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### The Concepts of Sin and Grace in Hinduism

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THE CONCEPTS OF SIN AND GRACE  
IN HINDUISM

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Systematic Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity

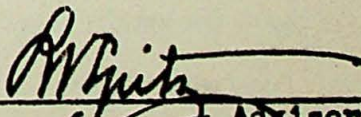
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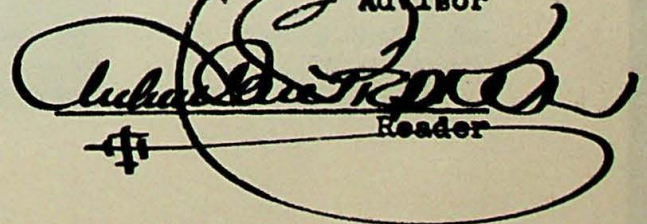
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June 1953

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

There are two very fundamental ideas in the Christian religion. These are the concepts of sin and grace. In the realm of Hindu thinking these concepts are not clearly defined. The Hindu concept of sin is not the same as the biblical concept of sin. The Hindu concept of sin is a state of being unrighteous, or a state of being impure. It is a state of being in a lower plane of existence. The Hindu concept of sin is a state of being in a lower plane of existence. The Hindu concept of sin is a state of being in a lower plane of existence.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

There are two concepts which are very fundamental in the Christian religion. These are the concepts of sin and grace. In the realm of Hindu thinking these concepts are only vaguely known. The author became aware of this state of affairs to some extent during his first term of mission service in India. This awareness awakened a desire to learn, if possible, what ideas arise in the mind of a Hindu thinker when he hears these terms used by a Christian speaker. The author feels that this investigation will help him to render better service to his Savior and to some of the people of India, who, for the most part, still do not know their loving Redeemer.

Christianity has made its greatest progress among the outcastes of India. There are a number of reasons for this, but the author wishes to mention especially two of them. In the first place, the outcastes, or "depressed classes" as they are called in India today, were actually denied a place in the religious system of Hinduism. Only the three highest castes, the Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas had access to the Vedas, or sacred books, and to the temples. The religious position of the Sudras or fourth caste was only slightly better than that of the outcastes. The only hope



of salvation for an outcaste was the possibility of being born as a man of a higher caste in his next incarnation.

Secondly, the physical distress and economic poverty of the outcastes was regarded as a result of their evil deeds in previous lives, and, therefore, little was done to alleviate their sufferings until Christian missionaries began to help them. Today the situation in India is quite different. Now there are groups of Hindus who are taking an active part in relieving the distress of the outcaste often out of a desire to prevent the outcaste from becoming a Christian. There are others of a more enlightened nature, like the late Mahatma Gandhi, who realize that untouchability is a blot on the Hindu social system and seek to erase the disgrace of the outcastes.

It was but natural in former years that men of the depressed classes should find in Christianity a welcome relief from the degradation of soul and body suffered in the social system of Hinduism. It is true that many became Christians in order to obtain an education or to improve their financial status. The author does not wish to speak disparagingly of these Christians who were formerly outcastes. Although they often came into the Christian fold from motives which we might consider unworthy, nevertheless, these motives brought them into contact with the Gospel message which is able to convert sinners into children of God. And God's love has transformed the lives of many of these people.



But this very success of mission work among the out-castes has made it more difficult to reach members of the higher castes with the Gospel. Many high-caste Hindus believe that Christianity is a religion for the outcastes and that Christian Missions are primarily interested in helping the depressed. Others, who have delved more deeply into the philosophy of Hinduism feel that Christianity is inferior to Hinduism, because it does not satisfy the deeply spiritual longings of the East. One often hears the people of India say, "The West is materialistic, the East is spiritual." These people feel that the religion of the materialistic West cannot satisfy the longings of the spiritualistic East. This attitude is often the outgrowth of ignorance of the fullness of the Gospel revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. But, unfortunately, this attitude is sometimes the result of a presentation of the Gospel which was not fully aware of the needs and the aspirations of the high-caste Hindu.

Christian Missions in India have always been conscious of the fact that the Gospel message of salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is meant for all men, irrespective of nationality, caste, or social status. But in India most mission groups have had their hands so full ministering to the lower castes, that they often lost sight of the high-caste. This shortcoming has been recognized by many mission groups, and efforts are being made to correct this situation. Thus, for example, the Missouri Evangelical



Lutheran India Mission published a survey in January, 1953 of its plans for expansion during the next five years under the title: Lengthening The Cords. The first area of work dealt with in this survey is: "Work among new castes."

In order to pursue such work effectively one must be acquainted with the background of thought among people of the higher castes. Their outlook on life is quite different from that of the outcastes. We need not speak of that difference here, but mention it only as a complicating factor which makes it necessary for the missionary to acquaint himself with some of the leading thoughts of Hinduism.

It is the background of Hindu thought which colors the words that a preacher might use in presenting the Gospel message to the Hindu and convey to the hearer a meaning not intended by the speaker. If a person is aware of this danger, he can forestall misinterpretations which might otherwise vitiate his message.

Although the author does not intend to present a comparison between Hinduism and Christianity, yet the comparison will slip in time and again. This comparison has forced the author to think often of the words that Saint Paul wrote in the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the



kingdom of his dear Son...."

CHAPTER II

THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SIN

The author does not intend to present an exhaustive treatment of the doctrine of sin according to the Bible. That has been done by many theologians who were well qualified for such an undertaking. A detailed treatment of this subject may be found in the Third volume of Pieper's *Christiania Dogmatik*,<sup>1</sup> and in Mueller's *Christiania Dogmatik*.<sup>2</sup>

It will, however, be necessary to define the concept of sin. The author, therefore, proposes to present a brief summary of Bible teaching regarding the nature, the source, and the consequences of sin.

The Bible teaches that sin came into the world when Adam disobeyed God's commandment not to eat of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. God permitted man to enjoy the fruits of the trees of that garden with one exception. God forbade man to eat of the

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Pieper, *Christiania Dogmatik* (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1924), I, 611-696.  
<sup>2</sup>John Theodore Mueller, *Christiania Dogmatik* (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1924), pp. 210-235.



## CHAPTER II

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The Bible teaches that sin came into the world when Satan tempted man to transgress God's commandment. God had created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden. God permitted man to enjoy the fruit of the trees of that garden with one exception. God forbade man to eat of the

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<sup>1</sup>F. Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1924), I, 631-690.

<sup>2</sup>John Theodore Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), pp. 210-235.



fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>3</sup>

Satan, in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve by creating doubt in her mind concerning God's commandment. The father of lies held out to Eve the prospect of becoming as gods who know good and evil if she would eat of the forbidden fruit. Eve felt a desire for the fruit and for the wisdom that the devil promised. She took of the fruit, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.<sup>4</sup> Thus man failed in the choice between good and evil by disobeying God's commandment. He thereby fell from the holy estate in which God had created him.

The Fall of man did not erase in him the knowledge of God's will. Adam and Eve knew that they had sinned. They tried to hide from God instead of looking forward with joy to the personal communion that they had enjoyed with Him before the Fall. And Saint Paul writes:<sup>5</sup>

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel.

To the Israelites God revealed His holy law when He

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<sup>3</sup>Genesis 2, 17.

<sup>4</sup>Genesis 3, 1-6.

<sup>5</sup>Romans 2, 14-16.



spoke to them through Moses on Mount Sinai.<sup>6</sup> At that time God gave the Israelites the Ceremonial Law which was binding on them as God's chosen people until the coming of the Messiah and the Moral Law which is binding on all men for all time.<sup>7</sup>

Thus God revealed His law to men and expected man to keep these commandments perfectly. We frequently find such admonitions as, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy."<sup>8</sup> "Sanctify yourselves therefore and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: for I am the Lord which sanctify you."<sup>9</sup>

That this ideal applies not only to the Israelites, but to all people, we can see from the inspired writers of the New Testament. Saint Peter writes, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."<sup>10</sup>

In this connection it is interesting to note what stress

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<sup>6</sup>Exodus 19 and 20.

<sup>7</sup>That the Moral Law is binding also in the New Testament is evident from its repetition there. Compare Matthew 5, 6, and 7; Matthew 22, 37-40; Romans 13, 8-10; James 2, 8; I Timothy 1, 5; and many other passages.

<sup>8</sup>Leviticus 19, 2; 11, 44.

<sup>9</sup>Leviticus 20, 7-8; 20, 26.

<sup>10</sup>I Peter 1, 15-16.



our Lord Jesus lays on the law in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>11</sup> There He clearly shows that God expects not only outward compliance with His law, but that He expects perfect compliance also in thought; and that anything less than this perfect obedience renders a man guilty in God's sight.

The commandments of God were summarized and stated in positive form in Deuteronomy chapter six, verse five: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might;" and in Leviticus chapter nineteen, verse eighteen: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Our Lord Jesus illustrated both of these commandments very aptly and showed that the keeping of these commandments involved absolute obedience, also of man's will and desires, to the will of God. Love for God must be so complete that it surpasses love for anything else if it is to be counted perfect in God's sight. This was the interpretation that Jesus set forth in His discussion with the rich young man of which we read in Matthew chapter nineteen, verses sixteen to twenty-six. The second commandment of love Jesus illustrated and interpreted in the parable of the Good Samaritan found in Luke chapter ten, verses twenty-five to thirty-seven. Here too, we see that the Law of God involves the inmost thoughts of man as well as his outward actions. Jesus' interpretation of the law

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<sup>11</sup>Matthew 5, 6, and 7.



did not diminish the requirements of the law, but revealed them more clearly. He Himself declared that He did not come to destroy the law, or the prophets; but came to fulfill them.<sup>12</sup> He could, therefore, not tolerate anything less than complete obedience to the law. Saint James also writes, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."<sup>13</sup> The Apostle Paul points out that the person who attempts to earn salvation by the works of the law is accursed if he does not observe the law perfectly. He writes, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."<sup>14</sup>

The law which God revealed He wanted obeyed. Sin may be defined as the transgression of that law. Thus it is defined in the first epistle of Saint John, chapter three, verse four. Reu and Buehring in their book, Christian Ethics, state that the concept of lawlessness, ἀνομία links all Biblical designations of sin together, whether sin is spoken of as ἁμαρτία, ἁμαρτία, ἁμαρτία, aberration from the right way; or as ὑπόβ, παράβασις, παρακοή, παραπτώμα, transgression, trespassing, defection; or as ἴδι, ἀδικία,

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<sup>12</sup>Matthew 5, 17.

<sup>13</sup>James 2, 10.

<sup>14</sup>Galatians 3, 10.



deviation by conscious turning away from the law; or as  $\psi\lambda$ ,  $\sigma\lambda\gamma$ ,  $\kappa\alpha\kappa\acute{\iota}\alpha$ ,  $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\acute{\iota}\alpha$ , insolent, malicious transgression; or as  $\alpha\sigma\tau\psi\gamma$ ,  $\acute{\alpha}\sigma\epsilon\beta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ , wanton ignoring of God and His norm, insurrection against God; or by still other names, such as  $\sigma\gamma\gamma$ ,  $\sigma\tau\eta$ ,  $\sigma\tau\eta$ ,  $\sigma\tau\eta$ ,  $\sigma\tau\eta$ .<sup>15</sup>

The English word sin, according to the same source, is derived from sun, syn, synia, deny, refuse; synn, renunciation of peaceable relations, breaking the peace; sunta, insurrection of vassals, rebellion; also used as a translation of the Latin words crimen, lapsus, peccatus, hence, rebellion against law and order.<sup>16</sup>

It helps us understand the nature of sin properly to contrast it with the holiness of God. God is perfectly holy. There is not a trace of imperfection in Him. Sin is a perversion of that which is perfect according to the standard set by God. It is disregard for the will of God, a form of rebellion against Him whose rules are perfect because He is perfect.

As a result of the Fall, man lost the ability as well as the desire to live a holy life. His whole being became corrupt. Unless God changes the will of man, he remains an enemy of God. "The carnal mind is enmity against God,"

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<sup>15</sup>Johann M. Reu and Paul H. Buehring, Christian Ethics (Columbus, Ohio: The Lutheran Book Concern, 1935), p. 92.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.



Saint Paul writes.<sup>17</sup> In this state, man's impulses are inclined toward evil. His intelligence is corrupted so that he can no longer perceive spiritual truths.<sup>18</sup>

This sad state of depravity was also transmitted to all the descendants of Adam. The Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of original sin, that is, that all men are born in sin. We find a statement of this in God's promise to Noah after the Deluge that He would not again curse the ground for man's sake; "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."<sup>19</sup> We find an acknowledgment of original sin in the confession of King David in Psalm fifty-one, verse five. We meet the same truth in the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans where, in the fifth chapter, he compares the depravity that came upon all men by the sin of Adam with the righteousness that comes to all men through Christ's redemption.

Another consequence of the Fall is that man is under the wrath of God. God's holiness demands that He punish sin. And so the sinner is subject to God's wrath as we read in the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans, chapter one, verse eighteen: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold

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<sup>17</sup>Romans 8, 7.

<sup>18</sup>Ephesians 4, 18; I Corinthians 2, 14.

<sup>19</sup>Genesis 8, 21.



the truth in unrighteousness." God's wrath over sin is mentioned in many passages of the Bible. God's holiness demands that He punish sin. Especially in the history of the Children of Israel we can see that sin brings God's punishment.

