

Hinduism

As the clash of eastern and western philosophy and religion come together, Hinduism is becoming more and more prevalent today due to a global economy, easier travel, visa access and a better educated and skilled English language Indian labor force is moving to the United States and bringing these traditional philosophical and religious values with them.

If this is the trend going forward with the global economy the way it is, it behooves us to better understand Hinduism and how it differs from historical Biblical Christianity.

With this being said, the rise in the practice of yoga, the belief in reincarnation, karma, meditation, gods and goddess worship, religious experience over objective truth, and the fact that Hinduism embraces many different beliefs only opens the door for opportunities to share Jesus with the Hindu in many different settings.

Hinduism is the world's oldest extant religion, with a billion followers, which makes it the world's third largest religion. Hinduism is a conglomeration of religious, philosophical, and cultural ideas and practices that originated in India, characterized by the belief in reincarnation, one absolute being of multiple manifestations, the law of cause and effect, following the path of righteousness, and the desire for liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.¹

As the world's oldest religion, Hinduism practices goddess worship, it probably has the oldest literature on spirituality and mysticism and is the most inclusive of all the world's religions.

Tonight, we're here to discuss, contrast and compare the teachings of Hinduism with Christianity, to see how it deviates from the historic Christian faith, but first, let's look at Hinduism's beginnings.

Definitions and Beginnings of Hinduism

Apart from the other major religions of the world which can trace their origins to a founder, individual or teacher, Hinduism has no founder that can be pinned down historically.

The lack of historical concreteness is what makes Hinduism attractive to many of its adherents.

Now, although no human founder is attributed to starting Hinduism, Hindus will claim that it was started by God Himself and thus is God-centered while other religions are focused on the founder or man-centered.

“There are these eternal principles, which stand upon their own foundations without depending on any reasoning, even much less on the authority of sages however great, of Incarnations however brilliant they may have been. We may remark that as this is the unique position in India, our claim is that the Vedanta only can be the universal religion, that it is already the existing universal religion in the world, because it teaches principles and not persons.”²

In 1995, Chief Justice P. B. Gajendragadkar was quoted in an Indian Supreme Court ruling:³

“When we think of the Hindu religion, unlike other religions in the world, the Hindu religion does not claim any one prophet; it does not worship any one god; it does not subscribe to any one dogma; it does not believe in any one philosophic concept; it does not follow any one set of religious rites or performances; in fact, it does not appear to satisfy the narrow traditional features of any religion or creed. It may broadly be described as a way of life and nothing more.”

The following definition of a basic Hindu was quoted in India’s Supreme Court in 1995 as well:⁴

“Acceptance of the *Vedas* with reverence; recognition of the fact that the means or ways to salvation are diverse; and the realization of the

truth that the number of gods to be worshiped is large, that indeed is the distinguishing feature of the Hindu religion.”

It's thought that the term *Hindu* comes from the River Sindhu (Indus), which is on the north-western region of the Indian continent.

The word Hinduism is derived from an ancient linguistic root that means “to flow,” and rivers have indeed been and have remained a central feature in the life for nearly a billion Indians.⁵

Vedic Period: 4000 BC–2000 BC – Ancient civilization flourished around the Indus river valley in India. Oral traditions were passed down from generation to generation around this time.

Epic Period: 1500 BC–500 BC – *Upanishadic scriptures*, philosophical in nature and the *Rig Veda* were developed and the culmination of the *Vedas*, the collection of hymns and chants collectively known as the *Vedanta* were compiled around this time.

Classical Period: 500 BC–AD 500 – The *Sutras* and the great epics of good versus evil called the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which contains the *Bhagavad Gita* were written.

Medieval Period: AD 500–AD 1800 – The *Puranas* or “religious and ancient narrative” texts start spreading across India. From these tales the great Hindu triad of Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu emerges.⁶

Modern Period: AD 1800–Present – Swami Vivekananda speaks at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago (1893), India gains Independence (1947), Hindu temple opens in United States (1957), 800 Hindu temples reported in 1994.

Today, there are approximately one billion Hindus worldwide.

- Approximately 1 out of every 7 people practices Hinduism or considers themselves to be Hindu.

- Hinduism is the third largest world religion behind Christianity with approximately 2 billion and Islam with approximately 1.6 billion followers.
- According to adherents.com, Nepal (89%) and India (79%) are the top two countries with the highest proportion of Hindus as of 1990; Colorado was third on the list, following New York and New Jersey of U.S. States with the highest proportion of Hindus.
- As of 1998, the United States had between 800,000 to 1.2 million and Canada had approximately 100,000 to 160,000 people who consider themselves to be Hindu.

As Christians, understanding other religions in order to dialog with people of other faiths is important. It's important to make friends and demonstrate that we care enough about folks to understand what they believe in order to "become all things to all men, that [we] might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). This is a Biblical concept as demonstrated by the apostle Paul.

Paul means here that he would use their belief systems to point to the truth of Jesus Christ.

