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THE FINALITY OF CHRISTIANITY
IN RELATION TO THE SYNCRETISM OF HINDUISM
AND THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER

By

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A Thesis

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INTRODUCTION

THE FINALITY OF CHRISTIANITY
IN RELATION TO
THE SYNCRETISM OF HINDUISM AND THE CHRISTIAN
ANSWER

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of the Problem and
Delimitation

Since those who adhere to the name of Christ are the bearers of a new religion, a new message, a new life, and a new Saviour when they present Christ to those who are following another faith, it is necessary to state the case of Christianity in connection with a declaration of its message in such a setting. It is the responsibility of the one who bears the message to present it in a way which will be vital to the person reached in the light of his need, his environment, and that which is meaningful to him. This thesis will deal with the problem of one God or many which arises when the Christian message is brought to the Hindu in India. The finality of Christ and the Christian way of life will be presented with special reference to its validity for the Hindu.

B. Significance of the Problem

The message of Christ and His way of salvation have been presented to the Hindu; he is willing to accept

Christ as the sinless one whom he desires to grant a place beside his other gods in his home and his heart. Christ does appeal to the Hindu, not as the only Lord and Saviour and the sole means of salvation, but as a god among gods. He says that there are many roads leading to the same place, and we are worshipping the same God whether the devotee addresses him as Rama, Siva, or Christ. This belief is stated by a Hindu thinker in one of his books.

According to Hinduism, all religions are so many paths to one goal. Different religions exist to suit different temperaments. It is not a fact that this or that religion is true in this or that respect; the fact is that all religions are true in all respects in so far as they lead their adherents to the goal of God-consciousness. The different features of a religion have been ordained by God to suit different needs. All religions are but the manifestations of one eternal religion.¹

This is a common argument among the educated and the man of the village. There is a real need to consider Christ and His finality in relation to such an attitude and to show that Christ meets the Hindu at every point of his need.

C. Method of Procedure

The origin in the Hindu Scriptures, the customs and beliefs in everyday life, and the results of syncretism

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1. Swami Nikhilananda: Essence of Hinduism, p. 85.

will be considered in Chapter I. This will give a background for the present tendency in Hinduism to believe that all religions are one.

Chapter II will present a similiar statement of the origin, practice, and results of finality in Christianity.

Through the study made of snycretism in Hinduism and finality in Christianity, the differences of the two attitudes toward religion will be contrasted in the last chapter. Caste, transmigration, karma, and the Hindu idea of God with their historical development and effects on life shall be considered. Then the way of fulfillment of every Hindu need by Christ will be presented.

D. Sources of Data

The books which have been written by both Eastern and Western students of Hindu thought will be used to present the Hindu beliefs. Hindu and Christian Scriptures will be used. Comparative studies of religion and presentations of the Christian belief will be a basis for that section of the thesis. Reference will also be made to some of the works which have been written concerning the finality of Christ.

CHAPTER I

THE SYNCRETISM OF HINDUISM

THE FINALITY OF CHRISTIANITY
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THE SYNCRETISM OF HINDUISM AND THE CHRISTIAN
ANSWER
CHAPTER I

THE SYNCRETISM OF HINDUISM

A. Introduction

Through the ages the Hindu has, knowingly or unknowingly, faced the problem of adjusting his religious beliefs in relation to those of other faiths. The Hindu religion

...represents the sum of penetration, absorption, and accommodation rather than the result of creative evolution, and its totality has been itself exclusive even to the extent of a sloughing-off of variations which disturbed inordinately the loose balance of the general framework. At the same time variants innumerable have occurred within the whole, which being retained have made Hinduism the most confused, confusing, and distinctive of all the world's religions.¹

A brief study of the historical origins and their results in the past and present concerning attitudes toward other religions, as well as the thought of leaders, will give us a background to determine what syncretism has meant to the Hindu in following his religious beliefs.

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1. Edward J. Jurji: The Great Religions of the Modern World, p. 45.

It is well to remember that "... a feature of the Hindu mentality is the facility with which he can associate himself with other religions without the least abandonment of his own."¹

B. Origin

1. In Scripture

When we look at any religion, we are concerned with its sacred writings. Hinduism has a variety of volumes from which their doctrines come; the philosophy of each one has had its influence on the development of the life and thought of its followers.

The early writings found among the Hindus are the Vedas. From them came the philosophy called Vedanta which is basic to Hinduism. "The word vedanta means the end of knowledge,...."²

...the Vedas represent the religion of the classes, the masses continued to worship their traditional deities, Yaksas and Nagas. Behind the facade of Vedic orthodoxy and its tendency to abstract symbolism, an extensive and deep-rooted system of popular beliefs and cults and a decided tendency to anthropomorphic presentation prevailed. The Vedic religion, however, absorbed, embodied, and preserved the types and rituals of older cults. Instead of destroying them, it adapted them to its own requirements. It took so much from the social life of the Dravidians and other native inhabitants of India that it is very

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1. Ernest R. Hull: The Great Anthesis: Hinduism vs. Christianity, pp. 30,31.
2. Ione Lowman: Non-Christian Religions A Comparative Study, p. 44.

difficult to disentangle the original Aryan elements from others. The interpenetration has been so complex, subtle, and continuous, with the result that there has grown up a distinct Hindu civilization which is neither Aryan or Dravidian nor aboriginal.¹

It is basic that "the religion of Vedanta teaches that there is one God, with many aspects."² "The one is spoken of ... or imagined ... in different ways."³

The Rig Veda states:

The real is one, the learned call it by various names, Agni, Yama, Mitarisvan.⁴

Priests and poets with words make into many the hidden reality which is but one.⁵

According to the Upanishads which are a part of the Hindu scriptures, a "variety of description is permitted."⁶

"In the Bhagavadgita, ..., bhakti is by no means the unique and exclusive way of attaining to the Absolute; man is free to choose any way of salvation ..."⁷ The idea in this work "is that systems of worshipping differ in the degree of their efficacy only, not in their essence, each of them being directed to the same Absolute."⁸

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1. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan: Eastern Religions and Western Thought, pp. 307,308.
2. Swami Abhedananda: Attitude of Vedanta Towards Religion, p. 75.
3. Radhakrishnan: op. cit., p. 308.
4. Ralph Thomas Hutchkin Griffith; The Hymns of the Rigveda, Book I, Hymn CLXIV, 46.
5. Ibid, Book X, Hymn CXIV, 5a.
6. Radhakrishnan: op. cit., p. 308.
7. Vincene Porizka: "The Bhagavadgita and the New Testament Some Notes on the Presumed Parallelism", Archiv Orientalni, Vol. XI, Mai 1940, p. 225.
8. Ibid., p. 225.