From this same history we can learn that God's punishment for sin often serves a wonderful purpose. A temporal punishment for sin often acts as a deterrent to further sinning. It also may serve to awaken in man a realization of the hopelessness of his condition without the grace of God. But such punishments sometimes have also the opposite effect, namely, that man becomes hardened in his enmity against God, curses Him, and blames Him for sending even a small portion of the punishment that man so fully deserves.

The consequence of sin is death.<sup>20</sup> God told Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden that they would die in the day they transgressed His commandment.<sup>21</sup> But Adam and Eve lived on earth for many years after they first fell into sin. This indicates that the Bible uses the word "death" in a wider sense than physical death. We see that the Bible speaks of man being dead in sin, even though he is physically alive. Saint Paul writes to the Ephesians: "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."<sup>22</sup> Reu and Buehring

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<sup>20</sup>Romans 6, 23.

<sup>21</sup>Genesis 2, 17.

<sup>22</sup>Ephesians 2, 1.



describe death which is the punishment for sin in this way: "... the word "death" must be taken here in its widest Scriptural meaning as denoting the severance of those life-ties which unite God and man. Bodily death is the external evidence of this severance, its evil beginning is spiritual death, and its terrible consummation eternal death."<sup>23</sup> We see, then, that the consequences of sin are much more serious than physical death, grim as that is. Sin separates man from God, and that is death indeed.

As long as man continues to live in sin he is cut off from God. This life of sin ends with bodily or temporal death. But that is not the end of the consequences of sin. These consequences go on into eternity. A man who dies in a state of sin is separated from God forever. That is eternal death, the consummation of the separation from God which existed already during the life-time of the sinner.

Fortunately, the Christian religion reveals the way of salvation from this dreadful state. God Himself, out of great love for sinners sent His only-begotten Son into the world to save sinners. Of that we shall speak later when we consider the Biblical concept of grace. The Bible teaching concerning sin will have to be emphasized over against the same concept in Hinduism. First, sin is a dreadful reality with terrible consequences, and not a figment of the imagi-

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<sup>23</sup>Reu and Buehring, Op. cit., p. 110.



nation. Secondly, sin is a transgression of God's law, and not of man-made commandments. Thirdly, man, and not God, is responsible for sin. Finally, sin is not ignorance of God as the highest good, but is rebellion against Him who is completely good. Other points of difference exist, but these especially will come to the forefront of our attention in the following chapter.

...Christianity be defined, the definition...  
 ...reference to God made...  
 ...Christ, Hinduism is not...  
 ...and Hindu...  
 ...and is not...  
 ...Hinduism is a...  
 ...and includes...  
 ...

...the complexity of Hinduism...  
 ...it admits...  
 ...it is a...  
 ...of which the...  
 ...of many...  
 ...which...  
 ...ism, polytheism, and...  
 ...it has...  
 ...it knows...  
 ...and...  
 ...possible...  
 ...is...  
 ...includes...  
 ...atheism, polytheism, and...  
 ...Hinduism. So long as a Hindu...  
 ...and practices...  
 ...



## CHAPTER III

### THE CONCEPT OF SIN IN HINDUISM

It is difficult to define the concept of sin in Hinduism, because it is difficult to define Hinduism. Sydney Cave presents the contrast between Christianity and Hinduism in this respect in his book, Hinduism or Christianity? He writes:<sup>1</sup>

However Christianity be defined, the definition must contain some reference to God made known in Jesus Christ. Hinduism is not thus connected with a historic person, and Hindus proudly remind us that Hinduism has no dogmas, and is not concerned with the truth of historic facts. Hinduism is a vast development through the ages and includes within itself the most diverse beliefs.

O'Malley writes in a similar vein. He says:

The complexity of Hinduism is so great, the forms which it assumes are so protean, that it defies precise definition. It is a composite religion made up of many conflicting elements; at the same time it is a social system, of which the basis is caste. It is the product of many centuries of growth and compromise, during which such widely divergent beliefs as pantheism, theism, polytheism, and animism have received recognition. It has neither a common creed nor uniformity of worship. It knows little of dogma; it acknowledges no stereotyped and unchanging canons. It allows of the greatest possible freedom of thought as apart from practice, as is frankly admitted by Hindu scholars. 'Hinduism,' wrote one, 'includes all shade of faiths-- monotheism, pantheism, agnosticism, atheism, polytheism, and fetishism. So long as a Hindu conforms to the customs and practices of his society, he may believe what

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<sup>1</sup>Sydney Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 46.



he likes.' (P.N. Basu, Hindu Civilization Under British Rule, 1894).<sup>2</sup>

Radhakrishnan in his book, The Hindu View of Life, presents a similar statement. He says of Hinduism,<sup>3</sup>

While it gives absolute liberty in the world of thought, it enjoins a strict code of practice. The theist and the atheist, the sceptic and the agnostic may all be Hindus if they accept the Hindu system of culture and life. What counts is conduct, not belief."

Although there is no set of beliefs that a Hindu is expected to hold as a Hindu, Farquhar mentions certain ideas or convictions which all or nearly all Hindus will be found to hold. These beliefs are:<sup>4</sup>

1. The validity of caste and the authority of the Vedas and the Brahmans,
2. The doctrine of transmigration, and
3. The sacredness of the cow.

To this list of beliefs he adds, "Perhaps it may be said that a further general characteristic of Hinduism is to be found in a tendency of thought, feeling and aspiration of which the logical issue is a mystic pantheism." But he hastens to add that the degree of this belief varies widely.

Another factor that makes it difficult to pin down a theological thought in Hinduism is the Hindu attitude toward other religions. Mahadevan says, "It (Hinduism) believes in

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<sup>2</sup>P.N. Basu, quoted in Popular Hinduism: The Religion of the Masses, by L.S.S. O'Malley, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>J.N. Farquhar, A Primer of Hinduism (London: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1911), p. 151.



the sanctity and efficacy of all religions."<sup>5</sup> According to the Vedas, Truth is one, though the sages call it by various names. The Bhagavad Gita declares that all religions are strung on the Lord like pearls on a necklace. In whatever way people offer worship to the lord, he accepts it. Rama-krishna repeatedly said that different religions are only different paths leading to the same spiritual experience of peace and blessedness.<sup>6</sup>

We can understand, therefore, the vagueness in Hindu religious thought. Hinduism, apart from its social side, is a philosophical system rather than a religion. Whatever fits into this system of human thought was incorporated into the system. Hinduism is not an eclectic religion, however. The ideas that were taken over into the system were really digested and absorbed into the system of thought and became integrated into the whole.

It is, therefore, necessary to consider a number of concepts in order to get a clear understanding of any particular concept that we might select. To understand the concept of sin, we shall have to consider the Hindu concept of God, the concept of the soul, and the doctrine of karma. All of these concepts modify the concept of sin.

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<sup>5</sup>T.M.P. Mahadevan, Outlines of Hinduism (Madras: The Madras Law Journal Press, 1940), p. 10.

<sup>6</sup>Vergilius Fern, Religion in the Twentieth Century (New York: The Philosophical Library, c. 1948), p. 12.



## Concepts Which Modify The Hindu Concept of Sin

### The Hindu Concept of God

The author will attempt to trace the change in the concept of god which took place in the history of Hindu thought.

The period up to 1000 B.C. may be classified as the period of nature worship. The four earliest Vedas belong to this period. The Rig Veda is the most important of these.

Cave describes the thought content of the Rig Veda thus:<sup>7</sup>

The Rig Veda in the bulk of its hymns reflects a cheerful piety untroubled by speculation. The gods were for the most part held to be kind to those that gave them offerings. Life, this earthly life, was prized, and men desired to survive a "hundred lengthened autumns" (Rig Veda, X, 18. 4) and looked forward, when at length they had to die, to enjoying a life "where longing wishes are fulfilled" (Rig Veda, IX, 113. 11) in that happy sphere over which reigned Yama, the first of men to die.

In the Rig Veda the worship of Varuna seems to be the highest type of worship. Every hymn addressed to Varuna contains a prayer for the forgiveness of sins. Unfortunately, there are few such hymns in the Rig Veda.<sup>8</sup>

Most of the hymns of the Rig Veda were addressed to Indra, the genial, kindly, and often drunken warrior-god, and to Agni, the god of the sacrificial fire. These gods were of the kind that men could bribe to fulfill their

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<sup>7</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 51.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 87.



requests. The way of ethical monotheism was forgotten.

The age of the Rig Veda was succeeded by that of the Brahmanas (1000 - 800 B.C.). By this time the priest and the sacrifice had become more important than the gods. It was believed that if sacrifices were carried far enough they could exalt a man to the level of the gods. Hence it was very important that every detail of the ritual be properly executed. The priest, therefore, became all powerful. Without him the layman was helpless. The power of the priests became so great that they were spoken of as gods upon earth, and were feared more than the gods. The rituals in connection with sacrifices became so involved that no layman could conduct them with accuracy.

During this period belief in a personal creator, Prajapati, or more often, in a mysterious, incomprehensible, divine essence was held. Farquhar says that along with this new god came the idea that the ordinary gods were merely mortals until they extorted immortality from the supreme by sacrifice and austerity.<sup>9</sup> Some of the ancient gods faded into the background, and Siva, the mountain-god and the god of thieves, and Vishnu, the sun-god came into prominence.

After this followed the period of philosophic Hinduism. This is the period of the Upanishads (800 - 600 B.C.). Pantheistic faith became more widespread. The world was con-

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<sup>9</sup>Farquhar, Op. cit., p. 21.



sidered paltry and unreal in comparison with the One who was the sole Reality. All the ordinary gods were spoken of as mere manifestations of the One.<sup>10</sup> During this period the doctrine of karma and transmigration was formulated. We shall have more to say about this doctrine later.

Hindu thinkers now tried to find the One behind the all. They found this sole Reality in Brahma. He is the unknowable and inactive one. Perhaps the best way to describe him would be to quote what Haigh says on the subject:<sup>11</sup>

Whatever you may say of the Brahma, however describe him, the answer is Neti! Neti! 'not so, not so.' Do you speak of him as subject? Neti! Neti! for you thereby differentiate him from an object. Do you call him infinite? Neti! Neti! for you start forth with the image of the finite. He is not an empty abstraction, but he has no concrete. He is a necessity of thought, but beyond all comprehension. He is the impalpable and the immutable; selfless, timeless, spaceless, causeless; the sole entity, the final reality. Beside him there is no other, nothing else.

Although Brahma is unborn and immutable, yet Brahma through the help of its own inscrutable maya (illusion), appears to be born as a man so that men may realize their divine nature. That is how Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, and other incarnations of god came into existence.<sup>12</sup>

The goal to be attained is the realization that all is Brahma. The inquiry into Brahma has for its fruit the eter-

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<sup>10</sup>Farquhar, Op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>11</sup>Henry Haigh, Some Leading Ideas of Hinduism (Madras: Christian Literature Society for India, 1930), p. 58.

<sup>12</sup>Fern, Op. cit., p. 9.



nal bliss of absorption in Brahma, and does not depend on the performance of any acts. Release is nothing but being Brahma. Therefore, release cannot stand in the slightest relation to any action except knowledge, Cave points out.<sup>13</sup>

We saw before that the gods were considered incarnations of Brahma through maya. The existence of many gods is justified also on other grounds, Ferm indicates.<sup>14</sup> Since the supreme god is unknown and unknowable to the finite mind, the Hindu religion prescribes various symbols through which one can contemplate It (Brahma). The Vedic gods, Agni, Vayu, Indra, and others, and the gods of the Puranas, Vishnu, Siva, Kali, Durga, and others are symbols. Hindu thinkers believe that by contemplating the godhead through these symbols the aspirant ultimately realizes the absolute.

In this way Hinduism has made room for the primitive gods of the native tribes which the Aryans conquered. These gods were regarded as different aspects of the Absolute. In Hinduism everything, including the Deity, is viewed as transitory. Champion expresses the thought that personality, even in its divine form, is viewed as limited and therefore, is not far-embracing enough to cover all aspects of the Universe. Therefore, every symbol of the divine is believed to be sacred because of the religious feeling of the devotee

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<sup>13</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 179.

<sup>14</sup>Ferm, Op. cit., p. 9.



embraced in that symbol.<sup>15</sup> Hindus believe that "God is one without a second." But they believe that god is so great that he cannot fully be expressed by one being. Wilkins explains, "... all the gods, differing as they do in form and character, represent a part, but only a small part of his immensity."<sup>16</sup> To indicate their belief in the unity of the godhead, the Hindu will in turn extol each deity that he is worshipping as the supreme, and will regard the others as being emanations from him.

The next period that is of importance for our consideration following the period of the Upanishads is the period of devotional Hinduism. This is the period of the Bhagavad Gita. The time is about 1 A.D. The Bhagavad Gita is considered the noblest and purest expression of modern Hinduism. Hindu scholars like to compare it to the New Testament.

Farquhar says of its contents:<sup>17</sup>

The author wished to produce a poem to express his own boundless reverence for Krishna, to gather the best thoughts of the Upanishads and unite them with the most helpful parts of the philosophies, and at the same time bind people to the ordinary life and worship of Hindu society.

This poem was to be a manual which the ordinary farmer,

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<sup>15</sup>Gelwyn Gurney Champion, The Eleven Religions and their Proverbial Lore (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1945), p. 145.

<sup>16</sup>W. J. Wilkins, Modern Hinduism (Second edition; Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1900), p. 136.

<sup>17</sup>Farquhar, Op. cit., p. 82.



soldier, shopkeeper, or Brahman might read day by day while following his ordinary avocation.