Hinduism Today, a magazine dedicated to Hindu teaching and thought, founder Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami summarized Hinduism's faith when he wrote "The common bonds uniting all Hindus into a singular spiritual body are the laws of karma and dharma, the belief in reincarnation, all-pervasive Divinity, the ageless traditions and our Gods. Our religion is a religion of closeness, one to another, because of the common bond of loving the same Gods. All Hindu people are one family, for we cannot separate one God too far from another. Each in His heavenly realm is also of one family, a divine hierarchy which governs and has governed the Hindu religion from time immemorial, and will govern Sanatana Dharma on into the infinite. The enduring sense of an ever-present Truth that is God within man is the essence of the Sanatana Dharma. Such an inherent reality wells up lifetime after lifetime after lifetime, unfolding the innate perfection of the soul as man comes more fully into the awakened state of seeing his total and complete oneness with God."⁷

Hinduism Today defines what it calls the “9 Basic Hindu Beliefs” which we will be going over. Almost all Hindus share these beliefs or creeds today.

Beliefs of Hinduism

1. Reverence for Hindu Scriptures
2. All-Pervasive Divinity
3. The Three Worlds and Creation Cycles
4. The Laws of Karma and Dharma
5. Reincarnation and Liberation
6. Temples and the Inner Worlds
7. Yoga Guided by a Satguru
8. Compassion and Noninjury
9. Genuine Respect for Other Faiths

1. Reverence for Hindu Scriptures

Hindus believe in the divinity of the *Vedas*, the world’s most ancient scripture, and venerate the *Agamas* as equally revealed. These primordial hymns are God’s word and the bedrock of Sanatana Dharma, the eternal religion which has neither beginning nor end.⁸

Hinduism does not have a one volume book considered holy but a voluminous collection that is best classified as “holy writings” that consist of *Smriti* (heard) and *Smriti* (remembered) texts.

Hindus do not believe that the *Vedas* were originated by human authors but that they exist eternally from the beginning of time and as the priests were in meditation, the *Vedas* were revealed to them and they in turn, orally passed them down to other priests.

The *Vedas* (which mean “wisdom” or “knowledge”) were developed over a period of approximately 2000 years and originally transmitted orally down through the generations until written down in an ancient Indian language called *Sanskrit*.

The most common of the Hindu writings and their descriptions are as follows:

- **Vedas** – A collection of over 1,100 hymns dedicated to their gods, liturgies, hymns, rituals, mantras, reciting, magic spells and incantations.
- **Upanishads** – Philosophical commentaries on the *Vedas* on how to live.
- **Ramayana** – An epic tale of good over evil.
- **Mahabharata** – Another epic tale and is the longest poem in the world consisting of approximately 100,000 verses. These writings contain the **Bhagavad Gita** – the most common and well know of Hindu literature, it's often called the "Bible of Hinduism." ⁹
- **Agamas** – Devotional texts.

The **Bhagavad Gita** consists of 18 chapters and 700 verses: ¹⁰

- The first six chapters deal with the "science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the Ultimate Consciousness through actions."
- The next six chapters deal with the "science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the Ultimate Consciousness by the path of devotion."
- The last six chapters deal with the "science of the individual consciousness attaining communion with the Ultimate Consciousness through the intellect."

Biblical Teaching

Christians consider the Bible to be the Word of God. The word *Bible* means "book." The English name came to us from the Latin *biblia* and from the Greek *biblos*. It was the original name of the outer skin of the papyrus reed that people used to write upon in antiquity times and around the second century AD, the word was used by Christians to describe their sacred writings.

The Bible is made up of 66 separate books and letters, 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament.

These two major parts, the Old Testament and the New Testament, could better be called *covenants* since they are taken from the Hebrew and Greek words that mean "a compact or agreement between two parties."

The Bible was written across a time span of approximately 1,600 years, by more than 40 different people with varying educations, backgrounds and occupations. For example:

- David was a king.
- Moses and Hosea were shepherds.
- Joshua was a military general.
- Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah were prophets.
- Daniel was a prime minister.
- Luke was a doctor.
- Peter and John were fishermen.

The Bible was written on three different continents, Africa, Asia and Europe in three different languages, Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic.

Yet, in spite of the diversity of the people writing over a span of 1,600 years from different cultures, occupations, continents and languages, the Bible has one consistent message, God's message of love, grace, mercy, salvation and redemption in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

We can demonstrate that the Bible is divine in origin rather than human in origin, based on the following acronym **M.A.P.S.** ¹¹

Manuscript Evidence - We have what's called *an embarrassment of riches* when it comes to the manuscript and transcript evidence in our possession. The number of manuscripts, versions and translations of the New Testament number over 24,000 and combined with the Dead Sea Scrolls which verify the accuracy of the transmission of the Old Testament and the writings of

the early church fathers that quote all but 11 verses of the New Testament, the accuracy of the New Testament is amazing as well.

Archeological Evidence - Time and time again, archaeology has confirmed people, places, events and customs that are mentioned in the Bible as historical and reliable. In fact, "25,000 sites within this region and dating to Old Testament times, in their broadest sense, have been located" ¹² demonstrating that the Bible is not mythological but historically accurate regarding archeology.

Prophetic Evidence - One of the most compelling and strongest cases for accepting the trustworthiness of the Bible as the inspired Word of God is predictive prophecy. Predictive Prophecy is so convincing that skeptics will conclude that after the events happened, literary editors went back and "doctored" the original events to make them look like they were written before hand.

Statistical Probability Evidence - Anybody with a statistical background or an understanding of the odds involved in the following statistical probabilities would be hard pressed to shrug off the evidence that if we look at just eight of the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by Jesus Christ, we can conclude that the odds of their coming to pass are 1 in 10^{17} or 1 with 17 zeros after it or 100,000,000,000,000,000 chances in one!

