experienced with Jesus, searched through the text of the Torah and found prophecies which they considered related to the Messiah and turned these selected texts (often out of context) into an account of Jesus’ life in order to establish to themselves and to others that Jesus was indeed the Messiah — the Chosen One whom the prophets had predicted would come to save the world.

The understanding of Revelation (in all religious systems) turns on authority. In the Christian faith the Protestants ascribe all authority to the Bible itself. Modern science and scholarship has made Biblical fundamentalism rationally untenable and empirically impossible — the existence of Leviathans (Job 40 & 41 Isaiah 27;1 Psalms 74;13-14), talking donkeys (Numbers 22;28), God riding on clouds (Matthew 24;30), people living for 800 years (Genesis 5), Ships carrying two of every kind of animal (Genesis 7) etc. are acceptable only as allegory or metaphor. They are contrary to human reason and experience when presented as alleged facts.

In the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christian world, Authority rests in the hands of the Bishops. The Bishops are bound by Scripture and Tradition (not to be confused with customs). Tradition is the teachings of the apostles and the bishops who followed them. Scripture and Tradition are weighed in the light of actual problems to be faced and an authoritative ruling is made.

Hindus can identify with the Catholic/Orthodox Christian approach to serious religious questions. The fundamental problem for the Protestant approach to religion is the anarchy induced by private interpretation of Scripture.

For Hindus no threat is posed by scholarship or science. For Hindus history means nothing. If it can be proven that Rama, Krishna, or the Buddha never historically existed — no harm would be caused to the faith of Hindus and Buddhists because their importance is not in their historical lives but in their cosmic symbology. This too is now the stance taken by many enlightened Christian theologians.

The future which holds great hopes for the decline of ‘white’ imperialist attitudes to ‘non-white’ religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, will present the West with the seriousness of Hinduism. Hindus living in the West, either of Hindu descent or by conversion belong to a tradition where religion is seen as a serious involvement requiring renunciation, study, dedication, and an awareness

¹² Vide my publication “Why Hindus should reject Jesus”.

of the transitory nature of the world, and that God is not interested in material possessions. (The author does not have to tell his North American readers about the lack of seriousness of the American Protestant view of religion. They can tune into Christian TV. any day of the week). Evangelical versions of Christianity basically abhor reason, renunciation, study, dedication and, in its materialism, exposes itself as anti-Gospel.

Adherents to the Dharma taught by the Lord Krishna and Lord Buddha have nothing to be ashamed of when faced by Evangelical Christians. Despite the errors of the Evangelicals, the Truth is that God remains the God of all, not just the God of the Christians.

Why? Is God the God of the Jews only? Is He not also God of the Gentiles? Yes, He is God of the gentiles also. Romans 3:29

The good acts of Hindus have moral and religious merit in the eyes of the Supreme Lord. The virtue of Hindu men and women is praiseworthy in the eyes of the Lord. It is perfectly possible from the Hindu religious tradition, that Jesus of Nazareth is God Incarnate. Those Hindus who are interested in the subject of Jesus and His teachings would be well advised to learn from the Catholic Bishops and theologians and to pass by those of whom St. Paul wrote;—

**That we henceforth be not as children easily stirred and carried away by every wind of false doctrines of men who through their craftiness are artful in deceiving the people.
Eph. 4:14**

I have attempted in this book to show the principle similarities as well as the differences between Hinduism and Christianity and hope that those who are confused will have a clearer insight. To me the Hindu way, as I have argued, is the most rational and reasonable — but all paths ultimately lead to the same Supreme Reality. All expressions of spirituality or theology are by nature flawed. A transcendent ‘revelation’ has to pass through the minds of the revealers — and they have their own, biases, prejudices, desires, limitations of expression and experience and limited metaphors by which to describe that received revelation. It is impossible to convey through language things which transcend language. The Ultimate Reality is essentially unknowable and transcendent, and every attempt to describe it necessarily requires a process of circumscribing it in time and space and presenting it through allegories and metaphors. When the limitless absolute Godhead is confined by words and human expressions it becomes distorted. The nature of the Godhead is something to be experienced not discussed, just as the understanding of love and compassion comes with the experience thereof, never from lectures, reading or discussion. Everyone's experience of love is personal, unique and different, and if such a common emotion is so difficult to understand, communicate and to share with others how can we be dogmatic, conclusive and coercive in matters of spiritual experience? Readers who wish to pursue the matter more are referred to the quoted texts and the bibliography given at the end of the book.

While Hinduism is not evangelical, those who wish to explore that path can easily do so. I would suggest that you begin by contacting one of the well recognised Vedanta organisations such as Divine Life Society, Chinmaya Mission or the Ramakrishna Society or the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Most of these organisations have literature, programs, lectures etc. through which one can explore the rich Hindu tradition. There are now many web sites dedicated to Hinduism and the propagation thereof. The Saiva Siddhanta Church of Hawaii has a Hindu conversion program which can be accessed via the World Wide Web home page; —

<http://www.HinduismToday.kauai.hi.us/ashram/>

Abbreviations

CE	— Common Era known also as AD.
BCE	— Before the common era known also as BC.

Hindu Scriptures

Gita	— Bhagavad Gita
M.N.U.	— Maha Narayana Upanishad
Katha Up	— Katha Upanishad
B.N.P.	— Brhad Naradiya Purana.
Isa. Up	— Isa Upanishad

Books of the Bible

Gen	— Genesis
Deut	— Deuteronomy
Levi	— Leviticus
Num	— Numbers
Exo	— Exodus
Chro	— Chronicals
Ecc	— Ecclesiastes
Mic	— Micah
Ez	— Ezekiel
Mal	— Malachi
Joh	— Gospel according to St. John
Matt	— Gospel according to St. Mathew
Thess	— Thessalonians
Eph	— Ephesians
Rom	— Romans
Tim	— Timothy

Suggested Reading

Forgery — Why the authors of the Bible are not who we think they are. Prof Bart Ehrman

River of Compassion — A Christian Commentary on the Bhagavad Gita by Bede Griffiths. Amity House NY 1987

Waters of Fire — Sister Vandana. Amity House NY. 1988

Hinduism and Christianity — Swami Satprakashananda. Vedanta Society of St. Louis 1975.