Verses from the Bhagavadgita show that Vincene Porizka is correct in his statement based on the teachings found there.

Whatever form any devotee with faith wished to worship, I make that faith of his steady.¹

As men approach me so do I accept them: man on all sides follow my path, O Partha (Arjuna).²

During the time of the Puranas the same tradition was fostered by using different names for the gods and giving them various functions.³

2. Among Leaders

From the days of the Vedas there has been a "principle of accomodation"⁴ among such men as Badarayana and Shankara.

The theory became general that the phenomenal world is transitory and unreal, that the religions of mankind are themselves phenomenal, that there is something universal and unifying underlying all religions, and that phenomenal variations are merely different steps and stages to ultimate, ideal reality, the truth of Brahman, which is the Absolute.⁵

Ram Mohun Roy, introduced religious reform in India by establishing the Brahmo Samaj in 1830. Evidences of the influence of Christianity are found in it, for a

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1. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan: The Bhagavadgita, VII, 21.
2. Ibid., IV, 11.
3. Radhakrishnan: op. cit., p. 310.
4. Robert A. Hume: An Interpretation of India's Religious History, pp. 72,73.
5. Jurji; op. cit., p. 73.

place of worship was established in which there were no idols, pictures or sacrifices. Hindus engaged in worship and prayer, indicating that again they were influenced by practices which they found around them.¹

About 1860 Keshub Chunder Sen established a new group when there was trouble in the old one. The influence in it is Unitarian Christianity.² Some of their basic beliefs are found in the following statements:

God Himself never becomes man by putting on a human body. His divinity dwells in every man, and is displayed more vividly in some; as in Moses, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Nanak, Chaitanya, and some other great teachers who appeared at special times and conferred vast benefits on the world. They are entitled to universal gratitude and love.

The Brahma religion is distinct from all other systems of religions; yet it is the essence of all. It is not hostile to other creeds. What is true in them it accepts. It is based on the constitution of man and is, therefore, eternal and universal. It is not confined to age or country.³

In Northern India the Arya Samaj was founded by Dayanand Sarawati in 1825. He believed that there should be a return to the teaching of the Vedas. However, in some of the Arya catechisms and tracts it is stated: "An Arya should always be ready to accept the truth and renounce

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1. Robert E. Speer: The Light of the World A Brief Comparative Study of Christianity and Non-Christian Religions, p. 30.
2. Ibid., p. 32.
3. Ibid., pp. 32,33.

untruth when discovered."¹ This movement, too, had an element of bringing all religions together.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa is another outstanding leader who lived in the nineteenth century. To him the goddess Kali was the greatest of all. He was eager to know and understand the religious experience of others. The result of his studies was that he built shrines to the gods of other religions and worshipped them all. His conclusion was "that all religions were true, that they were simply various paths leading to the same goal."²

Another group of importance in modern Hinduism is the Ramakrishna Mission which was established by Swami Vivekananda and his disciples in 1897. This combined the Vedanta of the past with social service.³ Ramakrishna, whom Vivekananda followed, believed "all religions were true, because all religions come from God and go unto God."⁴ After looking into different Scriptures, he tried to find what would be the true expression of God in Christ.

C. Practice

1. In the Village

Everywhere one hears in India that all religions

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1. Ibid., p. 36.
2. Edmund Davison Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 114.
3. Oscar MacMillan Buck: "Our Asiatic Christ", p. 36.
4. Ibid., p. 37.

are true and all pathways lead to God.¹ It is natural that the most humble followers in a system where one of the basic doctrines is the "harmony of religions"² would find expression for such an element in their own religious life.

"Within the fold of Hinduism one can find people who worship stones and trees at one end and the highest thinkers and philosophers at the other."³ The Hindu can respect the Christian creed and still remain a Hindu.⁴

Often in the villages the people will listen with attention to the presentation of Christianity. Sometimes they will agree, but when there is discussion it is found that "this means that there is a willingness to add Christ to the endless list in the Hindu pantheon,"⁵

The Hindu believes that men should remain in the religion to which they are born. Men may believe in the gods of the Hindu and worship them faithfully, and yet they will not be considered members of that religious group. It is also true that a Hindu may worship Christ, provided he continues with his accustomed Hindu practices. Many Hindus do worship Christ, for they "find on difficulty in finding divinity in any great person who has changed the course of history..."⁶ It is "no news to them to learn

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1. J. E. Graefe: Christ and the Hindu Heart, p. 22.
2. Vergilius Ferm: Religion in the Twentieth Century, p. 13.
3. Sir Firozkhan Noon: India, p. 14.
4. P. Thomas: Hindu Religion, Customs and Manners, p. 24.
5. Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions: Religions of Mission Fields as viewed by Protestant Missionaries, p.74.
6. P. Thomas: op. cit., p. 24.

that Jesus Christ could be an incarnation of God."¹ Their opposition is to "the exclusiveness and finality of Christ."²

2. Among Leaders

There is much today among the leaders indicating that they are interested in a world religion or a recognition of all religions.

Diversity of taste and capacity has to be accepted as an ineffaceable fact of nature and has to be provided for. And this has actually been done through the introduction of the various religions. This is the secret behind the existence of so many religions. They have no reason to quarrel with one another for supremacy. Each is a correct path to the same goal of perfection; and each has its use for a particular group of human beings.³

Ramakrishna has said:

Different creeds are but different paths to reach the Almighty. Various and different are the ways that lead to the temple of Mother Kali at Kalighat. Similarly, various are the ways that lead to the house of the Lord. Every religion is nothing but one of such paths that lead to God.... It is one and the same Avatara that, having plunged into the ocean of life, rises up in one place and is known as Krishna, and diving down again rises in another place and is known as Christ!⁴

Another of the leaders, Radhakrishnan, states that the different creeds are a part of the same truth. The treasure is the same for all, but it is given in different types of containers which are determined and colored by the culture and environment from which they come. According to his ideas, every religion is a perfect way