The significant contribution of the Gita is the teaching of the supremacy of Krishna and the doctrine of Karma-yoga. Krishna is now conceived as the absolute Brahma, the object of the meditation of the sages of the Upanishads, and at the same time as a personal god who can be approached with sacrifice and prayer. That of course raises a problem in Hindu philosophy. If Krishna is active, how can he be real? The law of karma, as we shall see later, operates in the realm of the gods also. If a god is to be free from the dreaded cycle of rebirth, he, too, must be without action, attribute, or desire, Cave points out.<sup>18</sup>

The author of the Gita solves this problem by the teaching of karma-yoga. The commands of karma-yoga are: Give up all desire for the fruits of action, and thereby fulfill the philosophic ideal, but continue to do your ordinary work in the world at the same time, and thus fulfill your duty as a member of the Hindu family and caste.<sup>19</sup> This sort of self-less activity enables the god as well as men to do work without incurring the effect of work. Krishna can declare: "Works do not stain me, nor in me is there any

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<sup>18</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 97.

<sup>19</sup>Farquhar, Op. cit., p. 82.



longing for fruit of works."<sup>20</sup>

The period of devotional Hinduism was followed by a period of great decadence. This is roughly the period from 320 to 650 A.D. During this period religion is chiefly marked by a coarse, noisy sectarianism as Farquhar calls it. The follower of Siva or of Vishnu uses extravagant language in praising his own god and curses the devotees of the other heartily. Noteworthy of this period is the attempt to reconcile all sectaries by the doctrine of the threefold manifestation of the supreme in Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva.<sup>21</sup> But Farquhar says that this concept never truly laid hold of the people.

The myths of Krishna are embellished in the Puranas of this period. The licentiousness of Krishna is portrayed. In the stories of Krishna's childhood, many details are borrowed unchanged from Christian sources.<sup>22</sup>

Something that is difficult to understand is the unworthy conception of the gods that marks much of popular Hinduism. The Krishna of the Gita is a noble, though human hero. The Krishna of the Puranas is a lewd character unworthy of adoration. But that is the Krishna of the common Hindu. Wilkins remarks that when Hindus are asked about

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<sup>20</sup>Bhagavad Gita, IV. 13 f. quoted by Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 97.

<sup>21</sup>Farquhar, Op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.



the character of the god, they will repeat a number of attributes, most of which the devout Christian would admit as truly descriptive of God. And yet, they believe that this same god when incarnate amongst men was a man of like passions with ourselves; using his greater wisdom and power for the doing of greater evil.<sup>23</sup> Not only the licentiousness of Krishna is mentioned, but Siva's infidelity towards his wife and the quarrels that resulted are well known and oft repeated tales. Wilkins says further:<sup>24</sup>

Hindus admit that they should be sorry for the gods to live near them, and it has passed into a proverb, that whilst the teaching of the gods is good and worthy to be followed, the example they have set is bad and unfit to be copied. In the present day there are those who try to explain away a good deal of the worst teaching of the Puranas, and to give a poetical interpretation to the stories of the immoralities of the gods; but the people believe these accounts in their literal form, and say that acts permitted to the gods are forbidden to men.

O'Malley remarks:<sup>25</sup>

In the minds of the ordinary villager there is no direct connection between religion and moral code. The gods do not come within the moral category. The function of the gods is not the direction of morals but the distribution of blessings and, if not duly propitiated, of curses.

O'Malley lays the responsibility for this teaching at the feet of the Brahmans, where, the author feels it properly belongs. The Brahmans are always more concerned about

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<sup>23</sup>Wilkins, Op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 69.



the merit that comes from the religious rites at which they function than about virtue and vice. O'Malley says, "The gods, according to them, are offended, not by sin, but by neglect."<sup>26</sup>

We have seen that the figure of the holy god Varuna of the Rig Veda faded into the background. There was now no holy god to give sanction to a moral order. Religion degenerated into a matter of priestly rites and the worship of many gods. Then came the search for the One behind the many. Brahma, the priestly speech, was exalted until it became the cosmic soul with which the Atman or individual soul is identified. The goal of life is to realize the identity of the individual soul and Brahma. In the Bhagavad Gita the prospect of attaining this goal by selfless service instead of by meditation and asceticism is held out to the devotee. But we have seen that the gods are not concerned about a moral law. It is, therefore, not surprising that the devotees of these gods also lack this concern.

#### The Concept of the Soul

The soul is held to dwell within the body absolutely inactive, and remains unaffected by all the influences and acts of matter. It is like matter in that it is indestructible. This is based on the Hindu thought, stated in the

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<sup>26</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 72.



Bhagavad Gita (II. 16), that "that which is, ever has been and ever will be. Existence cannot be predicated of that which is not, nor non-existence of that which is."<sup>27</sup>

The soul is immutable, because it is divine. Some systems of Hindu philosophy hold that the soul has an existence apart from Brahma. Others hold that the soul or Atman and Brahma are one. The same soul is believed to shine equally in the highest man and in the lowest creature.

According to Ferm, Hindus believe that everyone will finally realize the divinity of his soul.<sup>28</sup>

The Vedic description of the soul calls it the "eye of the eye," the "ear of the ear." "That which cannot be seen by the eyes, but by which the eyes see- know that to be the soul."<sup>29</sup>

Concerning the immortality of the soul the Kathaka Upanishad says: <sup>30</sup>

The soul is not born, nor does it die. It has not come from anywhere, nor has it produced anything. It is unborn, eternal, everlasting, ancient; it is not slain though the body is slain.... The soul, smaller than the small and greater than the great, is hidden in the hearts of all living creatures. A man who is free from desires and free from grief sees its majesty through tranquil senses and mind. Though sitting still it travels far; though lying down it goes everywhere.

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<sup>27</sup>R. Garbe, "Bhagavad-Gita," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, James Hastings, editor (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), II, 537.

<sup>28</sup>Ferm, Op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.



Wise men, having realized the incorporeal, great and all-pervading soul dwelling in perishable bodies, do not grieve.

Why does the infinite, perfect, and immortal spirit appear as a finite, imperfect, and mortal creature? Hinduism answers that question by introducing maya again. Because of maya or ignorance the soul identifies itself with finite material forms in the universe. The spirit identifies itself with these forms and, therefore, appears subject to birth and death, hunger and thirst, and pain and pleasure.<sup>31</sup> But this false identification of the soul with material forms cannot change its real nature. It is always and under all conditions pure, perfect, and non-dual (that is, one with Brahma). The discovery of the spiritual nature of the soul and its non-duality is the goal of religion.

Hinduism speaks of two souls, the real soul and the apparent soul. The real soul is pure spirit. The apparent soul which springs from maya is identified with a material form. It is the latter that is aware of good and evil, that acts righteously and unrighteously, and that experiences rewards and punishments here and hereafter.<sup>32</sup>

The Vedas speak of the different courses that the apparent soul may follow after death. The meritorious soul enjoys happiness and the wicked soul is punished through

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<sup>31</sup>Fern, Op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.



divine or sub-human bodies. After these experiences are over, it again assumes a human body on earth and resumes its journey to the spiritual goal. The doctrine of karma and re-incarnation does not apply to the real soul, which is neither born nor dies.<sup>33</sup>

There is a belief in heaven and hell through which the souls pass, as we noticed. Cave says that heaven and hell can be regarded as the reward of fulfilling, or failing to fulfil, works of piety, while the nature of the next birth on earth can be interpreted as dependent on a man's ordinary behavior. This was the view of Sankaracharya who is considered the supreme exponent of Vedantic literature.<sup>34</sup> Thus we find a double retribution which is stated, but not explained.

Not only one heaven and one hell exist according to Hindu belief, but many heavens and many hells are mentioned. The Laws of Manu speak of hells as horrible as the imagination can devise. Cave quotes an example of how evil deeds will be punished in the next life from Palapadam, a Tamil Saivite handbook written for use in schools: "A woman is rude to her husband. For this for millions of years she will have in hell to lick a red-hot iron, and then be born as a

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<sup>33</sup>Fern, Op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>34</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 62.



mosquito."<sup>35</sup>

These hells are not purgatories in the sense that souls are purified by suffering in them and then admitted to heaven. The suffering is retribution for past wickednesses, and after it has been endured the soul returns to earth and starts a new existence.<sup>36</sup>

The virtuous are translated to heavens of various kinds. Also those who die in sacred places like Benares or in the stream of the Ganges go to one of the following heavens: Swarga, the heaven of Indra; Kailasa, the heaven of Siva; Vaikuntha, the heaven of Vishnu; or Go-loka, the heaven of Krishna.

The souls of the dead live in material splendor. The heavens are equipped with gold streets and jeweled houses. Heavenly music is provided. The souls may enjoy the shady trees, the luscious fruit, the cooling streams, and similar comforts. But this kind of heaven is not the goal of the deeper thinkers. They desire the final consummation of the union of the soul with god and the consequent freedom from rebirths.<sup>37</sup> Even those souls that enjoy the heavens mentioned above must leave these places to be born again as creatures in the world after the rewards for their good deeds

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<sup>35</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 63.

<sup>36</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.



are used up. The doctrine of karma will help us understand why the desire for freedom from rebirth is greater than the desire for the heaven of Hinduism.

### The Concept of Karma

The doctrine of karma and transmigration is held to have been first stated in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.<sup>38</sup> This doctrine became of fundamental importance for all later Indian thought, and through Buddhism was carried far and wide into Asiatic lands.

The doctrine is briefly this: good produces good, and evil produces evil. This law operates during this life and after death as well. That men are born with dissimilar physical and mental traits is the result of their past acts. Neither god nor fate is responsible for this. Hence, the best thing a man can do is to accept his present misfortunes with calmness and act righteously in this life-time so that he may enjoy a better life in the future.

It is almost as bad to do good as to do evil, for good actions cause rebirth as well as evil actions. Hence the highest goal is to be inactive as Brahma is inactive. The Bhagavad Gita offers a solution to this problem by saying that if a man acts without a desire for reward, his action will not render him subject to rebirth. The Bhagavad Gita

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<sup>38</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 53.



says of this:<sup>39</sup>

Thou hast a right to action, but only to action, never to its fruits; let not the fruits of thy works be thy motive, neither let there be in thee any attachment to inactivity.

The law of karma operates apart from god. Haigh

writes:<sup>40</sup>

God stands without, witnessing the movement of this fearful engine, but never seeking to deflect its course by a single hair's breadth; untouched by pity, unconcerned for character, indifferent to the increase of righteousness- content that justice shall have its perfect work. If such be the system under which we live, if we are simply victims of a mighty cosmic process, then he mocks who talks of forgiveness.

The succession of rebirths which karma involves is not considered desirable, but something from which to escape at all costs. Cave points out that "the blessed hope of immortality" is a Christian phrase, and that no Hindu would speak of the blessed hope of rebirth. That is something which has to be accepted as belonging to the order of nature of which men are a part.<sup>41</sup>

The doctrine of karma casts a pall of pessimism over Hinduism. Cave speaks of the disastrous consequences of the doctrine in the following terms:<sup>42</sup>

By its teaching that the unfortunate are accursed, the

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<sup>39</sup>Bhagavad Gita (II. 47), quoted by Champion, Op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>40</sup>Haigh, Op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>41</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 66.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 70.



doctrine of karma has stayed the course of pity, and caused a people who are kindly and humane to acquiesce in the degradation of the outcaste and the privations of the widow. The leper, the cripple, the blind, and the bereaved, the outcaste in his poverty and ignorance, are all to be regarded as criminals undergoing the fit punishment of wrong deeds done in previous births. The sufferer is not helped to bear his suffering by being told that his suffering is due to sins done in a previous existence of which he has no memory or knowledge.

This accusation has, of course been denied by Hindus, but in the opinion of the author, these denials are not very convincing. For example, Mahadevan writes:<sup>43</sup>

Karma does not bind man entirely. The cycle of samsara (rebirths) has not the inevitability of fate. Man has the freedom to get out of the vicious circle; and if he has the will, karma will help and not hinder his progress. There is a certain amount of determination; but it is not to the exclusion of all freedom. In the words of Sir Radhakrishnan, 'The cards in the game of life are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to our past karma, but we can call as we please, lead what suit we will, and as we play we gain or lose. And there is freedom.'

The facet of karma that interests us is the effect that it has on man's moral and ethical thinking. Farquhar sums that up in the following words:<sup>44</sup>

The doctrine of transmigration suggests that a man's moral and spiritual state is scarcely under his own control, since it is the result of his past life: so that it is quite possible that he is not yet in a fit state for accepting a spiritual religion. [Which, according to the Hindu philosopher is the only way of release.] Also, it suggests that since a man will have more lives, there will be plenty of opportunity for repentance in the future.

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<sup>43</sup>Mahadevan, Op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>44</sup>Farquhar, Op. cit., p. 61.



A final thought should be added. From the point of view of the higher knowledge, the whole karmic order is unreal. The karmic order exists only for those who have not reached illumination.<sup>45</sup>

#### In Hinduism There is No Real Sin

The Hindu thinker would consider it presumptuous to speak of an act as being sinful or good. He would say that it is a part of the illusion of maya to believe that man can exercise judgment in any matter. Furthermore, he would not consider himself responsible for his own actions. According to the pantheistic belief of Hinduism, "God is everything, everything is God." Wilkins states that the usual reply to an attempt to show the evil of sin is, "I am part of God."<sup>46</sup> So it is really the god, rather than the individual who commits the offence, who is to blame. The same author continues, "It is generally believed that as God induces men at one time to sin, and at another induces them to do right, the blame and the merit are God's not man's."<sup>47</sup> And that this statement is not just the opinion of an outside observer, but the statement of Hindu belief we can see by comparing it with a statement made by Swami Vivekananda.