Combine these evidences together and it's overwhelming that the God of the Bible has so inspired His Word that the original autographs were without error since God is without error and as we read in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

Other verses in the Bible that attest to the accuracy and reliability to the Bible:

- Luke 1:1-4 says, "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers

of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account,... that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed."

- In John 19:35, speaking of the accuracy of seeing Jesus crucified, John says "And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe."
- 2 Peter 1:16, 20-21 says, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty... knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke [as they were] moved by the Holy Spirit."

2.All-Pervasive Divinity

Hindus believe in a one, all-pervasive Supreme Being who is both immanent and transcendent, both Creator and Unmanifest Reality.¹³

The Hindu god is one (Brahman) and yet also many (Kali, Vishnu, Rama, Shiva, Ganesh, etc.)

There are 330 million gods and goddesses, which are manifestations of Brahman and a way to approach Brahman. However, Brahman is usually not worshiped in Hinduism but by worshiping one of the 330 million, they are worshiping the one.

The Hindu religion is both monotheistic (the worship of one God) and henotheistic (belief in and worship of one God without denying the existence of others).¹⁴

In Hindu thought, Brahman is the ultimate source, formless, eternal, without qualities and without attributes, impersonal, the creator of the universe.

The Hindu trinity (Trimurti) is made up of *Brahma*, the creator of all life and the universe; *Vishnu*, the protector or preserver who oversees the cycles of birth and death and *Shiva* the destroyer, the Lord of the Fire who is also called *Hara* the Remover, or Death.¹⁵

The Hindu pantheon of gods and goddesses consists not only of the *Hindu trinity*, but also *manifestations of Shiva*, the *Ten Avatars of Vishnu*, but also millions of *Demigods*, *Animal gods* and even the *Nine Planet gods*.

Hindus believe that the gods are very much alive and live in temples, on snow-capped peaks, in rivers and oceans and in the hearts and minds of the Hindus.¹⁶

Biblical Teaching

The Hindu religion is a complex mixture since a Hindu may believe any of the following: monism (all matter is one substance), pantheism (God is all and all is God), animism (God lives in nonhuman objects such as rocks, trees, rivers, etc.) monotheism (there is only one God), henotheism (there are many gods (330 million), but they only worship one) and panentheism (everything exists inside of God).

Except for monotheism, these aspects are not a Christian worldview of the God of the Bible as He has defined Himself.

The Bible teaches that there is one God and not three gods, thirty-three gods or thirty-three million gods.

- Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"
- Isaiah 44:6 says, "I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God."
- Isaiah 45:5 says, "I am the LORD, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me."

- John 17:3 says, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
- James 2:19 says, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble!"

The Bible also teaches that we don't have to go through a pantheon of gods to reach or worship the one true God.

- 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"

Scripture teaches that God is transcendent of His creation, not part of it or it part of Him.

God was before creation (Genesis 1:1) and exists outside of creation and is not in rocks or trees nor do rocks or trees dwell in Him.

While God is present everywhere according to Psalm 139:7-8, God is not everything:

- Psalm 139:7-8 says, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there."
- Isaiah 57:15 says, "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit. To revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'"

Here we see His *Transcendence* meaning God is above and uniquely different than His creation.

And we see His *Immanence* meaning God still works and His presence is felt in the lives of believers who repent and live by faith.

The Bible warns us about worshiping the creation instead of the creator in Romans 1:25 which says that some "exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.."

One of the problems with panentheism as a worldview is that evil would then reside in God.

In other words, according to the panentheistic worldview, "evil is a necessary part of the ongoing progress of the interaction of God and the whole world (his body)."¹⁷

3.The Three Worlds and Creation Cycles

Hindus believe there are three worlds of existence-physical, astral and causal-and that the universe undergoes endless cycles of creation, preservation and dissolution.¹⁸

The *physical* (bhuloka) consists of what can be felt and accessed by the five senses - taste, touch, sight, sound and smell. At death, the physical or material body as well as its life-force begins to disintegrate.

The *astral* (antarloka) sometimes is referred to as the *subtle* or *mental* aspect of a person. In Hindu thought, the astral contains our mental/thought or wisdom capabilities and it is this aspect that continues to exist after death. The concept of astral projection is said to involve the separation of the astral or subtle body from the physical.

The *casual* (sivaloka or karanaloka), in Hindu thought "contains the very essence of who you are as an individual. The habits and attitudes developed in your previous lives, your likes and dislikes, talents and liabilities, are carried with the casual body like a piece of luggage."¹⁹ It is the *casual body* that reincarnates.

According to the Vedas, "Now, there are, of a truth, three worlds: the world of men, the world of the fathers, and the world of the Gods. The world of the Gods is verily the best of worlds."²⁰

Hinduism teaches that the world, the universe, humans and creatures is created, destroyed and re-created over and over again in eternally repetitive endless cycles.

Since Brahman (the ultimate source, formless, eternal, the creator of the universe) alone exists, ultimately everything is illusory (maya).