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1. Thomas, op. cit., p. 24.
2. Ibid., p. 24.
3. Swami Nirvedananda: Hinduism at a Glance, p. 201.
4. Edmund Davison Soper: The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission, pp. 175, 176.

of presenting the Divine. Although they are different, they all will lead to the highest.¹

Abhedananda has stated the position of many when he says:

If we understand that the Vedantic ideal has no particular name, then we have no difficulty in reconciling it with the ideal of sectarian religions like Christianity, Mohammedanism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Buddhism, and other 'isms' of the world.²

The Father of the Country, Mahatma Gandhi, has written: "I believe in the Bible as I believe in the Gita. I regard all the great faiths ... of the world as equally true with my own...."³ He spent time studying the New Testament as well as the Bhagavad Gita, and certainly he was influenced by the teachings of Christ and Christ Himself.⁴

Yet, though finding truth in all religions, he remains by profession and conviction a Hindu. ... It is the essence of Hinduism to be tolerant. Mr. Gandhi not only acknowledges the truth of other religions, he is prepared to accept light from any quarter. But Hinduism is the religion of his country, and he is persuaded that no other is needed to renew, consolidate and purify the national life. ... Mr. Gandhi prizes Hinduism, and in all sincerity adopts such of its tenets and practices as he approves. It is the religion of his beloved country, of his mother and the saints. Yet the religion which supports his own soul, which directs his actions, is, by his own

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1. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 327.
2. Abhedananda, op. cit., p. 143.
3. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 313.
4. R. M. Gray and Manilal C. Parekh: Mahatma Gandhi An Essay in Appreciation, p. 101.

confession, something different and higher, a religion which has nothing to do with outward rites and social customs, but solely with the relation of the soul to its Maker. It is a purely ethical theism, which is at least as near akin to Christianity as it is to Hinduism. ... It matters little, what name we give to this religion. Mr. Gandhi's own catholicity is without bounds. He respects all sincere religions, seeing in them all a genuine aspiration of the human spirit towards the divine. In Mussulman, Hindu, Christian, Parsi and Jew, he sees alike children of one Father. And all this is no mere intellectual affirmation, but a genuine sympathy with all that is good in man.¹

The above statement was written concerning Mr. Gandhi some years ago, but it provides a summary of what he did believe. It also serves to point up the feeling among many of the leaders that the good can be taken from all religions, especially Christianity, and life can be met in that way.

There is no doubt of the tremendous influence exerted by the life and teaching of Jesus upon thinking Indians. Christ has won India's respect. For traditional Hinduism He is the perfect Character; to the Brahma Samaj He is the Divine Example; to Mahatma Gandhi He is the Prince of Passive Resisters.²

Both the life and teaching of Jesus have won the respect of Hindus, but they are not ready to say that He is the only Lord.³

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1. Ibid., pp. 101, 104, 105.

2. W. E. French: The Gospel in India, p. 121.

3. Ibid., p. 121.

D. Results

1. In the Past

It has been taught by the saints and seers of Hinduism that all religions are the correct paths to one goal. The religions have no reason to have difficulties with each other.¹

In the past it seems that "much of the complex of popular or Puranic Hinduism has arisen from the assimilation of Dravidian or aboriginal cults into the corpus of Vedic Brahminism."² Manu "issued a broadcast invitation to all the people of the whole world to come and sitting at the feet of the sages of this country learn all about their duties."³ Through such association the people of India and neighboring lands shared religious customs and beliefs.

Excavations have been made of the past; Radhakrishnan tells us about it. "Obviously the different races and religious cults lived in harmony and adopted an attitude of live and let live."⁴

There are evidences that Christians early came to India. Both Jews and Christians were found on the southeast coast of India. Since the Hindu kings helped

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1. Nirvedanada; op. cit., p. 201.
2. Hull, op. cit., p. 18.
3. Gokul Chand Narang: Real Hinduism, p. 125.
4. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 307.

build the first Christian church in Travancore by giving generous grants, it would seem from the very beginning that they were very tolerant.¹

When followers of Zoroastrianism were expelled from their own country, they came to India. At the time the first fire temple was built the Hindu rulers gave assistance. The same attitude was found concerning the Mohammedans.²

Nath tells us something of the results of this outlook toward other religions.

Hinduism held all gods to be true. When Mohammedans and Christians said, "Our gods are the highest and the best," Hindus said, "Your gods are also true," and some began worshipping them as well; they installed images of the Virgin in the South as Mariamma, and in the North worshipped tombs of Muslim saints, and some went so far as to keep the Ramazan fasts in the olden days.³

This is "a sign of that eclectic comprehensiveness which makes one religion as good as another, and one can share in them all without joining any."⁴

As a result of this tolerant attitude, Hinduism itself has become a mosaic of almost all the types and stages of religious aspiration and endeavour. It has adapted itself with infinite grace to every human need and it has not shrunk from the acceptance of every aspect of God conceived by man, and yet preserved its unity by interpreting the different historical forms as modes, emanations, or aspects of the Supreme.⁵

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1. Radkrishnan; op. cit., pp. 310, 311.
2. Ibid., p. 312.
3. Kashi Nath: Ideals of Hinduism, p. 15.
4. Hull, op. cit., p. 32.
5. Radkrishnan, op. cit., p. 313.

2. Today

There has been a growth in India which could be called "religious universalism."¹ It is one of the basic convictions of practically all educated Hindus at the present time.² Its prophet was Mahatma Gandhi; its chief exponent Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Their main idea is that all religions are the same. The examples that all rivers flow into the same ocean or that all doors lead into the same temple are used to illustrate the truth that all religions lead to the same God. No matter what name is used they are all the same. In such a system there is pride that no exclusive spirit or hampering dogmas are found. Historical events are not necessary for any beliefs. Since the common features of religions are their concern, they fail to recognize the differences which are found. It is a way of "religious indifference and complacency."³

Another statement concerning this has been made by S. Kulandran.