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<sup>45</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 61.

<sup>46</sup>Wilkins, Op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.



This Hindu dignitary said, "Good and evil are the same, both are merely God's play. Why then should I choose good rather than evil?"<sup>48</sup> But that Swami Vivekananda realized that this position was rather theoretical we can see from the fact that he rebuked his own countrymen for incontinence, child-marriage, depriving women of rights, for Brahman oppression of the low castes, and want of sympathy with the Pariahs, resulting in thousands of them "turning Christians," and for laziness, meanness, and hypocrisy.

There is a great deal of moral teaching in Indian literature, but it is unconnected with religious teaching. Morality is not the concern of religion. Morality is supposed to consist in the discharge of the duties of one's caste, as we shall see later. "Religion," as Bishop Caldwell says, "is supposed to rise far above such petty considerations as the social duties and to consist solely in the worship of the gods by means of the appointed praises, prayers, and observances, in the hope of obtaining thereby union with the Supreme Spirit and final emancipation." The same author states:<sup>49</sup>

The duties of life are never inculcated in any Hindu temple. The discharge of those duties is never represented as enjoined by the gods, nor are any prayers ever offered in any temple for help to enable the

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<sup>48</sup>Hervey DeWitt Griswold, Insights into Modern Hinduism (New York: Henry Holt and Company, c. 1934), p. 67.

<sup>49</sup>Quoted by O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 67.



worshippers to discharge those duties aright.... Hence we often see religion going in one direction and morality in another. We meet with a moral Hindu who has broken altogether away from religion and, what is still more common, still more extraordinary, we meet with a devout Hindu who lives a flagrantly immoral life. In the latter case no person sees any inconsistency between the immorality and the devoutness.

Haigh defines sin as the transgression of expediency according to the Hindu view of things.<sup>50</sup> It is exposure of yourself to avoidable misfortune or inconvenience. If a lie brings a promotion, then a lie is as good as the truth; it is only to be regretted when it fails. But, for that matter, the truth would be equally regrettable if it happened to bring trouble.

The same author defines holiness as the perfection of prudence.<sup>51</sup> To do nothing that will make you obnoxious to your caste or to your community is a fair attainment of holiness. Inward thoughts and secret habits are practically unimportant as long as they do not obtrude themselves upon the outside world.

The author knows that many Hindus would disagree with the final sentence of the preceding paragraph. Mahadevan says, for example, "Right speech, right thought, and right action are insisted upon by every school of Hindu thought." Other Hindu writers stress this same thought.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Haigh, Op. cit., p. 106.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Mahadevan, Op. cit., p. 5.



The writer believes that the solution of the apparent disagreement lies in a change of emphasis in Hindu thought which has resulted from contact with Christianity. It remains true that the gods of Hinduism are unconcerned with morality in thought, word, or deed.

The worship of these gods also does not bring about a change of heart in the devotee. An experienced missionary writes:<sup>53</sup>

As far as I can gather from observation and conversation with the people [of Bengal], by their acts of worship there is no attempt after real purity of heart, the conquering of an evil nature, and a desire to please God in return for His goodness. Men sin at the shrines as they do in their houses, and on their return as before their visit. Nor is it thought anything remarkable that this should be so, excepting perhaps in the case of those who have gone to some sacred place in the hope of ending their days there. In cases of this kind I have heard of a higher, purer life being attempted, and of the expectation of this by those who knew them. But certainly there is neither the attempt nor expectation of this in the minds of the large majority of the people who go on a pilgrimage. It is not that they may be made pure, but that, by an act of penance, they may give an equivalent to the gods for their sins.

A question arises concerning the sacrifices made to the Hindu gods. Do these sacrifices reveal a consciousness of sin? Are they offered up as an atonement for sin?

Perhaps in the earlier days of Hinduism there was a consciousness of sin which led the devotee to bring a sacrifice to the gods. In the Sacred Books of the East we find

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<sup>53</sup> Wilkins, Op. cit., p. 313.



the statement, "This is the atonement for everything, the remedy for everything. He who performs the asva-medha (horse sacrifice), redeems all sin.<sup>54</sup>

But from the same source comes another statement which is more in accord with the current popular opinion concerning sacrifices. It reads, "Whosoever performs the asva-medha sacrifice, obtains all his desires, and attains all attainments."<sup>55</sup>

Mahadevan says that the principle underlying the Vedic rites is that the gods had to be cherished so that they might cherish men. The object of the sacrifices he describes thus:<sup>56</sup>

The beneficent Gods had to be pleased so that they might do good unto man, and the maleficent Gods had to be appeased so that they might refrain from doing harm. And the recognized mode of pleasing was the sacrifice.

The sacrifices of which Mahadevan writes are the sacrifices to the higher gods, which are generally of an unbloody nature. The sacrifices to the village gods of the lower castes and outcastes of South India are generally bloody sacrifices. The blood is used in various ways. Sometimes it is sprinkled over the people, sometimes it is drunk by the officiant, and sometimes it is mixed with rice and

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<sup>54</sup>Quoted in Robert Ernst Hume, The World's Living Religions (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), p. 23.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Mahadevan, Op. cit., p. 31.



thrown into the air. Does this use of blood show any connection with the sacrifices of the Old Testament? Are these sacrifices regarded as sin offerings? These are questions that enter the mind when one sees these gruesome rites for the first time.

In his book, The Village Gods of South India, Whitehead describes these sacrifices in detail. On the basis of some of the details of the sacrifices, which can best be explained by the principles of animism and totemism, he comes to the conclusion that these sacrifices are of animistic origin.<sup>57</sup> The motive and purpose of these sacrifices he presents in the following sentences:<sup>58</sup>

Whatever may have been the origin of these animal sacrifices in prehistoric times, they are now regarded by worshippers simply as a means of appeasing the deity's wrath by satisfying her lust for blood.... There is no penitence for sin, no thought of the consecration of human life to a just and holy God, but simply the desire to appease the ill-temper of a vengeful spirit by an offering of blood. And even in unbloody offerings of fruit, camphor, and incense to the more refined and respectable of the goddesses, who are supposed to be shocked by the sight of blood, the idea of a sacrifice does not rise above the conception of a propitiatory gift. It is the kind of offering that is made to the local policeman or a tyrannical government official to secure his favour.

Such a view of worship obviously will not impart a deep

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<sup>57</sup>Henry Whitehead, The Village Gods of South India (Calcutta: Association Press, 1921), p. 148. For a discussion of the basis on which Whitehead reaches his conclusion, see also p. 147.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 152.



concern about a high moral life. The Hindu thinker would retort, "Why should I be concerned about that which is not real?" Haigh writes: 59

To the Vedantist the trouble at the root of all things is not sin- a disordered and unsubmitive will; but ignorance- a darkened understanding. The remedy, therefore, which he announces is not moral but metaphysical.

Sankara, in the forefront of his commentary on the Vedanta-Sutras, places these words: "With a view to freeing one's self from that wrong notion which is the cause of all evil, and ascertaining thereby the knowledge of the absolute unity of the Self, the study of the Vedanta texts is begun." (Vedanta Sutras in Sacred Books of the East, p. 9).

Wrong notion- that is the evil; knowledge- that is the cure. Here is presented the complete Vedantic diagnosis of man's state and its main scheme for obtaining salvation.

A prayer like that of the Psalmist: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," is unnecessary. If the Hindu does this, there can be no objection, but he is thereby concentrating his attention on subordinate faculties and an inferior aim.

In one of the addresses which he delivered during the World's Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893, Swami Vivekananda said, "Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth, sinners? It is a sin to call a man so. It is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O Lions! and shake off the delusion that you are sheep." 60

In Brahmavadin, a Vedantist publication, the following sentence appeared: "The distinctions of right and wrong are mere appearances, which will vanish as soon as the dream

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<sup>59</sup>Haigh, Op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 107.



state of life is dispelled."<sup>61</sup>

Anandagiri, the disciple and exponent of Sankara, says, "The perfect sage, so long as he lives, may do good and evil as he chooses, and incur no stain; such is the efficacy of a knowledge of the Self."<sup>62</sup> Other men are bound by caste rules, but not the one who has realized that he is Brahma. He may cross the seas, eat with all sorts of people, and eat all kinds of food without offence. The Chandogya Upanishad (IV. XIV. 3), says, "As water does not cling to a lotus leaf, so no evil deed clings to one who knows."

The emancipation of the enlightened from all of the laws to which other men are subject is mentioned in many of the sacred books. We see how far these statements go in the quotation from the Kaushitaki Brahmana Upanishad (III. 1) which follows:<sup>63</sup>

Indra says: Whoso knows me, by no deed so-ever is his future bliss harmed, not by theft, not by a Brahman's murder, nor by a mother's murder, nor by a father's murder; nor, if he wishes to commit sin, departs the bloom from his face.

Over against such statements one finds the words of Saint John refreshing indeed: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If

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<sup>61</sup>Haigh, Op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>63</sup>Quoted in K.S. Macdonald, The Brahmanas of the Vedas (Madras: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1896), p. 127.



we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."<sup>64</sup>

The believing Christian is righteous indeed, not because he ignores sin and calls it a delusion, but because he believes that his Savior atoned for his sins and cleansed him by His blood.

The Hindu belief that all is maya theoretically vitiates the function of conscience. Haigh says:<sup>65</sup>

To the Hindu, conscience, like will and taste and judgment, is merely phenomenal, and the distinctions which it makes between right and wrong have only a temporary and conventional value. 'If you tell the truth,' says the Vedantist Hindu, 'conscience can only be described as a fiction, and morality and duty as part of the obligation imposed by that fiction. In this dream-world the concern is not whether you are doing good actions or bad ones. That is a minor consideration. The concern is that you should act at all- for all action brings consequences and prolongs the period that we must spend on the wheel [of rebirths].' In the presence of this theory, the distinction between virtue and vice becomes as unimportant as the distinction between refinement and coarseness, smartness and stupidity, a sanguine temperament and phlegmatic one. The only distinction worth making is that between the phenomenal and the real, and the rest is nothing. Clearly in such a system it is utterly beside the mark to speak of sin. That is as much an illusion as everything else.

In spite of the theory which makes the universe, the gods, karma, conscience, sin, and everything else an illusion, in practice the ordinary person (who, of course, is unenlightened) considers these things real. Mahadevan, for

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<sup>64</sup> I John 1, 8 and 9.

<sup>65</sup> Haigh, Op. cit., p. 105.



example, calls conscience "the God within us," and says that this should be the supreme authority in matters of moral action.<sup>66</sup> It is interesting to see how this Hindu writer realizes the practical value of a standard of morality and yet tries to uphold the traditional Hindu view that what is expedient is right. In the rather lengthy quotation that follows we may also learn the opinion that Hindus hold of the moral standard set forth in the Bible. Mahadevan writes:<sup>67</sup>

What is the criterion by which we judge an action to be right or wrong, good or bad? Why is thieving wrong, and charity right? Why is it bad to murder a fellow-being, and good to save one who is in distress?

We have used here two sets of words: 'right' and 'wrong'; 'good' and 'bad'. Their significance has been pointed out already. 'Right' and 'wrong' refer to the moral standard as Law, while 'good' and 'bad' refer to it as End. Why is thieving wrong? Because it goes against the law- 'Thou shalt not steal.' Why is charity right? Because it is in conformity with the law- 'Thou shalt be charitable.' Thus the moral standard at first appears to be the nature of a law. Later on it is seen that moral judgment is passed on an action from the standpoint of an end. Why is it bad to murder a fellow-being? Because the action makes the murderer descend to the level of the brute and corrupts his character; and this is not a worthy end. Why is it good to save one who is in distress? Because a man's character becomes noble if he renders help to those who need it, and he realises his true self by the exercise of virtues like generosity and compassion.

In the case of those who are immature and cannot think for themselves, rules of conduct have to be laid down, and morality consists largely in life according to rule. In order to provide these laws with a sanction the authority of God or of a law-giver is invoked.

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<sup>66</sup> Mahadevan, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-59.



The Ten Commandments and the Code of Manu are instances in point. These laws have to be obeyed because they have been spoken by men of God. Sometimes other sanctions besides the authority of a law-giver are forged. It is said, for instance, that if the laws are not obeyed, God's wrath would be incurred and punishment in hell would result, and that if the laws are observed, God would be pleased and there would be enjoyment in heaven. Thus the threats of hell and hopes of heaven exert a powerful influence on men's minds and keep them in the right path. Similarly there are social sanctions. He who abides by the law is respected and honoured, while dishonour and disgrace attend on him who transgresses the code. These sanctions are needed up to a stage, even as the tender plant needs to be fenced and protected. But this attitude towards morality cannot be the final attitude. Man will not allow himself to be coaxed or coerced into modes of activity for all time. When his critical powers mature, he asks: why should I be moral? To answer that he should be moral because somebody has asked him to be so will not satisfy him. Unless it is shown to him that moral life is a worthy end, he will not rest content. And it is the sort of end that will then determine what he ought to do and what he ought not to do.

The consideration of God's will does not determine what man should do or leave undone in Hinduism. Man should use his judgment, corrupted as it is by sin, to consider the end or goal of an action, and act in accordance with what is thought best.