Dr. Raymond Hundley explains the Hindu end-of-world and creation teaching and says that "according to Hindu tradition, an event will take place called 'the Night of Brahman' in which Shiva, the destroyer god, will come to earth, kill all the demons, and perform a special dance on their corpses that will signal the end of the world. Then Brahman will inhale all physical reality and hold it there for a long period of time. Later, Brahman will exhale the physical world and the process will begin all over again."²¹

Biblical Teaching

While the creation event is decidedly mythological in Hinduism, the Christian creation event is one that affirms the reality of the material world.

One thing we learn from modern philosophy, astronomy and astrophysics is that the universe had a beginning. The Bible teaches the following:

- Hebrews 11:3 that "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible"

Scholars believe that the Bible tells us that God created "Ex nihilo", Latin for "from nothing."

- Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

The word *created* [Hebrew: *bara*] means "to create out of nothing or of something new."

Prior to the moment of creation, there was nothing. God spoke into existence all time, energy and matter from nothing.

While Hinduism believes that all material is illusory (maya) and part of the Brahman, the Bible teaches that God is separate from His creation.

In other words, the creation cannot exist separate from God but God can and does exist separate from creation. In order to create, God had to exist prior to creation or else God would have created Himself which is an illogical absurdity.

We can look at the following *Kalam Cosmological Argument* to demonstrate that the universe is not eternal, it had to have a beginning and there was a cause for its beginning:

1. Whatever begins to exist has a cause.
2. The universe began to exist.
3. Therefore, the universe has a cause.

Other philosophical arguments for a beginning to the universe can be demonstrated by showing the following:

1. The universe is expanding. Scientists use the *Doppler effect* to show light shifts as objects move away from us.
2. The *Second Law of Thermodynamics* demonstrates that "unless energy is being fed into a system, that system will become increasingly disorderly."²²

In layman's terms, the universe would have died a cold death trillions upon trillions, upon trillions upon infinite trillions of years ago if it was infinite.

3. Also the fact that "actual infinities" do not exist.
4. We would never reach this point in time on the plane if time were infinite.

Psalm 19:1-3 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard." NIV

The Bible speaks of the Creator as a personal being who cares tremendously for His creation.

4. The Laws of Karma and Dharma

Hindus believe in karma-the law of cause and effect by which each individual creates his own destiny by his thoughts, words, and deeds-and in dharma, righteous living.²³

Karma is the concept that what one sows in this life; they will reap in this or the next life.

In other words, every action that this life causes, a reaction in this or the next life is inextricably woven into the rebirth or successive lives on earth.

According to Hinduism, depending on our actions, karma will determine the state we will occupy in the next life. This is one reason that the caste system in India is so hard to break out of and why the lower castes are not helped by the upper castes.

They believe that those in the lower caste systems are there because of their karma from previous lives and that to provide help would be denying them a chance to learn and move up in their next succession of lives.

Dharma is the concept of duty, a virtuous path, unselfish action or *the way of action*. Many aspects pertain to dharma such as Hindu ritual obligations,

one's social duties and harmony with all. This is the concept that Hindus should do what is right in practice of everyday behavior and ritual.

Hindus who master knowledge to the point where karma has no effect and live within accordance to dharma proceed more quickly towards liberation (moksha) from the ever-cyclical reincarnation (samsara).

Biblical Teaching

I've heard Christians ask, "Isn't the concept of karma the same as the Christian principle of reaping what one sows?"

Galatians 6:7-9 says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."

There's a fundamental difference between karma and "reaping what one sows."

In Hinduism, karma not only affects this life – but what form you will take in the next life. In other words, your next life on earth is partially determined by the karma you accumulate here and now and in past lives.

Karma and dharma are works with the purpose of working towards the "end game" of liberation (moksha) from the endless cycles of reincarnation (samsara).

Biblically, "reaping and sowing" means - if you sow to the "flesh", you will reap corruption and not eternal life in heaven but if you sow to the "Spirit", you will reap everlasting life.

Whatever seed is sown, that will a person reap. You cannot sow to the flesh and expect to spend eternity in heaven and have everlasting life. Verse 7 says "Do not be deceived."

All we have to do is turn to our Bibles, the *final court of arbitration* to see that close to 200 times in the New Testament, salvation is said to be *by faith alone* – with no works in sight:

- John 3:15 tells us that “whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”
- John 5:24 says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”
- In John 11:25, 26 Jesus puts forth a bold truth claim and then challenges us with a question, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”
- John 12:46 says, “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.”

It must be pointed out to anyone that’s in a works based religion that we are saved by faith *for* good works. In other words, works are a result of a faith that is a saving faith.

The New Testament repeatedly states that salvation is a free gift from God – salvation is by grace and grace alone entirely apart from the law or any works:

- Ephesians 2:8, 9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”
- Titus 3:5 says that “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...”
- Romans 3:20 tells us that “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified [declared righteous before God] in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

When talking to a Hindu, Christians need to stress the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ and what He did for us on the cross. Jesus made many truth claims that just cannot be swept under the rug and ignored.

If a Hindu really wants to work or perform duties (dharma), Jesus addresses that when He said in John 6:29, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

His truth claims (John 14:6) are valid including that He is God (John 8:58) and knows how a person enters heaven (Matthew 7:13, 14).

Because of the sinless life He demonstrated, by the miracles He did, and by His resurrection He confirmed that He is indeed the Son of God and therefore had the right to claim that He is the only way to eternal life.