If a Hindu arranges a meeting, at which a Christian is to speak, and perhaps takes the chair, it in no wise implies that he has been brought nearer to Christianity. When kind words are spoken after the meeting to the effect that the audience accepts what the Christian has said, what is meant is that Hinduism preaches the same doctrines, or can accommodate them without any unseemly religious disruption.... For many centuries it has drawn

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1. Charles Tudor Leber: World Faith in Action, p. 249.
2. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 114.
3. Leber, op. cit., p. 249.

into it many different systems of faith and practice often contradictory of one another. It has drawn into it all the gods, good and bad, that it could find throughout India, and differing customs of differing social grades. It is always ready to compromise, to come to an agreement and to make adjustments. Its power of assimilation is tremendous.¹

E. Summary

This chapter dealt with the syncretism of Hinduism. It has shown through the selections from the sacred books of the Hindus that there is a basis for the belief that all religions are one which is found in them. In all of their writings there has been at least some of this emphasis.

The earliest leaders also had this belief which they imparted in their teaching. Some of them placed so much emphasis on it that it has seemed to prevent their having a firm faith.

Today in the villages it is common to find those who are quite willing to add another god to the numbers they already have. Since they say, too, that all gods are one and all religions are paths leading to the same place, it is easy for them to accept a new one.

Leaders in India today are quite aware of this doctrine. There is a tolerance of other religions and a

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1. S. Kulandran: "The Significance of Theological Thinking for Evangelism among Hindus," International Review of Missions, Vol. XXXIII, No. 132, October 1944, p. 393.

desire to take the good out of them all and follow that as their religion.

Formerly the kings showed their tolerance by helping Christians, Mohammedans, and others build their houses of worship. Hinduism has been strongly influenced by all religions with which it has come in contact.

Today there is a tolerance toward all religions, but that fails to help people realize the vital differences found in the different beliefs. This chapter has presented some of the history and the ~~wends~~ ends of Hinduism regarding their doctrine that all gods are the same and all religions lead to the same goal.

CHAPTER II
THE FINALITY OF CHRISTIANITY

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A. INTRODUCTION

Christianity has been concerned throughout the centuries with the Revelation which God gave in Christ. With more or less fervor the Gospel has been preached in other lands. Naturally the religions of those lands have had their influence on Christianity, but in most cases Christians have continued to operate on the premise that Christ and His Way are the true means of salvation.

This chapter will deal with the origin of finality in the Old and New Testaments, as well as among the leaders of the early church. It will be helpful to note the tendencies today in Christian congregations and among the leaders of the Christian Church. Results of attitudes toward Christ in the past and today should provide a basis for the proper presentation of the Christian message in this age.

Soper says:

A heavy responsibility is laid on anyone who essays to reach definite conclusions and propagate them relative to the place of Christianity in the modern world. ... We who are within the ranks of those who are standing by the missionary enterprise must make good our claim that our religion possesses something which cannot be supplied by other religions and which we must carry far and wide, or else be recreant to the task with which we have

been entrusted.¹

B. Origin

1. In Scripture

Since the Bible is the inspired Word of God and the book from which the knowledge of Christianity is gained, it is fitting that we turn to it to learn what is found there concerning God and Christ and their Way for men. Both the Old and New Testaments will provide a background for the belief that Christianity is the way of salvation for all men.

In the Old Testament there is the emphasis that God is the only God. The law given to Moses contains the command, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."² Throughout the Old Testament we find this emphasis on the one God. Continually there are pleas from those whom God sent that they should worship only Jehovah; this is true especially in both the major and minor prophets. Such an example is found in Jeremiah:

There is none like unto thee, O Jehovah; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who should not fear thee, O King of the nations? for to thee doth it appertain; for as much as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their royal estate, there is none like unto thee. But they are together brutish and foolish: the instruction

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1. Soper: The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission, pp. 16, 17.
2. Exodus 20:3.

of idols! it is a stock ... they are all the work of skilful men. But Jehovah is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlasting King...¹

Even as early as the record in Genesis there is reference to the universality of the plan of God.

"Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"² This emphasis is also found in other portions of the Old Testament. Isaiah states that "...my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation unto all generations."³

There are many statements made in the New Testament by Christ Himself and by those who followed Him which indicate that Christ is the only way of salvation.

Christ Himself said:

I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.

I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never thirst.

I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.

I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believest on me shall never die. ...

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;

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1. Jeremiah 10:6-8, 9b-10a.
2. Genesis 18:18.
3. Isaiah 51:8b.
4. John 14:6b, 6:35b, 10:9, 11:25b, 12:32.

but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.¹

Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.²

Those who followed Christ such as Peter, Paul and the other apostles said:

And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, where in we must be saved.³

...: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.⁴

For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus.⁵

For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe.⁶

...let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.⁸

Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to

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1. Mark 16:16.
2. Matthew 10:32,33.
3. Acts 4:12.
4. Romans 1:16b.
5. Galatians 3:26.
6. I Timothy 4:10.
7. Hebrews 12:1b,2.
8. I Corinthians 3:11.

the glory of God the Father.¹

... Christ is all, and in all.²

The authors of the New Testament books used quotations from Jesus and statements from those who believed in Him to show that He held a supreme place in their lives.

2. Among leaders

Since the doctrine taught by Christ was a very positive one and since the apostles were convinced that through faith in Christ it was possible to attain salvation, it was natural for the leaders of the next few centuries to base their evaluation of Christ and His way and the relationship of Christianity to other religions on interpretations of the teachings of Christ and the apostles. The early Christians refused to compromise. One of the historians has told of happenings in the Roman empire in the following statement:

A pagan could have seen no real reason why Jesus should not be a demi-god like Herakles or Dionysos; no reason, either why a man should not worship Jesus as well as these. One of the Roman Emperors, a little after 200 A. D., had in his private sanctuary four or five statues of gods, and one of them was Jesus. Why not? The Roman world had open arms for Jesus as well as any other god or demi-god, if people would be sensible; but the Christian said, No. He would not allow Jesus to be put into that pantheon, nor would he worship the gods himself, not even the genius

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1. Philippians 2:9-11.
2. Colossians 3:11b.

of the Emperor, his guardian spirit. The Christian proclaimed a war of religion in which there shall be no compromise and no peace, till Christ is lord of all; the thing shall be fought out to the bitter end. And it has been He who has resolved that the old gods should go; and they have gone. ... Here we touch what I think is one of the greatest wonders that history has to show. ..., the Christian "out-lived" the pagan, "out-died" him, and "out-thought" him. He came into the world and lived a great deal better than the pagan; he beat him hollow in living.¹

The leaders of the early church were concerned with the problem of Christianity in relation to the other religions of the time. Clement had a "hospitable recognition of all truth everywhere as God's truth,"² but that did not mean that he was "leveling the Gospel with the philosophies and religions of the Greek world."³ He believed that salvation could only come through Christ; he called those who worshipped idols and philosophers "atheists."⁴ He "knew nothing of an equalitarian fellowship of religions."⁵ It was his belief "that Christ was the only Lord and Saviour and the Lord of everyone."⁶

Tertullian also condemned idol worship and declared that Christ was the "one supreme and exclusive Lord."⁷

When the works of Origen are studied, his view

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1. T. R. Glover: The Jesus of History, pp. 200, 201.
2. Robert E. Speer: The Finality of Jesus Christ, p. 85.
3. Ibid., 85.
4. Ibid., p. 86.
5. Ibid., pp. 86, 87.
6. Ibid., p. 88.
7. Ibid., p. 91.

of Christ is made very clear.