This attitude makes it very difficult for the Hindu to recognize sin. The author was conversing with a fellow-traveler on a train in India some years ago. In the course of our discussion the Hindu gentleman claimed that he had committed only one sin during his life time. He had married two wives, and the quarrels between his two wives destroyed the tranquility of his home. He admitted that he had once been tried for murder when a servant girl whom he had dashed



to the ground in a fit of anger struck her head on a rock and died; but the court had acquitted him, so he was not worried about the matter.

Fortunately, the morality of India is not as low as one might be led to believe after hearing of the Hindu belief concerning sin. As one author put it, there are moral people in India, but their religion has not made them so.<sup>68</sup>

We have seen before that Hindu thinkers recognize the need of some standard of morality to guide the conduct of the ordinary people. This standard is known as the dharma, the Hindu way of life. O'Malley writes:<sup>69</sup>

Popular Hindu belief holds that dharma, i. e., ideal duty, consists of right behavior in that state of life in which one happens to be placed. This for practical purposes means obeying the caste laws, so that morality is largely a matter of conformity to caste customs.

The Bhagavad Gita is held to inculcate the supreme duty of performing one's caste duties. Perfection is only attained by the man who does not deviate from the rules of caste.<sup>70</sup> Wilkins tells us that a man who strictly observes the rules of his caste, repeats the mantras of his guru (religious teacher), and is liberal in his offerings to the temples or gurus, is accounted a good Hindu, whatever his moral charac-

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<sup>68</sup> Wilkins, Op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>69</sup> O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 47.



ter may be.<sup>71</sup>

Breach of the regulations affecting social customs and matters of food and drink is considered sin. Crooke writes in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, "Sin is regarded as a social or ritual offence, not as the defilement of the individual soul."<sup>72</sup>

The rules which set forth the duties of one's caste are found in law books, of which the Laws of Manu is the most famous. The Laws of Manu date from about 250 B.C. Its contents, according to Cave, consist of detailed instruction for the correct behavior of the three higher castes and for the due subservience of the Sudra caste.<sup>73</sup> This book of rules contains many sayings which sound almost Biblical in content. O'Malley informs us:<sup>74</sup>

It is laid down... that he who perseveres in good actions, in subduing his passions, in bestowing alms, in gentleness of manners, and in patient endurance of hardships, he who does not associate with the wicked, he who gives pain to no sentient being, will attain final beatitude, i. e., union with the Supreme Being.

The last sentence, of course, is definitely not Biblical in character, but here is another example which would conform to the moral teaching of the Bible:

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<sup>71</sup>Wilkins, Op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>72</sup>W. Crooke, "Hinduism," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VI, 711.

<sup>73</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 173.

<sup>74</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 72.



Let him patiently bear hard words, Let him not insult anybody. Against an angry man let him not in return show anger. Let him bless when he is cursed.<sup>75</sup>

Here we find a trace of the work of the law written in man's heart. We need not read far, however, to realize that the Laws of Manu are not the commandments of God. The Laws of Manu prescribe the duties of the various castes. The penalties for the breach of these laws are very severe. Here are some examples quoted from Jolly's article in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics:<sup>76</sup> One who has committed the mortal sin of drinking intoxicating liquor is to drink the same liquor when boiling hot; when his body has been completely scalded by that process, he is freed from guilt. (Manu, XI, 91). Another example deals with the penance for killing a Brahmin: "The killer of a Brahmin shall become in battle the target of archers who know his purpose; or he may thrice throw himself headlong into a blazing fire." A third example deals with the punishment of theft: "A Brahmin who has stolen gold belonging to another Brahmin shall go to the king, and, confessing his deed, say, 'Lord, punish me!' The king himself shall strike him once; by his death the thief becomes pure." (Manu, XI. 74, 100 f).

The philosophy of Hinduism exercises little influence

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<sup>75</sup>Hume, Op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>76</sup>J. Jolly, "Expiation and Atonement (Hindu)," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, V, 659.



over morals. In default of a well-defined religious sanction for morals, Hinduism has made the ordinary sinner responsible to the caste council for breaches of the moral or social law as interpreted by the elders of the caste. This results in a great variety of standards of morality. What may be permissible according to the standards of one caste may be considered wrong by another caste. Especially in the treatment of the question of sexual morality by the castes many inconsistencies arise. O'Malley points out:<sup>77</sup>

For a woman to have a liaison with a man belonging to a lower caste is one of the gravest offences, presumably because the purity of the stock will be impaired if she gives birth to an illegitimate son. A man, however, may have a mistress belonging to a lower caste, provided he only shares his bed with her and not his meals. If he eats with her, he loses his ceremonial purity and is liable to be outcasted, which will also be the inevitable consequence of marrying her.

Aberrations from the rules regarding marriage, food and drink are generally viewed more seriously than moral turpitude. Perjury, instead of being an object of reprobation, is cause for admiration if committed on behalf of a fellow casteman. This, however, may be said to have the support of the Laws of Manu, which enunciate that false evidence may be given for a pious motive. Such evidence wise men call the speech of the gods.

The chief basis of judging between right and wrong is found in "Immemorial Custom." The rule of custom is considered more important than that of scriptural authority at least among the lower castes.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 76.



The caste council is guided by custom in judging what constitutes a violation of caste rules and in the matter of assigning punishments.

How do the caste councils exercise discipline? Among the higher castes laws are enforced by means of common consent. Grave offences are punished by excommunication, but minor offences, including moral laxity, are not punished. The lower castes are stricter and have far greater control over their members. The caste council exercises discipline in offences involving pollution. Certain castes, foods, and occupations are regarded as impure, and the man who disobeys the caste laws on the subject brings the stigma of pollution upon himself, the members of his family, and on any members of his caste who associate with him.<sup>79</sup>

These councils also punish breaches of religious obligations. They inflict penalties of a religious nature, such as a penance or a pilgrimage, on these breaches.

The council also takes action in cases concerned with the moral law. The punishments may vary from excommunication to the payment of petty fines. Frequently the miscreant is temporarily excommunicated, and is reinstated if he reforms.

The Brahmans often take great interest in these caste councils. In cases of difficulty, some learned Brahmans

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<sup>79</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 74.



are invited to send in a written declaration in which their opinion of the case and of the particular penance to be inflicted is stated. The offender is re-admitted on performing the penance enjoined by the Brahmans. The power of the Brahmans is great because of this arrangement. In former days, civil and criminal cases were often placed into their hands for judgment, Jolly asserts.<sup>80</sup>

Some of the penances prescribed are the muttering of prayers, and the chanting of songs from the Samaveda for lighter offenses. For more serious offenses a man might be required to visit sacred places or to go on a pilgrimage. Religious gifts to the Brahmans are highly recommended. One of these gifts consists of presenting to a Brahman his weight in gold. For the smaller offenses fines or dinners given to the caste at the expense of the culprit are common means of atonement. The latter is generally the penance for a man outcasted for traveling outside of India.<sup>81</sup>

A result of this treatment of sin is the warped idea that penance is an atonement for sin. Crooke mentions the complaint of a native writer to this effect in his article on "Hinduism." The complaint reads as follows:<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>J. Jolly, "Expiation and Atonement (Hindu)," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, V, 659.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>W. Crooke, "Hinduism," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, VI, 711.



Every Hindu believes that he will be able to wash off his sins by performing a penance or by giving dan (gifts) to Brahmans, who have proclaimed that pardon or even merit will be attained through their agency. ... It leads to the monstrous belief that evil deeds, of whatever enormity, can be atoned for and expiated by money. (Census Report Baroda, 1901, l. 135).

The guru or religious teacher is often a factor for preserving morality. He goes about admonishing people for moral and ceremonial aberrations, and he gives religious instruction.<sup>83</sup> Some of these gurus really give the people good advice, but even the highest counsel of Hinduism does not deal with sin as the cause of man's enslavement.

Many of the teachings of Hinduism are unknown to the common people of India. The main ideas of this philosophy shape the lives of many of the higher castes. Some of the ideas trickle down to the outcastes also. But by and large such books as the Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, or the Laws of Manu are unknown. These works are written in Sanskrit, a language unknown to the majority of India's millions.

A number of devotees have produced works in the vernaculars, and some of the popular religious epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are available in almost all of the Indian languages. These works, therefore, have a great influence over the thought of the ordinary villagers.

Rama in particular is an exemplar of truth, valor, faithfulness, and piety. Sita, his wife, is an exemplar of

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<sup>83</sup>Malley, Op. cit., p. 80.



feminine virtues. Concerning truth Rama says, " Truth is lord in the world; virtue always rests on truth. All things are founded on truth; nothing is higher than it."<sup>84</sup>

Some of the phrases from the Mahabharata express thoughts similar to those found in the Bible. Here are examples:<sup>85</sup>

The sum of true righteousness is to treat others as you yourself would be treated. Do nothing to your neighbor that you would not have your neighbor do to you hereafter. [Compare Matthew 7, 12] .

High-minded men delight in doing good without thought of their own interest. When they confer a benefit on others, they do not count on favours in return. [Compare Luke 14, 13 and 14] .

Fasts, ablutions and austerities are all in vain unless the soul is pure.

Overcome the wicked by goodness. [Compare Romans 12, 21].

In Tamil literature we find a number of works which are rich in ethical teaching. The most important of these are the Kurral and the Naladiyar. Pope evaluates the ethical content of these works very highly. The Kurral contains one thousand three hundred and thirty couplets treating of virtue, wealth and pleasure, and expressing moral truths in epigrammatic phrases. They inculcate such virtues as humility, charity and forgiveness of injuries, and contain many

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<sup>84</sup>Max Müller, India, What Can It Teach Us? quoted by O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>85</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 82.



passages which are strikingly Christian in spirit.<sup>86</sup> The Naladiyar consists of four-hundred quatrains and contains moral epigrams which have become household words among the Tamil-speaking people. It deals mainly with karma but otherwise contains no trace of religion. Pope says of this work that it presents a strong sense of moral obligation, an earnest aspiration after righteousness, a fervent and unselfish charity, and generally a loftiness of aim that are very impressive.<sup>87</sup>

Another source of moral teaching are the pity sayings of Auveiyar, the venerable mother. These are written alphabetically in the order of the Tamil letters. These sayings are still used in the school text books, and are therefore very well known.

The guru, the moral teaching of the popular religious epics, and the vernacular ethical literature exert an influence on the conduct of the people. But perhaps an even greater influence is exerted by the belief that good deeds will help a person to attain a higher and happier life in future incarnations. O'Malley asserts:<sup>88</sup>

Most people are unable to grasp the idea that good may be done for its own sake without reference to its effect in the working of the law of karma. They think

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<sup>86</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 83.

<sup>87</sup>G.U. Pope, as quoted by O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>88</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 71.



that the performance of a religious or moral act is sufficient, whatever may be the underlying motive.

On the whole it may be concluded that the fear that a man shall reap as he has sown is an appreciable element in the average morality. People are not inclined to do good for the desire of divine approval or fear of divine displeasure, but hope that virtue will get its reward and fear that wickedness will work out its own punishment in the future life.

There is, of course, much support for such a view in Vedic literature. "By holy acts shall one become holy, by evil ones evil. As his desire, so his resolve; as his resolve, so his work; as his work, so his reward," the Brihadaran-yaka Upanishad (IV, 4. 5.) says.<sup>89</sup> The ideal of the Bhagavad Gita that unless deeds are performed in a spirit of self sacrifice and devotion, without thought of advantage or reward, they are fruitless is held only by the spiritually minded. Most of the people probably do good in order to receive good. The statement from the Rig Veda (I, 125)<sup>90</sup> that "He who gives alms goes to the highest heaven, goes to the Gods," certainly encourages such an attitude.

One of the good deeds that is considered meritorious of release from sin is the veneration of the cow. Gandhi called cow-worship the "central fact of Hinduism, the one concrete belief common to all Hindus."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Champion, Op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>91</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 15.



The lengths to which this adoration goes might be evident in the following statement of Monier-Williams:<sup>92</sup>

The cow is of all animals the most sacred. Every part of its body is inhabited by some deity or other. Every hair on its body is inviolable. All its excreta are hallowed. Not a particle ought to be thrown away as impure. On the contrary, the water it ejects ought to be preserved as the best of holy waters- a sin-destroying liquid which sanctifies everything it touches, while nothing purifies like cow-dung. Any spot which a cow has condescended to honour with the sacred deposit of her excrement is forever afterwards consecrated ground, and the filthiest place plastered with it is at once cleansed and freed from pollution, while the ashes produced by burning this hallowed substance are of such a holy nature that they not only make clean all material things, however previously unclean, but have only to be sprinkled over a sinner to convert him to a saint.

Any man who kills a cow or eats her flesh is outcasted by the Hindu community. On the other hand, a person may break practically any moral canon to save the life of a cow, and those who take part in a murderous riot to prevent the slaughter of one, believe that their action is meritorious. This is often the source of bloody riots between Hindus and Muslims.<sup>93</sup>

We saw in the quotation from Monier-Williams that the products of the cow were considered a means of purification. Generally all five products of the cow are supposed to be swallowed as part of various penances. These five products, known as the pancha gayya, are milk, curds, ghee, urine, and

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92M.Monier-Williams, quoted by O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 15.