5.Reincarnation and Liberation

Hindus believe that the soul reincarnates, evolving through many births until all karmas have been resolved, and moksha-spiritual knowledge and liberation from the cycle of rebirth-is attained. Not a single soul will be eternally deprived of this destiny.²⁴

Reincarnation (samsara) literally means "in the flesh" or "to come again in the flesh" and refers to the cyclical wheel of a person's soul as it passes into another body after death.

These cycles of reincarnation and karma continue until one attains the spiritual knowledge to become *liberated* (moksha) from the cycle of birth, life and death over and over again.

Reincarnation and karma are not only prevalent in Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism but also the New Age movement here in America.

About one in four Americans believe in reincarnation and among college students the figure is nearly one in three.

The belief in reincarnation and karma has been pushed into the mainstream way of thinking in recent years with movies such as *The Reincarnation of Peter Proud* (1975), *Audrey Rose* (1977), *Heaven Can Wait* (1978), and *Birth* (2004).

Liberation (moksha) is achieved and the reincarnation process stopped when one reaches a self-realization that one's self (atman) is one with the Ultimate reality or Brahman and by practicing the disciplines (yogas). This is also known as *the way of knowledge*.

Biblical Teaching

Dean Halverson explains that "the direction of the Hindu way to enlightenment is *from humanity to God*, and it is *based on one's own effort*. The direction of the biblical way of salvation, on the other hand, *is from God to humanity* in that it is *based on God's grace*, and it is a gift to be received through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 John 4:10)."²⁵

The Bible teaches that human beings live once and die once.

- Hebrews 9:27 says, "And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment."

While here on earth, people decide their eternal destiny in one single lifetime.

- Matthew 25:46 says, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

It's important to note here that the punishment is said to be everlasting or eternal [Greek: *aionios*]. It's the same Greek word used to describe the righteous to eternal [*aionios*] life.

Other passages that can be used to refute the false teaching of re-birth or reincarnation:

- Philippians 1:21 says, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

The "gain" that Paul is speaking about is his longing to be with Jesus Christ.

- 2 Corinthians 5:8 says, "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."

This verse makes clear that to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord" and not jumping to the next lifetime to do it all over again.

As Christians our hope lies in the resurrection of Christ and that one day, not after many births and deaths, we will be raised up with a new body.

- 1 Corinthians 15:12-14 says, "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty."
- 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 says, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

6. Temples and the Inner Worlds

Hindus believe that divine beings exist in unseen worlds and that temple worship, rituals, sacraments as well as personal devotionals create communion with these devas and Gods.²⁶

According to the magazine, *Hinduism Today*, "The Hindu temple is a sacred space where man and God commune. It is the home of God and the Gods... If you could view the temple from the inner worlds, you would see a brilliant ray coming from the Third World right into the temple on the physical plane.

This ray allows communication similar to a live video conference."²⁷

The Himalayan Academy says that "It is in the Hindu temple that the three worlds meet and devotees invoke the Gods of our religion. The temple is built as a palace in which the Gods live. It is the home of the Gods, a sacred place unlike every other place on the earth."²⁸

As stated before, according to the Vedas, "Now, there are, of a truth, three worlds: the world of men, the world of the fathers, and the world of the Gods. The world of the Gods is verily the best of worlds."²⁹

The way of devotion (bhakti) to the gods of Hinduism is most popular among everyday Hindus to try and achieve liberation from the cycle of life and death that they believe every soul undergoes.

Biblical Teaching

The Bible also teaches that there is an unseen realm, a world of powers and principalities and forces we are not privy too:

- Colossians 1:16 says, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."
- Ephesians 6:12 says, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

And the Bible explicitly commands us not to contact this unseen world:

- Leviticus 19:31 - "Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God."
- Leviticus 20:6 - "As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people."

And communion with God comes by having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and not by “temple worship, rituals, and sacraments.”

- Psalm 40:6 says, “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require.”
- Psalm 51:16, 17 says, “For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart-- These, O God, You will not despise.”
- John 8:31, 32 and John 15 speak of abiding with Jesus and He will abide with us.

The word *abide* [Greek: *menō*] means “to stay, to remain, live, dwell.”

- In John 17:3, Jesus prays for believers and says, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

Notice that it doesn’t say “they may know of you” but “they may know you.” The words *they may know* [Greek: *ginōskō*] means “a grounded knowledge based on personal experience.”

It also reflects a personal intimate relationship since it is also a Jewish idiom for sexual intercourse between a man and a woman.³⁰

Our relationship with the Creator of the Universe is based on a personal relationship with His Son – Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11-13).

7.Yoga Guided by a Satguru

Hindus believe that a spiritually awakened master, or satguru [true guru], is essential to know the Transcendent Absolute, as are personal discipline, good conduct, purification, pilgrimage, self-inquiry and meditation.³¹

The word *yoga* comes from the ancient Sanskrit language and means “union, unite, control, or to yoke”. The idea is that ones self (atman) is to be in

union or yoked to the Hindu concept of God (i.e., Brahman or the Ultimate Reality).

Author Gopi Krishna in his article, *The True Aim of Yoga*, says that "the aim of yoga, then, is to achieve the state of unity or oneness with God, Brahman, [and] spiritual beings...."³²

We read in *Hinduism Today* that "through the continued practice of such discipline, the [practitioner] can establish himself in unflinching and inseparable union with the Lord Shiva's luminous form..."³³

Author Rabindranath Maharaj states in his book *Death of a Guru*, "Yoga is Hinduistic. It is a religious philosophy whose goal is self-realization that is, God-realization. It is religious, and has nothing to do with gymnastics or good physiques."³⁴

There are many types of yoga which emphasize different aspects and involve strict moral, mental and physical disciplines.

