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The Gita and the Ecclesiastes

From a first look at the two quotes, it seems as though the Gita is much more rigid in its perspectives of God and in showing how God is related to the physical realm, in comparison to the Ecclesiastes. The Ecclesiastes seems a little more free, possibly due to its focus on enjoyment and contentedness in the specific quote given. The Gita and the Ecclesiastes present distinctly different cosmologies by interpreting the duty humans have to God in two contrasting ways.

The main concept of the relationship between humans and God differs between both texts. In the Gita and Hinduism as a whole, the relationship between God and humans is not so symbiotic. Meaning, believers do not expect to gain anything material by following the rules and serving God accordingly. They expect to gain a sense of peace and purpose from the knowledge that they are behaving as the Gita says they should. Other than that, there is not a sense of entitlement to anything luxurious. This can be seen in the quote, “do your duty, but seek not the fruits of your duty.” What this quote aims to say is that one should serve God well, because of his or her respect and reverence. One must not have any ulterior motives or hopes of achieving personal gain.

This contrasts with the Ecclesiastes, which focuses more on the good humans versus the bad. Rather than bestowing a sense of duty on the humans, it aims to help people behave according to the rules by showing what will happen to people that do not. This is another way to

motivate people. Instead of just claiming that it is their duty, it gives them incentive, and plausible punishment. The Ecclesiastes says “there is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him, who can eat or who can have enjoyment? For to the one who pleases him God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he gives the work of gathering and heaping, only to give to one who pleases God; this also is a vanity and a chasing after wind.” This plays to the fundamental desires of humans: humans always want reward for hard work, and need food and drink to survive. This quote goes on to basically say that by “pleasing” God, people will live a good life, and be deserving of good things. The “sinners” will continuously work, but will not reap the rewards.

Overall, both texts try to convince humans to serve God well. The Gita tries to do this by appealing to a sense of integrity and duty. The Ecclesiastes does this by appealing to inherent human desires and behavior. Both have been successful as both religions have mass followings, and it is interesting to see how persuasive both texts are in their own ways.