93O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 17.



cow-dung. Another form of penance consists in following and serving a herd of cows for a whole month, washing oneself with the cow-urine, and subsisting on the five products of the cow during that time.<sup>94</sup> From the Vishnu Sutra (XXIII, 59 f.) comes the assertion that drops of water falling from the horns of a cow are sufficient to expiate all the sins of those who bathe in them, and it is even said that scratching the back of a cow will destroy all guilt.<sup>95</sup>

Other good deeds that a man might perform to gain merit for the final accounting are pilgrimages to sacred places, giving gifts to the Brahmans, worshipping in the temples, performing domestic ceremonies, and undertaking fasts. O'Malley credits the Brahmans for the invention of most of these penances. He says also that the Brahmans sometimes allow offences to be compounded for by payment to themselves. They also recognize bathing and expiatory ceremonies as sufficient atonement for many sins.<sup>96</sup> The people also believe that the mechanical repetition of the name of a god or the mechanical performance of rites and ceremonies are sufficient to gain merit.

Another deed that produces great merit is the building .

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<sup>94</sup>J. Jolly, "Expiation and Atonement (Hindu)," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, V, 659.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 13.



of a temple. According to one Purana, he who builds a temple rescues eight generations of his ancestors from hell. According to another he annuls the sins committed in one hundred previous lives.<sup>97</sup>

Fear that evil deeds might bring evil consequences also acts as a deterrent to evil. There is a proverb that says, "Don't do anything wrong, for the evil will return to you in increased form."<sup>98</sup>

The belief in the transmigration of souls seems to be lacking in the villages of the Central Provinces of India according to a Census Report quoted in Jolly's article on "Ethics and Morality" in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.<sup>99</sup> But he maintains that there is a vague idea that there is a future life in which those who are good in this world will be happy in a heaven (sarg), while those who are bad will be wretched in a hell (narak).

By way of summarizing the beliefs of the ordinary Hindu concerning sin, we may quote the impression of O'Malley:<sup>100</sup>

Sin does not carry with it the idea of a wrong done to God, whose divine love will be wounded, or whose anger will be provoked by wrongdoing. It is rather an offence against the traditional dictates of religion, and it includes acts involving ceremonial impurity, which

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<sup>97</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>98</sup>Champion, Op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>99</sup>J. Jolly, "Ethics and Morality (Hindu)," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, V, 498.

<sup>100</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 73.



can be atoned for by an expiatory rite called praya-  
schitta, or by a penance, or by some act of austerity.

And yet, we find in Hinduism traces of the Biblical teaching concerning sin. In the Satapatha Brahmana (VII, 4. 1, 1) we find the statement:<sup>101</sup>

Now were he to build up Agni [the god of the sacrificial fire] without taking him up into his own self, he would beget man from man, mortal from mortal, one not freed from sin from one not freed from sin; but when he builds up Agni, after taking him up into his own self, he causes Agni to be born from Agni, the immortal from the immortal, the sinless from the sinless.

These words seem to echo faintly the words that our Lord Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3, 6).

In the Taittiriya Brahmana (III, 7. 12, 3, 4), there is a prayer for the pardon of pre-natal sin.<sup>102</sup> The prayer reads, "May Agni free me from the sin which my mother or father committed, when I was in the womb."

Particularly in the Bhakti cults of which we shall speak later do we find a conception of sin which is quite different from the traditional Hindu view. The concept is far from Christian, to be sure, but shows at least traces of similarity.

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<sup>101</sup>Macdonald, Op. cit., p. 165.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 77.



The root idea of sin in the Bhakti marga, according to Grierson, is anything which is incompatible with bhakti (devotion).<sup>103</sup> The same writer presents the following summary of teaching:

Every sin is a work (karma) and necessarily bears its fruit, just as much as any good work. Sins are classed as involuntary (aj nata) and wilful (jnata). An involuntary sin can be expiated by ceremonial acts. These expiatory works, provided they are disinterested, i. e., not performed merely as counterbalances to the involuntary sins, reach the Adorable and give the everlasting fruit. As for wilful sins, when a man is devoted to disinterested works, or is in the way of bhakti, he does not usually commit such; and if perchance he do, then the Adorable, who is the Lord of good works, Himself forgives the sin of evil works.

Then follows an illustration of how the Adorable forgives. This illustration reveals again that sin is not regarded as an offense against the holiness of God. The Adorable forgives as an indulgent father overlooks the delinquency of his son. The doer of interested works, says the illustration, is like a paid workman. If he does any damage to the materials of his employer in the course of his work, he has to make it good to his employer. But if the damage is done by a faithful slave, who works not for reward but for love (i. e., the doer of disinterested works), then the master bears the loss, and none of it falls upon the slave. It is probably in this sense that the prayer of the poet, Tukaram, to Krishna should be understood. The prayer reads:

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<sup>103</sup>G. A. Grierson, "Bhakti- Marga," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, II, 544.



I am a mass of sin;  
 Thou art all purity;  
 Yet thou must take me as I am  
 And bear my load for me.<sup>104</sup>

This prayer might find a place in any Christian Hymnal were it not known that the forgiveness requested is one which would violate the holiness of God.

Sydney Cave states the matter admirably in his book, Redemption: Hindu and Christian. He writes:<sup>105</sup>

To let men off, and ignore their sin, would not solve but aggravate the moral problem. It is forgiveness that we need, and, if forgiveness is to be adequate, somewhere, somehow, there must be a vindication of righteousness and a recognition of the guilt of sin.

On both counts, the vindication of God's righteousness and a recognition of the guilt of sin, the Hindu concept of sin falls short. But we find a closer approximation to the Biblical concept of sin in the bhakti cults than anywhere else in Hinduism in the opinion of the author. These cults degenerated, and some of them were so lascivious from their inception that decent Hindus tried to break up their meetings. They perhaps do not reflect the loftiness of some of their teaching. But they were responsible for a change in the Hindu idea of sin. Grierson informs us:<sup>106</sup>

Till Ramanuja's time [twelfth century A.D.] , sin was

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<sup>104</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 139.

<sup>105</sup>Sydney Cave, Redemption: Hindu and Christian (London: Oxford University Press, 1919), p. 199.

<sup>106</sup>George A. Grierson, "Bhakti- Marga," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, II, 550.



disobedience to the rules of religion laid down in text books, and was to be avoided as entailing certain consequences in a future life. Since then it has been defined as anything not done in faith. Sin is sin because it is incompatible with the nature of the incarnate God of Love....

The statement is even made that good works not done in bhakti partake of the nature of sin.

The author is of the opinion that this change of attitude reflects the influence of Christianity. It is not possible to prove that assertion, for it is not known how widespread the influence of the Nestorian Christians was. These Christians were in India long before the days when the present era of mission interest in India began. We know too that some sects of Hinduism have borrowed heavily from Christian sources in building up their own teachings, but most of these sects are of comparatively recent origin.

One of these sects is the Deva Samaj.<sup>107</sup> The sect was founded by Shiv Narayan Agnihotri (1850-1929). This sect dethrones God and elevates its founder to the vacant place. But the sinfulness of man is assumed throughout the creed and the necessity of liberation from sin, of conversion from sin, is strongly emphasized. Salvation (Mukti) is defined as liberation from sin, not as deliverance from repeated births. According to the Deva Samaj deliverance is

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<sup>107</sup>Hervey DeWitt Griswold, Insights into Modern Hinduism (New York: Henry Holt and Company, c. 1934), p. 98.



emancipation from evil habit and takes place through the recognition of the Deva Guru as the possessor of complete higher life and through union with him by faith and surrender. How near, and yet how far from the truth!

Some thoughts chosen from Nicol Macnicol's essay on the subject, Christianity and Hinduism, will serve to highlight some of the differences between the Hindu and the Christian concept of sin. Macnicol writes:<sup>108</sup>

The Hindu seeks a victory over the world, the Christian seeks a victory over the evil that infects the world, a greater and more inclusive thing.

The Jewish saint prays: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

The Hindu prays: "From the unreal lead me to the real, from darkness lead me to the light, from death lead me to immortality."

The root distinction between these thoughts is to be found in that which each hold to be the source of man's enslavement. Both seek reality, believing that there they will find liberation from a bondage of which both are aware. But to the one the bond that binds, the poison that corrupts is sin, a will hostile to God and goodness, while the other cuts the knot of his enslavement at a stroke by denying that the world is real at all. It is a wrong vision, he says, not a rebellious will, that has led the soul astray.

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<sup>108</sup> Nicol Macnicol, Christianity and Hinduism (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928), pp. 21-22.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF GRACE

Nicol Macnicol writes:<sup>1</sup>

The moksha (heaven) of the Hindu is deliverance from the world's entanglement; the salvation of the Christian is victory over the world's evil. The former is attained by the opening of the man's own eyes to what Hinduism teaches to be the reality of things; the latter is attained by the divine intervention . . . "By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

God's grace is the sole cause for our salvation, we affirm. A number of Hindu devotees would agree with that statement. The word "grace" and its synonyms are used both by the Hindu devotee and the Christian believer. It is our purpose to try to learn what the Hindu devotee means when he speaks of God's grace.

It will, of course, be necessary to learn also what the author means when he speaks of the Biblical concept of grace. To that end the author will attempt to present the main teachings of the Bible concerning grace. This statement is not intended to define the Biblical concept of grace in complete detail. The reader who wishes a more detailed exposition of the Biblical teaching of grace might consult such works as F. Pieper's Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis:

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<sup>1</sup>Nicol Macnicol, Christianity and Hinduism (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928), I, 27.



Concordia Publishing House, 1917), II, 1-55; or John Theodore Mueller's Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), pp. 242-254.

The Bible uses the word "grace" in several senses. God graciously preserves His creatures we say on the basis of such passages as Psalm one hundred forty-five, verses fifteen and sixteen; and Psalm one hundred-four, verses ten to twenty-seven. The material blessings which we enjoy are the gifts of a gracious God.<sup>2</sup>

Another meaning of the word "grace" is a quality which God has implanted in man. We speak of the grace of giving or the grace of Christian living. Saint Paul writes in the Epistle to the Romans, chapter twelve, verses six to eight:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

In the same sense the word "grace" is also used in the Epistle of Peter, where we read:<sup>3</sup>

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

In this thesis the author wishes to exclude both of these meanings from the consideration of the concept of

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<sup>2</sup>Genesis 33, 11.

<sup>3</sup> I Peter 4, 10.



grace. These meanings are applicable when speaking of God's preservation of His creatures or when dealing with the subject of the Christian's sanctification. The author wishes to speak only of God's grace as it is active in the realm of the sinner's justification before God.

The term "grace" in this sense means "God's gracious disposition or merciful feeling, according to which He for Christ's sake forgives men their sins in His heart, 'before His inner forum'."<sup>4</sup> We may simply say that grace is God's favor for the sake of Jesus Christ. We shall see later that we cannot speak of God's grace outside of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This favor of God for the sake of Jesus Christ is not something that man can earn. The moment we speak of merit we may speak of rewards, but we cannot speak of grace as Saint Paul so clearly shows in the fourth verse of the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and in the sixth verse of the eleventh chapter of the same Epistle. God's grace and the works of man exclude each other in the plan of salvation. Salvation is by grace alone. In the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians we read:<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>F. Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated by W. Albrecht (Second edition; Springfield, Illinois: Concordia Mimeographing Company, 1942), II, 2.

<sup>5</sup>Ephesians 2, 8.



For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

God desires to give this grace to all men. When man fell into sin, God did not abandon him in his misery, but promised out of His great love to send a Savior to redeem man from sin and from its consequences. God fulfilled that promise by sending His only-begotten Son into the world. Saint Paul writes in the fourth verse of Galatians four: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

Our Lord Jesus Christ was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, born of a virgin, and therefore was born without the sin that infects the entire human race. His sinless birth was a miracle which God performed for our salvation. While the Lord Jesus walked on this earth as true God and also as true man, He was tempted by Satan as all men are tempted, but He fell into no sin.<sup>6</sup> He lived perfectly in accord with the law of God. Thus, as man's substitute, He kept the law which man could not keep.

God's holiness and His justice demand that every transgression of the law be punished. The consequence of sin is

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<sup>6</sup>Hebrews 4, 15; compare also Matthew 4, 1-11; Mark 1, 12-13; and Luke 4, 1-13.



death.<sup>7</sup> It was, therefore, necessary that our Savior suffer the consequences of the sins which men committed in order to redeem mankind. And so God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.<sup>8</sup>

The immediate cause of Christ's death was the hatred of the Jews, but the actual cause of His death was this that He bore the sins of the whole world, as the Prophet Isaiah so wonderfully foretold that He would,<sup>9</sup> and as the Apostle Paul demonstrated in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Jesus Himself declared that He gave up His life for His sheep.<sup>10</sup> By His innocent death our Lord Jesus atoned for the sins of mankind and freed them from the curse of the law which man could not keep.<sup>11</sup>

Our Savior did not remain in death. On the third day He rose again as He had foretold that He would.<sup>12</sup> Christ's resurrection showed that He was truly the Son of God and the Victor over the very foes that try to enslave mankind. In the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans we read repeatedly

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<sup>7</sup>Romans 6, 23.

<sup>8</sup>II Corinthians 5, 21.

<sup>9</sup>Isaiah 53, 4-12.

<sup>10</sup>John 10, 10-18.

<sup>11</sup>Galatians 3, 13.