Jesus is not to be grouped with the greatest of the great. He is not to be equated with any moral qualities of human spirit. His Name is the power. He stands in a class alone, no other man or God beside Him. He shares in a wholly unique sense the absolute reason, the absolute wisdom and the absolute righteousness of God. There is no teacher who can add anything to Jesus. There can be no other Master,¹

"..., primitive Christianity rejected all syncretism and stood out separate and superior."² It was basically different and superior to those religions with which it came in contact.³

...the pure and primitive Christianity ..., the only true and authentic Christianity, had and held its own clear and distinct faith in a personal God, the God and Father of Jesus Christ and in the absolute and normative truth of the Gospel of the New Testament.⁴

C. Practice

1. In the Village

Congregations have been established in India. Some of them are small, but they, too, are making their contribution to the Christian life of India. Groups of Christians, in most villages, live in a section by themselves; the Hindus and other groups live in other sections.⁵

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1. Ibid., p. 91.

2. Ibid., p. 102.

3. Ibid., p. 103.

4. Ibid., p. 104.

5. A. J. Appasamy: The Gospel and India's Heritage, p. 198.

There is a real need for the Christians to more fully realize their responsibility toward those who are in the caste groups. Since most of the Christians have come from an outcaste background, they have been slow in accepting their responsibility toward their caste Hindu neighbors.

Although there are places where Hindu customs are still followed for some ceremonies, it is acknowledged that Christ is the way. A rejection of idol worship and all it means is certainly a part of the creed of a true Christian. The Indian Church has made "Jesus known and they have shown what Jesus can do."¹

An organ of the Methodist Church, "The Indian Witness", states:

We follow Jesus, worship Him, preach His Gospel and baptise people in His name; safe-guards or no safe guards, whether we are loved or hated, tolerated or persecuted. Let the world know what we stand for. We made no apologies for professing and preaching the gospel of Jesus to humanity. . . . We know no bigger authority than that of Jesus, no higher loyalty than to our Master, no better service than to manifest Jesus to all mankind.²

2. Among Leaders

The problem of the relationship of Christianity to non-Christian religions has been a very real one

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1. R. H. Boyd: Village Folk of India, p. 38.
2. The Indian Witness, March 21, 1946, p. 71.

in India in connection with the presentation of the Gospel to the Hindu. As there have been studies made of other religions and the religions themselves have grown, there have been changes in the attitude of Christianity toward Hinduism.

When the message was brought to India in the days of the East India company, they were very positive in regard to the superiority of Christianity.

The Christian missionaries of that day did not recognize anything vital or valuable in the Indian religions. For them the native faiths were a mass of unredeemed darkness and error. They had supreme contempt for the heathen religions and wished to root them out, lock, stock and barrel. ...

Such an attitude is found in Bishop Heber's hymn, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains." Christians of much education and the average one, also, have believed that Christianity "is the one true religion and all other religions are utterly false."

In the days of Duff, ..., when notable converts were won, there was no approach to Hinduism save that of the axe wielded with vigour to cut down the noxious wide-spreading banian tree, in the dark shades of which deluded souls were hiding themselves far from the light. The methods of the old missionaries, rightly or wrongly, were not those of the present day. The Hinduism of the higher castes is approached no longer with an axe; Hinduism argumentively is largely left alone.³

There was a time when the Christian message

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1. Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 22.
2. Ibid., pp. 22, 23.
3. Walter Herbert Holmes: The Christian Approach to Hinduism, pp. 21, 22.

was presented with emphasis on the hell fire which was in store for all the unbaptized.¹ A new policy arose, however, which recognized that there was good in the religions with which they came in contact. An effort was made to build on those foundations.²

...we would seem to be approaching a reconciliation between Christianity and the Indian religions. And many of the representatives of these religions are willing to go half-way. Especially is this true of the Hindus. Many of them would be glad to accept Christ as one of the numerous expressions of God and of the truth, and to merge Christianity within Hinduism. But here we reach a point beyond which the missionaries are not willing to go. They insist not only upon the acceptance of Christ, but also upon the renunciation of the old gods and of certain of the old customs and the recognition of the distinctive teachings of Christianity. . . ., they hold that while there is much in common between Christianity and the Indian religions, there are also points of contrast, and that these differences are of very real importance. To many this exclusive attitude of the Christian missionary may seem narrow but I am convinced that a certain amount of it, at any rate, is justified.³

The study of non-Christian religions makes it apparent that there are very real differences between them and Christianity. The ways in which they differ "are of supreme practical value and significance for the life of man. . . . The Christian sees... distinctly the superiority of Christianity to the rest of the great religions;...⁴

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1. James Bissett Pratt: *India and Its Faiths*, p. 456.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 457.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 457.
4. J. N. Farquhar: *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 31.

There are those who feel that the spirit of toleration and of brotherhood in connection with other religions has been good; it has not meant that there has been no compromise on positions which are important.¹ On the other hand, there have been those who have felt that the only way for the religions of the earth to have any kind of fellowship would be for them to get together and take the good out of all religions. No religion should be abolished, but all should exist along with Christianity.²

In contrast to these views, there are those who continue to feel that Christ is supreme. Dr. A. J. Appasamy has said, "The religion of Christ is unique."³ S. Kulandran has stated:

... not the Christ of the New Testament only; not Jesus Christ of the first century, but Jesus Christ as He still is. Jesus Christ is greater than the Bible and is the same yesterday, today and for ever. Jesus Christ belongs not merely to the past, but to the present and the future. Our message is not a truth about a Person, but a Person Himself. He is the Word of God. No statement about it can exhaustively sum up the Word.