Classical yoga practitioners are not interested in making their minds permanently blank, but rather to so discipline their minds that they no longer identify thoughts and sensory perceptions with their sense of self. This is accomplished by following the eight limbs of yoga.³⁵

In the west, people think of the Hatha Yoga postures (asanas) when they think of yoga but these are not originally intended to be separate and isolated from the other eight limbs as seen in the following quote, "Each is part of a holistic focus which eventually brings completeness to the individual as they find their connectivity to the divine."³⁶

The last of the eight limbs is called Samadhi or "union, merging or bringing together". "Sameness, contemplation, realization. The state of true yoga, in which the meditator and the object of meditation are one."³⁷

Essentially, yoga is a means or steps that Hinduism looks towards to achieve its form of "salvation".

Biblical Teaching

As we have seen, yoga cannot be separated from its roots in Hinduism as a means to become one with the Ultimate Reality. If you are just doing the stretching exercises or Hatha Yoga, you are not truly practicing yoga.

Yoga is Hinduism and the term Christian Yoga is an oxymoron and equivalent to saying "Christian Hinduism."

Concentration (dharana) and Meditation (dhyana), the sixth and seventh of the eight limbs of yoga are a way of meditating where the one doing the meditation becomes one with what he or she is meditating on. This leads to the last or eighth limb, Samadhi or "union, merging or bringing together."

One of the earlier Upanishads refers to meditation when it states "having becoming calm and concentrated, one perceives the self (atman) within oneself"³⁸ yet the Bible teaches us to meditate on God.

Biblical meditation needs to be understood since the words "meditate" or "meditation" is used twenty times in the Bible.

Let's examine verses that teach us why and how to meditate on God's word.

- Psalm 1:2 says, "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."

The word *meditate* [Hebrew: *hagah*] means to "ponder by talking to oneself, speak, study or talk."

- Joshua 1:8 says, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it."

- Psalm 19:14 says, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer."
- Psalm 63:6 says that "when I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches."

So, we notice that we are to "meditate" or "ponder by talking to ourselves," inwardly and outwardly about the word of God, about God Himself and His works and it should be from the heart. This is a far cry from what concentration and meditation means in Hinduism.

Another reason to avoid meditation, as defined by Hinduism, is because the goal of mediation is to provide the participant with a way to the ultimate truth by sheer human effort, thus advocating a form of self-salvation by works instead of what the Bible explicitly teaches.

- Ephesians 2:8, 9 says, "For by faith you have been saved through faith, and not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, *not of works*, lest anyone should boast." (emphasis added)
- Titus 3:5 says, "*not by works* of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (emphasis added)
- Romans 11:6 says, "And if by grace, then it is *no longer of works*; otherwise grace is no longer grace." (emphasis added)
- Galatians 2:16 tells us that "We...knowing that a man is not justified [declared righteous before God] by the works of the law *but by faith in Jesus Christ*" (emphasis added)

Biblical salvation is *entirely* by God's grace through *faith and belief* in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

- Romans 10:9-10 says that, "if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

8. Compassion and Noninjury

Hindus believe that all life is sacred, to be loved and revered, and therefore practice ahimsa, "noninjury."³⁹

Hinduwebsite.com states that, "According to Hinduism, animals are not inferior creatures, but manifestations of God on the lower scale of evolution compared to man, each containing a spark of the divine, capable of becoming human and achieving salvation... Human life is precious because it comes after many lives of existence in the lower life forms."⁴⁰

Ahimsa or noninjury "is the first and foremost ethical principle of every Hindu. It is gentleness and nonviolence, whether physical, mental or emotional. It is abstaining from causing hurt or harm to all beings."⁴¹

An aspect come into play regarding ahimsa is Karma, the concept that what one sows in this life; they will reap in this or the next life and the Hindu worldview of pantheism or "God is all and all is God."

In other words, what we do to others may be done to us either in this life or in the next life.

Hindus learn that they cannot or should not hurt that which they revere because the ideas that the "divine lives within each of us" comes into play. For example we read "Hinduism stresses noninjury to all creatures because Divinity is the Life of all life, and to injure or kill is to dishonor God's presence in all."⁴²

Pantheism [Greek: *pan* = all and *theos* = god] is the concept that "god is all and all is god". This refers to the idea that all is god and that there are certain levels of this divinity but ultimately, everything that exists, including you, me, rocks, lawn furniture, the sofa, and the coffee table is god.

Biblical Teaching

Compassion and noninjury is indeed moral and commendable whether it's from the Hindu or the Mormon or the atheist. Treating others as we would like to be treated is indeed a worthy endeavor and Biblical principle.

For example, Jesus stated in Luke 6:31 "Do for others as you would like them to do for you." (NLT)

As Christians, our motivation for doing good and loving others is because God first loved us.

- 1 John 4:19-21 says "We love Him because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."

And when asked by a scribe "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus replied with the following:

- Mark 12:31 says "you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

But to the Hindu, the reasons for compassion and non-injury are self-motivated.