<sup>12</sup>Mark 9, 31; 10, 34; Luke 9, 22; 18, 33; 24, 46.



of the crushing of the power of death and sin which were brought about by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus.<sup>13</sup> The psalm of victory which the same Apostle penned in his first Epistle to the Corinthians repeats the significance of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus for the destruction of sin and death which separated God and man.<sup>14</sup> God wants all men to be partakers of the salvation which our Lord Jesus wrought.<sup>15</sup>

The way of salvation which God's grace has prepared for man is the way of faith in Jesus Christ. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."<sup>16</sup> No one else could do what Christ has done for us. Therefore, the Apostle Peter preached, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."<sup>17</sup> Whoever believes that our Lord Jesus Christ came to save him, has the salvation that our Savior won for all men. When the jailor at Philippi asked the Apostle Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" they answered, "Believe on the

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<sup>13</sup>Romans 6.

<sup>14</sup>I Corinthians 15.

<sup>15</sup>I Timothy 2, 4.

<sup>16</sup>I Timothy 2, 5.

<sup>17</sup>Acts 4, 12.



Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."<sup>18</sup>

This same truth is found also in John, chapter three verse sixteen: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Faith is not a quality in man which makes him worthy of God's grace. Faith merely accepts the reconciliation which Christ won for mankind. Those who believe that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,<sup>19</sup> enter into a new relationship with God. They believe that God is gracious unto them for the sake of what Christ has done, and are actually reconciled with God. By receiving Christ Jesus in faith, they become children of God.<sup>20</sup>

God deals with His children according to His grace. Those who have become God's children by faith in Christ enjoy the full forgiveness of all their sins. Saint John could write in his first Epistle:<sup>21</sup>

If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word

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<sup>18</sup>Acts 16, 30-31.

<sup>19</sup>II Corinthians 5, 19.

<sup>20</sup>John 1, 12; Galatians 3, 26.

<sup>21</sup>I John 1, 8- 2, 2.



is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

God forgives the sins of mankind because of the work of Christ. Without Him there would be no propitiation for sin, and, therefore also, no forgiveness.

A transformation of character also takes place in the heart of God's children. As their Heavenly Father loathes sin, so the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus will also loathe sin. The life of a child of God will be one of repentance over the shortcomings that he finds in himself and sorrow over the failure to live up to God's high standard. Such a person will try to avoid sin. This matter forms one of the subjects of the sixth chapter of Saint Paul's letter to the Romans.

The grace of God which reconciles God and man and has the power to transform the life of a sinner is offered to mankind through the Gospel. Saint Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."<sup>22</sup>

Those who reject the Gospel reject also the salvation that it offers. Thereby they vitiate God's gracious plan of salvation and fall into the condemnation of God. Even

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<sup>22</sup>Romans 1, 16.



those who at one time believed in the grace of God, and then felt that they could co-operate in securing their salvation by their obedience to the Law, are guilty of rejecting God's grace. That is why Saint Paul warned the Galatian Christians so earnestly to rely on God's grace and not on their own works for salvation.<sup>23</sup>

God has prepared the way to heaven for mankind. He bars the way for no one. He graciously invites all men and assures them, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."<sup>24</sup>

But if man in his blindness tries to build his own way to heaven, his plan is doomed to failure, and has the further tragic result that it excludes him from the only way that can lead to heaven.

"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Galatians 3.

<sup>24</sup>John 6, 37.

<sup>25</sup>Ephesians 2, 8.



## CHAPTER V

### THE CONCEPT OF GRACE IN HINDUISM

It is not surprising that the concept of grace is entirely lacking in early Hinduism. The term is first mentioned in some Upanishads of the Middle period.<sup>1</sup> Probably the first important development of the idea is found in the Bhagavad Gita.

Since Hindu philosophy does not acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, it cannot speak of grace in the Biblical sense.

The doctrine of karma, briefly described in our third chapter, actually leaves no room for grace. Every action bears its fruit according to the law of retribution, and not even the gods can prevent this law from operating. So it is surprising to hear Hindu philosophers speak of grace in spite of their belief in the doctrine of karma.

In speaking of the Biblical concept of grace the author repeatedly referred to salvation. This term, as we have seen, also means something altogether different to the Hindu than it does to the Christian. To the Christian salvation is a present possession which will reach its full

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<sup>1</sup>R. Garbe, "Bhagavad-Gita," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), II, 536.



consummation when he will enjoy perfect communion with God in heaven. While here on earth the Christian believer already enjoys fellowship with God, and finds his greatest joy in serving God and his fellowman as a result of the love which God has implanted in him.

The Hindu view of bliss is that the individual soul becomes absorbed again into the non-moral Brahma from which it came in the first place. Not a renewal or transformation of personality, but the complete submergence of personality is the highest goal. Cave remarks, "A redemption which gives meaning to life in the world is from the standpoint of philosophic Hinduism a redemption as yet incomplete."<sup>2</sup> The Hindu philosopher seeks to become free from the entanglements of this world through the knowledge that he is Brahma, all else is nothing. This view of salvation also leaves no room for a gracious God.

The philosophy of Hinduism has not satisfied the spiritual longings of the people of India. Only a god of grace can be an object of devotion for the people. And so the philosophy had to be changed to meet the requirements of its adherents. Therefore, we find that the Hindu devotee also speaks of a gracious god.

How are karma and grace reconciled in Hinduism? God

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<sup>2</sup>Sydney Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 35.



is not the creator of the law of karma, but is only the guardian of that law. Champion points out that the grace of the god can only stimulate his worshipper to develop certain tendencies, namely those which produce the right karma-seed, which will then mechanically grow and increase.<sup>3</sup> Man cannot change the main tendency of his intellectual and ethical disposition; that is determined by previous incarnations. Only the smallest urges can be overpowered and suppressed, either by our own will or by help from without. That is where the grace of the god comes in. God can serve as a model and as an inspiring force. We shall see later that in the bhakti cults another way was found to circumvent karma.

There are three ways that a Hindu might obtain salvation. The traditional way, and the way which is still regarded as the highest, is the Jnana-marga or way of knowledge. Then comes the Karma-marga or way of deeds, which is portrayed in the Bhagavad Gita. Finally there is the Bhakti-marga or way of devotion and faith, which is also set forth in the Bhagavad Gita.

"All three ways," O'Malley writes, "help to bring the soul into communion with God by freeing it from obsession by the sense and from entanglement by the fleeting interest of this life. True knowledge of God is ultimately the same

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<sup>3</sup>Selwyn Gurney Champion, The Eleven Religions and Their Proverbial Lore (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1945), p. 145.



as love of God, and both necessarily result in the surrender of the self to the divine influence and bear fruit in virtue and righteous conduct."<sup>4</sup>

Jnana-marga is the way of meditation on the divine spirit, through which spiritual knowledge is obtained. This way is, of course, open to the philosophers, but not to the people who must worry about the affairs of everyday life.

The Karma-marga consists of right action or righteous conduct and the performance of religious rites, austerities, and other acts conferring religious merit.<sup>5</sup> The difficult part about this is that the deeds must be performed without desire for reward. Garbe describes this ideal in this way:<sup>6</sup>

What is commanded must be done without passion, with quietness and equanimity, with an even regard for every one, esteeming indifferently the pleasing or displeasing, pleasure or pain, good or evil fortune, with no trace of desire or personal interest.

The interesting part about this is that this "disinterested action" is not subject to the law of retribution. Thus karma is circumvented. This type of action too is rather idealistic, and not attainable by all.

The Bhakti-marga is a way accessible to all. It's popularity is partly due to this fact and partly due to the

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<sup>4</sup>L. S. S. O'Malley, Popular Hinduism: The Religion of the Masses (New York: Macmillan, 1935), p. 10.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>6</sup>R. Garbe, "Bhagavad-Gita," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, II, 537.



fact that it offers to the devotees a personal god of grace whom they can adore.

What is bhakti? Grierson says:<sup>7</sup>

As a religious technical term bhakti is a most difficult word to translate. Probably 'faith' in the sense of 'devotional faith,' and not mere 'belief' is its best representative in English, but unless 'faith' is taken in this special sense, the word is apt to be misleading. 'Devotion' gives an idea as incomplete as 'faith'; for though devotion is a necessary element of bhakti it does not imply the after sense which is insisted upon by the teachers of the cult. It is devotion arising after the acquirement of belief.

According to the teachers of the Bhakti Cult, there is only one god, named the Bhagavat, the Adorable; Narayana, the Son of the Male; Purusa, the Male; or Vasudeva. He exists from eternity to eternity. He is the creator of all things out of matter. From this god issue all souls (jiva), which from henceforth exist as individuals and are indestructible. He has created Brahma, Siva, and the countless subordinate deities to carry out his orders in creating and ruling the world and promulgating the true religion. He generally leaves the burden of ruling the world upon their shoulders, but as occasion demands from time to time in his infinite grace (prasada) he himself becomes incarnate to relieve the world from sin and his followers from trouble. The greatest and most perfect of these incarnations (avatara) are those of Rama-chandra and Krishna; but there

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<sup>7</sup>George A. Grierson, "Bhakti-Marga," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, II, 539.



have been twenty-three in all, and one is yet to come.<sup>8</sup>

It is revealing to read what the Hindu author, Mahadevan, has to say about bhakti. He quotes Manavala's definition of bhakti which reads as follows:<sup>9</sup> "The pleasure which arises for the ignorant from sense objects, the same is called bhakti when directed to God." Then he continues:

Love for things that are fleeting and perishing is the cause of misery. Love of God, who is the eternal source of all things, makes for everlasting happiness.

The love for other objects is secondary, the love for the Self alone is primary. [The Self here evidently means the enlightened self and gets the meaning of Brahma, the author assumes]. Husband, wife, progeny, wealth, cattle, castes, the worlds, gods, the Vedas, the elements and all the rest have no intrinsic value in themselves. They are dear for the sake of the Self. In short, God is love. And bhakti-yoga is leading one's life in the full recognition of this truth.

The devotee dedicates himself wholly to God; and God in turn showers his grace (prasada) on the elect.

This quotation is a good example of how Christian phrases can be used to mean something altogether different than they mean in Christian usage. God's love, God's grace, and the elect are all mentioned, but what a gulf separates these terms in Hindu and Christian usage!

We turn our attention now to the Bhagavad Gita which will reveal in greater detail some of the aspects of the Hindu concept of grace.

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<sup>8</sup>George A. Grierson, "Bhakti-Marga," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, II, 543.

<sup>9</sup>T.M.P. Mahadevan, Outlines of Hinduism (Madras: The Madras Law Journal Press, 1940), pp. 89-90.



It is difficult to fix the date of this epic. Its latest possible date is fixed by quotations from it in Kalidasa, who lived about A.D. 400. Some Indian scholars have taught that the poem was written some centuries before the Christian era. The consensus of scholars is that the Bhagavad Gita, as we have it, is not later than the first century, or the second century after Christ.<sup>10</sup> The date is of interest because there are close resemblances in the poem to the Christian Gospels.

The story of the poem is this:<sup>11</sup>

Arjuna, a Ksatriya (warrior) by caste should give the order to engage in fight. But he hesitates to do so, because that will mean the slaughter, not only of many of his followers, but of his kinsmen who oppose him. But Krishna tells him that his fear is folly. Since the soul is indestructible, none kills and none is killed, for killing affects only the body.

And Krishna then uses this opportunity to elaborate to Arjuna on the desirability of doing the duties that one is called on to do by his station in life, and doing such acts without desire or hope of reward. In that way Arjuna can be free from the effect of works, namely reincarnation. Arjuna is invited to trust in Krishna's grace and imitate his own selfless activity.

Another very unusual thing is that the way of salvation

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<sup>10</sup>Sydney Cave, Redemption: Hindu and Christian (London: Oxford University Press, 1919), p. 99.

<sup>11</sup>Sydney Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 175.



through devotion to Krishna is open not only to the three higher castes, as was the case with the redemption mentioned in the Upanishads, but was open to Vaisyas, Sudras, and even women.<sup>12</sup> Krishna says to Arjuna:<sup>13</sup>

On me thy mind, to me be thy devotion, for me thy sacrifice; to me do reverence; thus holding thyself in control, and making me thine aim, even to me shalt thou come.

If anyone worship me with undivided devotion, even though he be of very evil life, yet must he be counted good; for his resolves are right.

Quickly he becomes righteous, and goes to everlasting peace; be very sure, O son of Kunti, my votary does not perish.

For even those, O son of Pritha, who are born of the womb of sin- women, Vaisyas, and Sudras too- if they resort to me, go on the highest way. (Bhagavad Gita, IX, 34, 30-32).

Krishna is here pictured as a loving god who has regard for the needs of men and evokes a response of love. In the dialogue which forms the conclusion to the Bhagavad Gita Krishna promises complete forgiveness of sins to Arjuna. He says, "Abandoning every duty, come to me alone for refuge; I will release thee from all sins; sorrow not." (Bhagavad Gita, XVIII, 64 ff.).<sup>14</sup>

Krishna even helps men who reverence other gods, and fulfills the desires for which they pray. At death these 'men of little wit' go to the gods to whom they sacrifice,

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<sup>12</sup>Sydney Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 134.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 136.



but Krishna's votaries go to be with him; for those who worship him there will be no future birth on earth.<sup>15</sup>

Of importance is the doctrine taught of Krishna's avatars or descents to earth. Krishna mentions both the method and the purpose of his appearances in the following quotations from the Bhagavad Gita:<sup>16</sup>

Though unborn and immutable in essence, though Lord of beings, yet governing Nature which is mine, I come into being by my delusive power.

For whensoever right (dharma) declines, O Bharata, and wrong uprises, then I create myself.

To guard the good and to destroy the wicked and to confirm the right, I come into being in this age and in that.