... The complacent evangelist who wants to preach Christianity without Christ has no message to the Hindus. ... the Divine, redeeming, triumphantly alive, Lord constitutes the Christian Message. The Word of God is His Son

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1. T. Issac Tambyah: Foregleams of God A Comparative Study of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity, p. 2.
2. Sydney Cave: Hinduism or Christianity?, p. 34.
3. Rajappan D. Immanuel: The Influence of Hinduism on Indian Christians, pp. 9, 10.

and He is our word. It cannot be anything less.¹

D. Results

1. In the Past

The early Church had the basis of the supreme view of Christ for its life. Speer writes:

This faith with its positive content and its bold exclusiveness was the faith of the primitive Church which outlived all heresies and conquered all rivals and foes. And the centre of this new faith was something original and unparalleled. It was ... a Personality. ...there was new teaching, too, teaching that was new and alone, or Christianity would not have been rejected by the Jew, despised by the Greeks and proscribed by Rome.²

St. Paul and the other leaders of the early church believed and taught that Christ was not just another teacher, one among many, but that He was the "sole Lord of man; the one adequate Redeemer. It was this that gave to Christianity at once its power and its offence."³ The paganism of that day was interested in something new and different. Christianity was different and demanded that its way be followed, which naturally caused opposition.⁴

It was the exclusiveness of Christianity that made men seek its destruction, and then, as now, the most persistent enemy of Christianity was

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1. S. Kulandran, op. cit., p. 395.
2. Speer, op. cit., pp. 109, 110.
3. Cave, op. cit., p. 35.
4. Ibid., p. 35.

not a crude heathenism, but a paganism purified by Christian influence. But if the exclusiveness of Christianity was its offence, it was also its vitality. Apart from this exclusiveness, Christianity would have been absorbed into the vast complex of contemporary religion,¹

2. Today

In the past Christians in India were somewhat isolated from their natural environment because of the belief that there was nothing good in non-Christian religions. There was an emphasis on Western hymns, clothes, forms of worship, and theology. "In this way they must seek to mark themselves off clearly from the Hindus among whom they live and from whose midst they have come."²

Today many "look upon the social and cultural environments of these Christians, not as obstacles to be overcome, but on the contrary, as a storehouse of the finest treasures"³ These come from the Hindu in his effort to express himself.

When too much emphasis is placed upon the likenesses of Christianity and Hinduism, there is a real danger that Christianity will lose some of its distinctiveness.³ If, however, it is remembered that Christianity and its Lord are unique, then Dr. A. J.

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1. Ibid., p. 36.

2. Appasamy, op. cit., p. 14.

3. T. C. Carne: The Christ of the Indian Mind, p. 9.

Appasamy's simile applies to what is happening in India today.

Like some immense cathedral, Christianity will rise in India with that majesty and dignity which are especially its own. Whatever we take over from Hinduism will be to Christianity what the buttresses are to a cathedral. They do not constitute the building by any means. The vast spaces of the cathedral, the stained glass windows through which the light streams in wonderful loveliness, the lofty roof with its finely wrought ceiling, the ornate pillars with their majestic proportions, the altar and chancel in their glory--these do not depend upon their buttresses for beauty or grace. And yet the buttresses add considerable to the stability and strength of the mighty structure. To confuse the main structure with the buttresses would be as great a mistake as to confuse Christianity with the elements which it may absorb from Hinduism.¹

E. Summary

This chapter has dealt with the finality of Christianity. The origin for the only way of salvation through Christ is found in the New Testament. Beliefs and teachings of the early church were founded on a vital faith in Jesus Christ as only Lord and Saviour; He was superior to all other gods.

In India the local congregation has been somewhat set apart, since the early Christianity brought to her was very exclusive. There has been an emphasis on traditions from the West. Sometimes there has not been as much of a missionary spirit as there should be, but

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1. Immanuel, op. cit., pp. 9, 10.

most of the Christians are aware of Christ as the only means of salvation.

Leaders in India have varied opinions about Christianity and its relation to Hinduism, but it would seem that most of them believe that Christ is the only way.

Christianity triumphed over the pagan religions of the Roman empire, for it truly was aware of its exclusiveness. Today in India there seems to be a continued awareness that Christ is unique, but there is also an effort to take those things out of their environment which will make the Indian Christian contribution her own.

CHAPTER III
THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO THE HINDU IN THE LIGHT OF
SYNCRETISM AND FINALITY

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A. Introduction

The approach of a religion like Hinduism which is willing to absorb good from any religion and which is unwilling to admit that one religion is superior to another would have a different attitude from the Christian approach to other religions. These two outlooks will be discussed in the first part of this chapter.

If the Christian message is to be brought to the Hindu, it should be presented in such a way that it will fulfill his deepest longings. Reference will be made to such important Hindu doctrines as transmigration, karma, and caste and the approach to the Hindu in the light of such beliefs. It will be shown that it is important that the Christian message be presented in the light of these particular needs of the Hindu.

Finally Christ will be presented as the final answer for all the needs of the Hindu. Charity and tolerance should be shown toward Hinduism, but Christianity must still be presented in the spirit of the report given at the World Missionary Conference in 1910.

Nowhere is the slightest support found for the idea that Christianity is only one religion among others, or that all religions are simply different ways of seeking the one Father, and are therefore equally pleasing in His sight. One massive conviction

animates the whole evidence that Jesus Christ fulfils and supersedes all other religions, and that the day is approaching when to Him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.¹

B. Syncretism and Finality Contrasted

The Hindu "will probably discover nothing in Christianity which he has not got already in equivalent; nothing to make him feel deficiencies either in his own religion or in his own personal needs."² The new religion does not seem so much "a light shining in his darkness, but rather as an additional light in the firmament, worthy, to take a place side by side with the light of Hinduism,"³

Many Hindus have come "to the comfortable conclusion that "all religions are equally true."⁴ In this way the necessity of making a decision concerning religion is avoided and no one way need be accepted as the only way. "Truth need no longer have definite outlines, and we can advance along a broad and accommodating highway, preserving an easy tolerance toward views that are divergent from those which we hold."⁵

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1. The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions, World Missionary Conference, 1910, Report of Commission IV, p. 268.
2. Hall, op. cit., p. 36.
3. Ibid., p. 37.
4. Nicol Macnicol: "Interreligionism in India," The National Christian Council Review, Vol. LIII, No. 10, October 1933, p. 509.
5. Ibid., p. 509.