- First, the karma aspect comes into play since you don't want to treat creatures poorly since you may be treated the same way. For example we read, "[The Hindu] knows that he may one day be in the same position of anyone he is inclined to harm or persecute, perhaps incarnating in the society he most opposed in order to equalize his hates and fears into a greater understanding."⁴³

- Secondly, since according to the Hindu, "all is God and God is all," to injure or dishonor ultimately means you injure or dishonor the divinity that lives within, that is you (pantheism).

We read this in the Bhagavad Gita, "He who sees that the Lord of all is ever the same in all that is -- immortal in the field of mortality -- he sees the truth. And when a man sees that the God in himself is the same God in all that is, he hurts not himself by hurting others. Then he goes, indeed, to the highest path."⁴⁴

If God is "all in all", then the totality of all things, including God, must include evil, and the Bible makes it perfectly clear, that's impossible.

God is not evil:

- 1 John 1:5 says that "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." Scripture reveals "God is light" representing the truth of God as well as the virtue, moral character and holiness of God.

God is not "all in all" in a pantheistic sense, but separate from His creation:

- There is a distinction between the Creator and the created:

Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent."

Psalms 102:25-27 says, "Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them...But You are the same, and Your years will have no end."

God created all things out of nothing:

- Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Nehemiah 9:6 says, "You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all."

Psalm 33:9 says, "For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

Hebrews 11:3 that "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible"

The Biblical view of God is one of a personal living creator (John 1:1) who loved His creation so much (John 3:16) that He took on a second nature, a human nature and become one of us (John 1:14; Philippians 2:7) to show us the way to the Father (John 14:9).

9. Genuine Respect for Other Religions

Hindus believe that no particular religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others, but that all genuine religious paths are facets of God's Pure Love and Light, deserving tolerance and understanding.⁴⁵

In other words, if the devotee of any religion is sincere, Hindus believe that all practices are OK since all paths lead to God.

Hinduism is what's called an inclusive religion. Inclusive means to "include everything or much of everything."

This concept that all paths lead to God can be seen in the Hindu religion itself since many differing beliefs are prevalent within. For example, some Hindus are monotheistic while others are polytheistic preferring to worship many gods.

One website states that, "Every instinct in Hinduism rejoices in tolerance and in acknowledgement of the many paths, even those that seem to contradict its own. When you believe that God is everywhere, in all there is wherever it is, it becomes impossible to hate or injure or seek to aggressively convert others."⁴⁶

Why convert others when “god is all and all is god” and we all are divine beings, part of the whole? Hindus believe that everyone can evolve to the divine irrespective of the religion or the god they follow.

Hinduism believes that even though religions like Hinduism, Islam and Christianity differ significantly and drastically on doctrine, they are each valid spiritual paths to the Supreme Being itself.

Biblical Teaching

The Bible teaches that Christianity is an exclusive relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus made incredibly radical exclusivity claims about Himself that a person should consider before outright rejecting Christianity.⁴⁷

- I have always existed (John 8:58; 17:5)
- I hold the keys to death (Revelation 1:18)
- I have never sinned (John 8:46)
- I have all authority on heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18)
- I and the Father are one (John 10:30)
- I must be placed above your family (Matthew 10:37)
- I have authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-12)
- I am the light of the world (John 8:12)
- I am prophesied about in the Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27)
- I am from heaven (John 8:23)
- I will be resurrected (Mark 8:31)
- I am the bread of life (John 6:35)
- I will send the Spirit of God Almighty (John 16:7)
- I am coming again to the earth (Revelation 22:20)
- I am a king (John 18:37)
- I give spiritual life (John 5:24)
- I am the one through whom you must pray (John 16:23-24)
- I raise the dead and heal diseases (John 11:38-44; Luke 13:32)
- I will judge the world on Judgment Day (John 5:22-30)
- I am the Son of God (Matthew 16:16-17)
- I will raise the dead at the end of time (John 5:28-29)
- I am the only way to God (John 14:6)
- My words will never pass away (Matthew 24:35)
- If you reject me, you reject God himself (Luke 10:16)

Truth is reality that matches up with the way things really are. Even if people don't believe in truth – or corresponding with reality, that doesn't make it any less real or truthful. In other words "truth is true even if people don't acknowledge it...In fact, truth is true even if no one knows it, admits it, agrees with it, follows it, or even fully grasps it."⁴⁸

Around 400 references in the New Testament confirm that Jesus is said to provide the only way to salvation, here are a few...

- John 6:40 says, "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."
- John 8:24 says, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am [He], you will die in your sins."
- John 10:1, 7 says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber... Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."
- John 11:25, 26 says, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
- John 14:6 says, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