He who thus knows in verity my birth and work divine when he has left the body goes not again to birth; he comes to me, O Arjuna. (Bhagavad Gita, IX, 26).

Moore states:<sup>17</sup>

A complete avatara is not a mere self-manifestation of God in a human form, nor the production of an intermediate being, but a real incarnation of the supreme God in a human being, who is at the same time truly God and truly man, and this union of two natures is not dissolved by death, but continues to eternity.

The author does not know what proof Moore has for this statement. He has not met the idea anywhere else, though he must admit that his reading is limited. If Moore's statement is correct, then there is great similarity between the avatara

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<sup>15</sup> Bhagavad Gita, IV, 5-9, quoted by Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 134.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>17</sup> George Foot Moore, History of Religions (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), p. 329.



of Krishna and the personal union of the two natures in Christ. But the resemblance would stop at that point, for nowhere do we hear that Krishna shed his blood to atone for the sins of his devotees.

The Hindu devotee found in Krishna a personal god whom he could love, and since redemption for him could come by way of devotion to Krishna rather than by absorption into the attributeless Brahma, activity was better than inactivity. He could do his caste duty and trust in Krishna, the loving and powerful god. But according to philosophic Hinduism, he would still be trusting only in an illusion. The ultimate Reality is One who has no regard for men. Krishna is rather a Manifestation of the Divine than god himself.<sup>18</sup>

Vaishnavite devotion is directed not only to Krishna but also to Rama. The story of Rama and Sita is the best known of Indian tales. In its earliest version Rama appears as a human hero. Later he was declared to be a "descent" of half the essence of Vishnu.<sup>19</sup> Every vernacular has its version of the Ramayana.

The most famous version is the Hindi version of Tulsi Das. In it Rama is proclaimed to be a gracious god able to sympathize with his worshippers. The love his devotees

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<sup>18</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 97.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 141.



give to him is the calm trust of a child in a father who is wise and kind, Cave writes.<sup>20</sup>

According to Hume, Tulsi Das taught that by abandoning himself to utter loving faith in Rama's power to save him from its thralldom, a man can escape from the weary round of perpetual transmigration.<sup>21</sup>

Another teaching of Tulsi Das was that the incessant and devout repetition of the name of Rama will insure happiness for the faithful. In earlier ages salvation might be won by contemplation, in the second by sacrifice, the third by temple worship. "But in this vile and impure iron age, where the soul of man floats like a fish in an ocean of sin, in these fearful times, the name is the only tree of life, and by meditating on it, all commotion is stilled. In these evil days, neither good deeds, nor piety, nor spiritual wisdom is of any avail, but only the name of Rama." (Chaupai 27).<sup>22</sup>

Yet Tulsi Das recognized the power of other gods. He did not wish to hear of the attributeless Brahma, but his poem reflects his belief in maya (illusion).

The recitation or hearing of this poem of Tulsi Das was

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<sup>20</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 141.

<sup>21</sup>Robert Ernest Hume, The World's Living Religions (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946), pp. 35-36.

<sup>22</sup>Cave, Redemption: Hindu and Christian, p. 120.



supposed to wash out the stains of the world and the stains of the soul, and was sufficient to carry the devotee swiftly and surely to Rama's sphere in heaven.<sup>23</sup>

Krishna as depicted in the Bhagavad Gita and by Tukaram is a god worthy of men's adoration. Even in the foolish stories of him as a shepherd god dallying with the milkmaids, he is portrayed as kindly if lustful. Rama has the dignity of an earthly king. Far harder than the worship of these gods is it to understand the worship of Siva. And yet, Cave remarks that this god draws forth from many the most heartfelt adoration.<sup>24</sup> Many gifted men worship Siva and propound the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. Siva is the Rudra of the Rig Veda, the destroyer whom men fear, and because of their fear, call gracious. He is a god that has boundless powers because of his austerities. He is connected with the mystery of birth and is worshipped under the symbol of the linga which is usually a rude phallic stone. He is the lord of the goblins, dancing his wierd dance in graveyards, his body smeared with ashes, his neck adorned with a necklace of dead men's bones. At the same time he is the friendly god whose sports evoke the praise of men.

Siva has no avatars like Vishnu. But as Nallaswami Pillai remarks, the absolute nature of Siva does not prevent

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<sup>23</sup>Cave, Redemption: Hindu and Christian, p. 124.

<sup>24</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 143.



him from appearing as the savior in the form of man out of his great love and feeling for the sin and sorrow of mankind.<sup>25</sup> How Siva's grace is popularly conceived is revealed in the stories of his sports. Siva joyfully accepts the devotion of his saints, grants them the vision of himself, and by strange means fulfills their desires. Often these stories seem trivial and meaningless as well as fantastic.

Some of the Saiva Siddhantists familiar with Christianity claim that there is no difference between the doctrine of grace in the Saiva Siddhanta and in the Christian doctrine. They sometimes claim that the bondage from which Siva releases is that of sin.<sup>26</sup>

Cave points out, however, that there is a great difference. He says,<sup>27</sup>

For one thing the bond from which the soul is released is not that of sin; but a bond partly karmic, partly material. Grace in Christianity means God's holy love seen in relation to man's sin. Where God is not regarded as essentially holy, and where man is not sufficiently responsible for his deeds really to be guilty, we cannot give to grace its Christian meaning.

The next point for consideration will be some of the later modifications in the doctrines of bhakti-marga. The traditional school of the Vedas found its highest expression

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<sup>25</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 143.

<sup>26</sup>Cave, Redemption: Hindu and Christian, p. 136.

<sup>27</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 150.



in the views of Sankara, according to Keith.<sup>28</sup> Sankara taught that the whole universe was One without a second (advaita). The One was, of course, Brahma, consisting of thought, but without differentiation of subject and object. The world of experience, he taught, arises from the association of maya, or illusion, with the one Reality. The objects thus originating have a conventional existence, being the objects of the lower knowledge as opposed to the higher knowledge of the one Reality. Escape from the fetters of transmigration is obtained by the act of intellectual intuition which appreciates the illusory character of the empirical universe. <sup>29</sup>

In Sankara's system a creator, the god, Isvara, exists, and his grace serves to secure in some degree the intuition that frees the soul. But the existence of god, as also of the soul itself as individual, is, in the ultimate analysis, mere illusion, and his grace is equally illusory.

Ramanuja (about 1050-1137) rejects Sankara's interpretation of the Vedanta altogether. He held with Sankara that Brahma exists "One only without a second." But within that unity there is a plurality (dvaita) so that both the world and individual souls have a measure of reality, though

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<sup>28</sup> A. Berriedale Keith, "Ramanuja," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, X, 572.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



a reality dependent upon Brahma.<sup>30</sup>

Another great difference between the two systems was Ramanuja's teaching about Brahma. Brahma is not an attributeless abstraction; but a god of grace who yet is real. Cave describes in what this grace consists.<sup>31</sup> He writes:

This Supreme Lord when pleased by the faithful worship of his devotees, frees them from the influence of Nescience, which consists of karma accumulated in the infinite progress of time, and hence hard to overcome; allows them to attain to that supreme bliss which consists in the direct intuition of His own true nature. (Vedanta-Sutras, IV, 4. 32).

What this amounts to is a short cut to salvation in the Hindu sense because a god takes interest in the devotee who serves him well.

In Ramanuja's system we also find a different interpretation of bhakti.<sup>32</sup> In his system bhakti is an outgrowth of knowledge (jnana). For Ramanuja bhakti is not ecstatic devotion, but a continuous process of meditation upon god. This meditation is to be promoted by subsidiary means, including the use of none but unpolluted food, chastity, the performance of rites, the practise of such virtues as charity, compassion, abstaining from taking life, truth and uprightness, the maintenance of cheerfulness, and the absence

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<sup>30</sup>Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? p. 102.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>A. Berriedale Keith, "Ramanuja," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, X, 573.



of undue elation. Thus promoted, bhakti results in the intuitive perception of god. We see little difference between the bhakti-marga and the jnana-marga in this system. That is probably why a new factor was introduced into the system in the form of prapatti.

Prapatti consists in the sense of submission, the avoidance of opposition, the confidence of protection, the choosing of god as the savior, the placing of oneself at his disposal, and the consciousness of utter abasement.<sup>33</sup> The argument of the teachers of the prapatti-marga is that the active concentration upon and adoration of god demanded by the bhakti-marga is a means of salvation that tries the utmost strength and capacity of mortals, and is beyond the powers of most. Hence god in his mercy has opened the way of prapatti, which demands merely unconditional self-surrender, and is accessible to all, irrespective of caste, color, or creed.<sup>34</sup>

The relation between bhakti and prapatti was left obscure in Ramanuja's teaching. So a split resulted among his followers.

The Vadagalai or northern school taught the "monkey"

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<sup>33</sup>A. Berriedale Keith, "Ramanuja," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, X, 573.

<sup>34</sup>G. A. Grierson, "Prapatti-Marga," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, X, 151.



doctrine of grace, that is , that man must strive to cooperate with god and must strive to obtain deliverance by means of meditation, good works, and faith as a preliminary to self-surrender.<sup>35</sup> Just as the baby monkey clings to its mother, so the prapanna must by his own effort take hold of god's grace.

The Tengalai or southern school taught the "cat" doctrine of grace. As the cat carries its kittens which are passive and helpless, so god delivers man without any effort on his part.<sup>36</sup> Self-surrender then is a preliminary to other means of obtaining salvation.

There were other differences which divided the two schools of thought. The Vadagalai taught that prapatti was only one of the ways of release. The bhakta offers his soul to god and then the prapanna (one who has resigned his will to follow the will of god) is chosen by god and freed.<sup>37</sup> The act of submitting one's will to the will of the god was held to be an element of human effort on the part of the prapanna, Keith explains.<sup>38</sup>

The Tengalai taught that prapatti was the only way to

<sup>35</sup>O'Malley, Op. cit., p. 219.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Mahadevan, Op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>38</sup>A. Berriedale Keith, "Ramanuja," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, X, 573.



release.<sup>39</sup> This precluded any action on the part of the devotee. The action emanated from god alone. The sense of submission was the outcome of prapatti, not the means of producing it.<sup>40</sup>

The Vadagalai insisted on the use of the original Sanskrit Vedas only, and held that a man could attain salvation by means of devotion and good works, and should resort to prapatti only when it was found impossible to attain the desired result by other modes. The Tengalai held that the vernacular Vedas were just as binding as the Sanskrit.<sup>41</sup>

These differences will suffice to show that even when Hindu philosophers are engaged in a controversy which bears an outward resemblance to a controversy that disturbed the Christian Church, they are still speaking of something which is completely foreign to the Christian concept of grace.

The Pelagians, Arminians, and Synergists disfigure the concept of grace inasmuch as they make God's grace contingent upon some quality in man or on co-operation on his part. But they still speak of the favor of God for the sake of Christ Jesus. That idea is entirely lacking in Hinduism.

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<sup>39</sup>A. Berriedale Keith, "Ramanuja," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, X, 573.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

We find in Hinduism a vagueness which leaves room for infinite interpretations and a variety of beliefs. That same vagueness surrounds the concepts of sin and grace. Sin, the Hindu believes, is an illusion. If a person wishes to speak of sin as a transgression of caste rules, that is perfectly correct for him, for he shows thereby that he still does not have the higher knowledge which frees him from the necessity of being reborn. His sin will indeed be the cause for his reincarnation. But, for that matter, also the good deeds that such a one does would necessitate his reincarnation. Sin is not regarded as a defilement of man's soul, but as an act of the god in him. Therefore man is not responsible for his actions. The gods are not concerned about sin either. Sin, the gods, the world, everything is only a delusion resulting from maya acting upon Brahma. Only Brahma is real. When the soul has come to know that it is part of the non-moral Brahma, then it will enjoy deliverance.

This attitude toward sin places a barrier in the way of the Gospel. If sin is not real, then a Savior from sin is unnecessary. Therefore, the eyes of the Hindu must be opened to the true nature of sin before he will understand the Christian emphasis on the love of God in Christ Jesus.



Similarly in our consideration of the concept of grace, we found that the Hindu philosopher considers grace an illusion or, if it exists, the favor of a god which might be compared to a high type of friendship. Through his devotion to a god, the Hindu may gain his favor, and with his help may escape the more quickly from the endless round of re-births.

So the Hindu needs to hear of the grace of God in Christ Jesus which alone is able to rescue both body and soul from eternal destruction. Our Lord Jesus Christ alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Nicol Macnicool writes in his essay on Christianity and Hinduism:<sup>1</sup>

The man of the West can never maintain that he has climbed further to God than the man of the East. The truth is wholly otherwise. But God has come to meet him all the way. God and the grace of God are in Christ as nowhere else in the universe....the least in the Kingdom of Heaven who has obtained a glimpse of God as He is seen in Christ Jesus is greater than any on whom that light has never shone. But it is a "superiority" that can only humble him in the dust.

Sydney Cave in speaking of the necessity of holding before the Hindu world the complete redemption that God has granted man in Christ Jesus says, "This is the best possession that we have, and it is not given us to keep for ourselves. We have to seek to let others know of it. To do

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<sup>1</sup>Nicol Macnicool, Christianity and Hinduism (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928), p. 42.



so is not arrogance, for it is not of anything that we have conceived or wrought that we wish to speak; it is of what God has done for men in Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

May God grant His ambassadors the grace to witness clearly of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, so that He, being lifted up, may draw all men unto Himself.

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<sup>2</sup>Sydney Cave, Hinduism or Christianity? (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 237.



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