Another expression was given to this same outlook at the Indian Philosophical Congress in 1950. The belief was again expressed that the Supreme God is ultimate reality. Although God is one, He manifests Himself through many gods; any or all of them may be worshipped as God. The system is a unity of gods in God.

While God is one, there are according to Hinduism, many different ways of reaching Him, just as there are many paths that lead to the same destination. ... Hinduism is the sublime religious faith which finds one in all and all in one, and recognizes the unity of all genuine religious faiths as being 1 so many paths leading to the same goal, i. e., God.

Quite in contrast to that is the belief which is found among Christians in their relationship to non-Christian religions. In the past there has been the firm belief that only in Judaism and in Christianity was the revelation of God to be found; other religions were considered the works of the devil. Now, however, they do not say that all is true and all is false. "Nonetheless, the vast majority still remain rooted in the essential faith that only in Christ has God fully and once for all revealed Himself, that only in Christ is God ... incarnate."²

Since many are agreed that this is an important belief for Christians, there has been a new statement of

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1. S. C. Chatterjee: "The Fundamentals of Living Faith", The Indian Philosophical Congress, p. 120.
2. James Thayer Addison: "The Changing Attitude Toward Non-Christian Religions," The International Review of Missions, Vol. XXVII, No. 105, January 1938, p. 116.

the place of Christianity in relationship to the other religions.

They have grown to believe that the contrast is between the perfect and the imperfect. They crying need which they move to meet is not so much the need to save the lost from hell as to answer the unspoken desires for something better, the unrealized longing for something deeper and more satisfying -- for all that Christ can give in abundance.¹

The problem of the attitude of Christianity toward other religions was discussed and some conclusions were made in the findings of the Eastern Asia Christian Conference which met December 3-11, 1949. Their statement was: "The gospel of the Crucified and Risen Lord is God's message for all times, and for all conditions of men."² Men should be called to the Christian faith, the gospel should be preached as "the one sure hope of East Asia."³ The answer to the needs of all of the countries of Eastern Asia is "the saving power of God in Jesus Christ."⁴

Hinduism continues to state and act on the principle that all religions are the same, while those who proclaim the Christian gospel remain firm in the belief that only through Christ is there salvation and an answer to the world's needs.

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1. Ibid., p.
2. The Christian Prospect in Eastern Asia, Paper and Minutes of the Eastern Asia Christian Conference, Bangkok, Dec. 3-11, 1949, p. 118
3. Ibid., p. 118.
4. Ibid., p. 119.

C. Approach to the Hindu

The preaching of the gospel to the Hindus should be a process which is not one "from the outside,"¹ but rather "from the inside, feeling with them their intense feelings, longing with them their deepest longings, thinking with them their most baffling problems, following with them their highest ideals"² This must all be done in the spirit of Christ and only in such a way as it is possible for the Christian to remain firm in what he knows is right.³

Christianity should make an impact on the whole system of Hinduism as well as on individuals.⁴ "Holding to the best thought and life of India we would seek to explore the infinite possibilities of the life in Christ."⁵ Due to political and social changes which have occurred and those which are taking place, the Gospel should be presented as "revolutionary."⁶ The Christian message should be delivered in such a way that it will reach the spiritual needs of the Hindus. Although there have been changes in India, better education and increased commerce

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1. A. P. Appasamy: What is Moksha?, p. 9.
2. Ibid., p. 9.
3. Ibid., p. 9.
4. Paul David Devanandan: "Trends of Thought in Contemporary Hinduism," The International Review of Missions, Vol XXVIII, No. 112, October 1939, p. 478.
5. Appasamy: What is Moksha?, p. 10.
6. C. W. Ranson: Renewal and Advance Christian Witness in a Revolutionary World, p. 109.

and industry, as well as political and economic changes, man in India is no different from others or from what he has always been. Christ continues to be the only answer in his struggles.¹

For many centuries now India has been praying, "Lead me from the unreal to the real, Lead me from darkness to light, Lead me from death to immortality,"² and it is still the cry which must be answered by the Christian message.

1. In the Light of Caste

It is always difficult to determine just what is required to be a member of the Hindu religion. Whatever standard is set up can be denied and the opposite declared true. However, there is one demand "which is so important and so inclusive that there are those who feel that it is a valid criterion."³ It is the caste system which is important to the Hindu. "To be a Hindu means to belong to one of the castes and to obey caste regulations."⁴ The idea that caste is the most important characteristic of Hinduism means "that it lays stress not upon orthodoxy of belief or purity of morality, but upon adherence to ritual, and, above all, upon observance of caste."⁵

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1. Ibid., p. 112, 113.
2. Ibid., p. 113.
3. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 103.
4. Ibid., p. 103.
5. Andrew Blair Wann: The Message of Christ to India, p. 107.

Much has been written concerning the origin of caste, but none of it is completely satisfactory.¹ From the earliest times Indian society was divided into groups.² Varna which means color is the word for caste in Sanskrit.³ It would seem that the Aryan was fair-skinned in contrast to the darker Dravidian. In an effort to remain pure, they began many kinds of restrictions which were to preserve the purity of their race.

The earliest division we have on record separates into distinct groups the priests (Brahmins), the warriors (Kshatriyas), the agriculturalists (Vaiśyas), and the menial laborers (Sudras). The three mentioned first constitute the twice-born people, those who had the right to be initiated or be born again into the religious community. The Sudras, who are supposed to have been largely of Dravidian blood, at least in the beginning, were outsiders so far as the ceremonial and worship of the twice-born were concerned. According to the theory found in the Institutes of Manu, one of the ancient books of laws and customs, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaiśyas were born from the mouth, the arms, and the thighs, respectively, of the supreme soul of the universe, while the poor Sudras proceeded from the feet and were looked upon as the menial, doing their work at the bidding of the three other orders.⁴

Today emphasis has been placed on the origin of caste from the different works and occupations in society, and the "hereditary principle"⁵ has become "absolutely

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1. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 105.
2. John McKenzie: Two Religions A Comparative Study of Some Distinctive Ideas and Ideals in Hinduism and Christianity being the Croall Lectures for 1948, p. 35.
3. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 105.
4. Ibid., p. 105.
5. McKenzie, op. cit., p. 36.