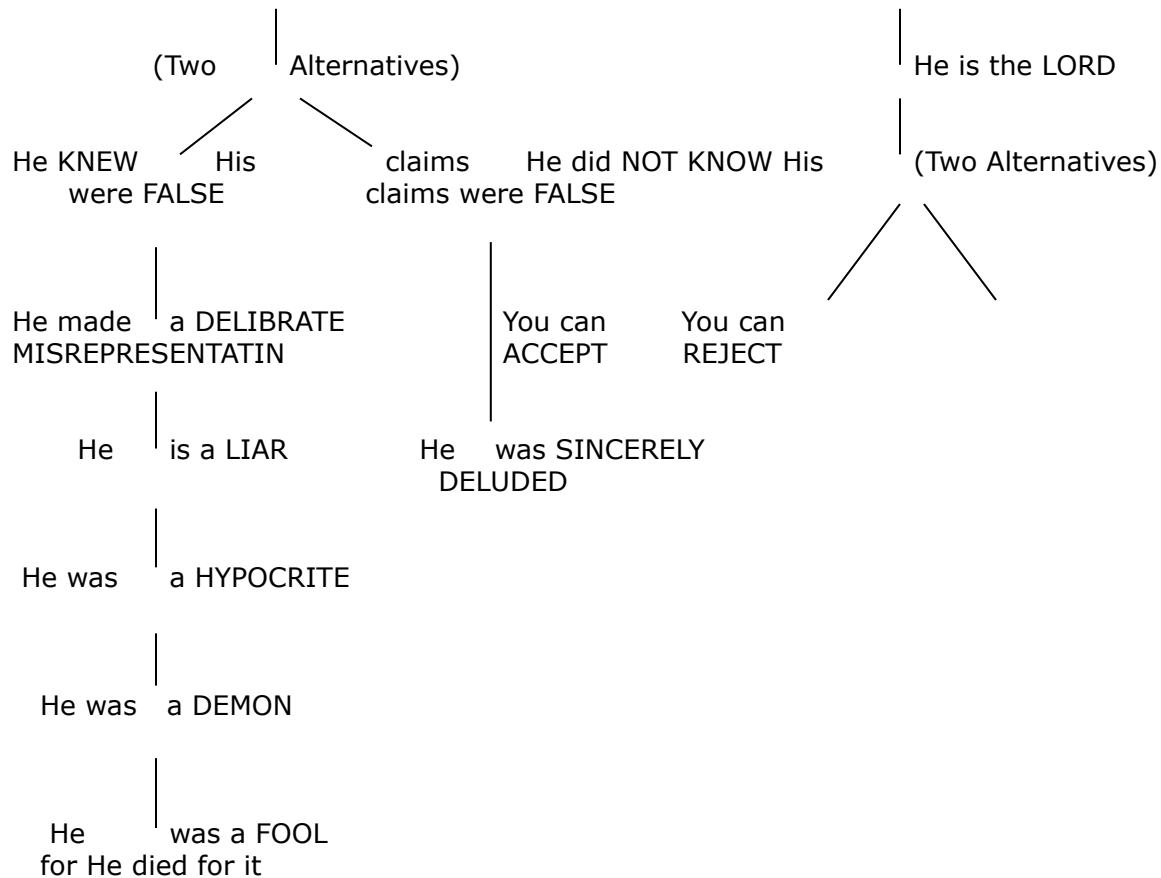
Over and over again we read that the only way to God is through His Son Jesus – talk about exclusive!

When we look at the truth claims of Jesus in the Bible, we have to ask ourselves, what makes what Jesus says reliable? Was Jesus actually Lord, a Liar or a Lunatic? Josh McDowell calls this "The Trilemma"⁴⁹

TWO ALTERNATIVES

His Claims were FALSE

His Claims were TRUE



I would add one more possibility to the Trilemma – Legend. Was Jesus just a legend and not an actual historical figure?

We have about 18 secular sources from about 100-150 years after the time of Jesus that confirms He was an actual historical figure. For example:

- Thallus, a historian in the first century, “confirms the Gospel’s accounts of the unusual darkness that engulfed the land when Jesus was crucified (Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44)”⁵⁰
- Pliny the Younger (AD 61 – AD 112), a Roman Governor wrote that early Christians gathered on a particular day and that they “chant[ed] verses alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god...”⁵¹
- Tacitus (AD 56 – AD 117), Roman senator and historian wrote that “Christus [Jesus], the author of their name, had suffered the death

penalty during the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate."⁵²

- Josephus (AD 37 – AD 100), a Jewish historian wrote that "When, therefore, Ananus [the high priest] was of this [angry] disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road. So he assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James."⁵³

Dr. Gary Habermas, Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Liberty University, says that "the fact that's recorded in secular sources more than any other one, about twelve of the eighteen sources tell us that Jesus died, many telling us details, what happened to him, he died by crucifixion, etc... but about two-thirds of the sources tell us he died...we really do have good historical evidence."⁵⁴

Conclusion

Just like all other attempts of man to reach up to God by our own works, we will fail. The Bible makes it clear that nothing we can do in the way of works, no good act can merit us salvation based on what we've done.

We will all fall short of the righteousness required from God and the Bible tells us that over and over again:

- Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
- Isaiah 64:6 says, "And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags."

Our only hope in this lifetime, not many lifetimes like Hinduism teaches, but this one lifetime, lies in the perfect sacrifice that Jesus paid on the cross.

That one act of sacrifice paid for my sins and I'm convinced that Jesus saw my face while He was dying on the cross for me.

The good deeds of Hinduism may focus on such elements as right living, right conduct, wisdom and conduct in a social order or *karma* and *dharma*, but it will not lead to salvation as we saw earlier.

Not only is Jesus the *only way to the Father* (John 14:6), but He offers more hope than a works based religion where you never know if you've attained enough karma on the positive side to move you along to liberation from reincarnation. Jesus extends salvation to the entire world (John 3:16) and He is the Christ, the Messiah, the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." (John 1:29)

Romans 10:9-11, 13 says, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.' For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.'"

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