Pagans and Christians — Robin Lane Fox; Viking Books 1986

The Unauthorised Version - Truth and Fiction in the Bible — Robin Lane Fox; Penguin Books 1992

Imitation of Christ — Thomas A'Kempis; Penguin Books

Cloud of Unknowing — Anonymous; Penguin Books

Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism — John Shelby Spong; Harper San Francisco 1992

Living in Sin — John Shelby Spong; Harper San Francisco 1990

Born of a Woman — John Shelby Spong; Harper San Francisco 1991

Resurrection - Myth or Reality? — John Shelby Spong; Harper San Francisco 1994

The Birth of the Messiah — Ray Brown. Doubleday Books 1979

Testament - The Bible and History — John Romer; Michael O'Mara Books 1988

Christian Mythology — George Every; Hamlyn Publishing Group 1970

Hebrew Myths; The Book of Genesis — Robert Graves & Raphael Patai; Arena 1989

A History of God — Karen Armstrong; Heinemann London 1993

The Hebrew Goddess — Raphael Patai

Middle Eastern Mythology — S.H. Hooke; Penguin 1991

Faith, Text & History, The Bible in English — David Lawton

Reincarnation - a Christian Appraisal — Mark Albrecht, Inter-Varsity Press 1982

Adam, Eve, and the Serpent. — Elaine Pagels

The origin of Satan — Elaine Pagels

Peace with God — Billy Graham

Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine — H. Wayne House, Zondervan Publishing House 1992.

Reincarnation - A Christian Appraisal — Mark Albrecht Inter Varsity Press 1982.

God - a biography — Jack Miles

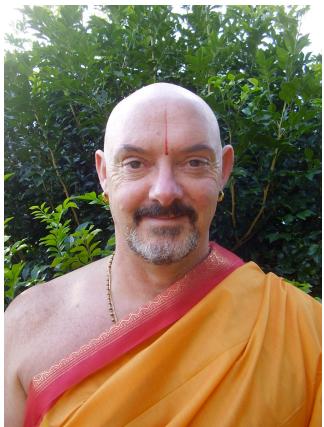
Who Killed Jesus — John Crossan

Glossary

anathema	— A formal Church ban or curse on something. A declaration that a person or teaching is heretical.
atonement	— to make amends
Beatific Vision	— Blessed and blissful vision of God
Bhagavad Gita	— The Hindu Scripture known as the "Hindu Bible" which is a dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna.
canon	— A religious rule or law, the authorised Holy Books.
chimera	— an absurd creation of the imagination, a groundless fantasy.
dialectic	— a logical argument
dichotomy	— division into two parts.
emanation	— coming or flowing from an original source.
empiricism	— the teaching that all knowledge is derived from the senses
empirical	— based upon experience or observation.
Esoteric	— confidential, secret, dealing with unseen things.
Exoteric	— adapted or able to be understood by outsiders or laymen.
exegesis	— exposition or interpretation of Scripture.
gnostic	— pertaining to knowledge of spiritual mysteries
Gnosticism	— a teaching of some Christian sects from the 1st to the 6th century, that knowledge rather than faith was the key to salvation.
Godhead	— the essential nature of God, Godhood, divinity.
gratuitous	— given freely without claim or consideration.
hermeneutics	— the science or art of interpreting the Scriptures.
heresy	— a teaching or view that is at variance with that of the recognised or mainstream religious establishment.
homily	— a sermon or discourse.

immanence	— the teaching that God dwells in all things, and permeates the soul.
inerrant	— free from error
insentient	— unconscious, incapable of thought
justification	— to be made right, proper or blameless
Mahabharata	— one of the great epics of India which is a commentary on the Vedas.
omnipotence	— Ability to do anything and everything.
omnipresence	— existing everywhere
omniscience	— all-knowing, possessing knowledge of everything.
polemic	— the use of aggressive arguments to refute errors of doctrine
premise	— foregoing arguments, a proposition which serves as the basis for argument or discussion.
Redemption	— the act of regaining possession of something, the recovering of the soul by God.
restitution	— the act of restoring something or making good something that is lost or damaged.
resurrection	— a rising again from the dead
self-abnegation	— self-denial, self-renunciation
schism	— division based on opinion
transcendent	— of a very high and remarkable degree, surpassing or beyond knowledge, pertaining to God as beyond the universe and perfect.
transfigure	— to change the outward form or appearance of, to make glorious.
vicarious	— made or performed by some else, a substitute for the original.

About the Author



Sri Rama Ramanuja Achari (Rami Sivan) is one of only two Westerners ever to be ordained as Priests in the conservative lineage of the Srivaishnava tradition of South India, and the first to have been confirmed as Acharya (Spiritual Preceptor) in 1990 by His Holiness Sri Varada Yatiraja Jiyar Swamigal — the late pontiff of the Adi Kesava Perumal Temple in Sriperumbudur, Tamilnadu.

He studied Hebrew and Arabic in Israel, Sanskrit in Benares, and spent some years in the South of India studying Tamil, Vaishnava Theology and Liturgy as well as Astrology.

He has travelled extensively, lecturing in South Africa, North America, Bali and India and presently resides in Australia where he is practicing as a Hindu Priest and Dharma teacher. He's the Public Relations officer of the Australian Council of Hindu Clergy.

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