determinative."¹ Many castes are assigned to certain duties within society. Even though this does seem quite rigid at times, it is true that there are many exceptions. An example of this is found among the Brahmins who form the priestly caste, but are found in other professions and occupations.²

Regulations concerning food have been quite strict in the past, but today there are many occasions when they are not strictly followed. In some places the old customs are breaking down, but in the villages the regulations which have been followed for centuries continue to rule supreme in the lives of all of those concerned.³

Marriage within a caste or a sub-caste is absolutely necessary. No matter how lax Hindus become in regard to other rules concerning caste, that is one which must be kept. It has meant that there have been many child marriages and that the place of the woman in society has not been respected.⁴

When the Gospel is preached to Hindus and its claims begin to be meaningful to them, then the requirements of caste must be considered. Caste for centuries

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1. Ibid., p. 36.
2. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 106.
3. Ibid., pp. 103, 104.
4. Ibid., p. 104.

has given a certain stability to society in India.¹

Christianity does not provide a set of laws by which men must live, but rather the emphasis is on the spirit.

Its "pattern" has always to some degree had to be adapted to circumstances, but never its spirit. For its spirit is that of Jesus Christ Himself, who in the most definite possible ways enunciated the principle of Christian conduct. It is set forth in the Golden Rule, and in the still more unmistakable principle: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." All conventions and institutions must be tried and, if necessary, revised by reference to this standard.²

Since caste divides society in many segments, the sense of brotherhood is stifled. "To a Hindu his "brother" is a member of his caste and no one else. He is taught to despise and look down upon the lower castes as inferior,"³ Christianity teaches him that "ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Jesus Christ."⁴

Many Hindus profess the Christian faith, follow true moral practices, read Christian books, and for all practical purposes discontinue idol worship, but yet they are still members of their caste and considered upright members of the Hindu community. However, when they are baptized, they have forfeited the rights they enjoy in their community and can no longer partake of the privileges

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1. McKenzie: op. cit., p. 53.

2. Ibid., p. 55.

3. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 106.

4. Galatians 3:26.

of Hinduism. Some have been willing to say that baptism is not necessary for those who must suffer because of their entrance into the Christian community. In view of the teaching found in the New Testament, we should not place less emphasis on it or completely remove it.¹ The New Testament holds that it is the duty of the Christians to show that they are all living together as one in Christ.² Peter writes in his first epistle: "be ye all likeminded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tenderhearted, ..." ³

John writes:

He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.⁴

It is true that men have different talents and abilities. Man is expected to do what is commanded by Christ through God; he is to always remember that "he is a child of a loving Father-Mother God, who has loved and is loving him and who has shown His love in Jesus Christ."⁵ All he has is God's; his greater abilities are to be used for God. "... , every man is to treat his fellow beings

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1. Wann, op. cit., pp. 133, 134.
2. A. J. Appasamy: Christ in the Indian Church A Primer of Christian Faith and Practice, pp. 154, 155.
3. I Peter 3:8.
4. I John 2:9; 4:20-21.
5. Graefe, op. cit., p. 80.

as Christ would do if He were in his place."1 Those who are greater are to treat those of lesser ability with love, as a father would treat his child. Those who are the lesser should not bear a grudge; those who are higher should not be proud. Concern for all men should be a part of the religious life of men. A part of man's responsibility as a Christian is to be concerned for all.2 It is the Christian's task to show this different way in Christ to the Hindu.

2/ In the Light of Karma and Transmigration

About 500 B. C., in the Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad the earliest statement of the doctrine of Karma was given by Yajnavalkya. The new doctrine was combined with the old "eschatology which spoke of the world of bliss over which there ruled Yama, the first man."3 This doctrine is most powerful, and it is found in every school of thought.4 It is necessary that it be taken into consideration when study is made of the effects of Hinduism in the lives of men and women.5

According to Hinduism, the life in the relative world is determined by the law of karma, which is the law

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1. Ibid., p. 80.
2. Ibid., p. 82.
3. Cave, op. cit., p. 55.
4. A. J. Appasamy: The Gospel and India's Heritage, p. 110.
5. Noel Macnicol: I The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems 2. Christianity and Hinduism, p. 18.

of causality. Good produces good, and evil produces evil. Evil action creates barriers around the soul and covers its light. Good action removes the barriers and reveals its innate purity.¹

Some say that karma is simply reaping what we sow. Since it is not a "mechanical principle,"² but determined by God through the actions in life, it should not lead to despair. It does, however, and "life appears meaningless and vain."³ Man is loaded with a sense of guilt and no way of escape is provided for him. Karma, the action of life now, determines the kind of life which will be lived in the future. The action is in the nature of a "returning curve, . . . , which comes back to the thrower."⁴ All a man can hope is not to add to his Karma, "so that when what we have inherited is finally exhausted there will be no more fuel to keep the fire burning."⁵ The fuel is the good and bad deeds which constitute life.

This idea that men will be born again is not an event to which the Hindu looks forward, but it is a state which cannot be avoided. Since it is believed that men are reaping the reward of deeds committed in former births, there is a lethargy about removing present evils. Life is accepted just as it is as a man's due. "To live,

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1. Nikhilananda, op. cit., pp. 54, 55.
2. MacNicol: I The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems 2. Christianity and Hinduism, p. 18.
3. Ibid., p. 18.
4. L. Stanley Jast: Reincarnation and Karma A Spiritual Philosophy Applied to the World of Today, p. 11.
5. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 97.

... - just to live, whether nobly or dishonorably, it makes little difference--is an evil with a most unfortunate entail for the future."¹

When the Aryans came to India, there was no evidence of a doctrine concerning transmigration. Today, however, it is one of the basic doctrines in Hinduism. The origin of it is very obscure; it is thought that the idea came from the aboriginal group into which they came. Although the Aryans became more and more important in exercising control over religious beliefs, they did absorb many of the ideas found among the Dravidians. One of these may have been the transmigration of souls.²

The theory is that when a man dies his soul leaves the dying body and enters the body of some animal or human being as it comes into the world to begin its career. And the process is repeated generation after generation times without number. While the theory doubtless came to the Aryan invaders in a very crude form, the keen minds of the thinkers among them would not allow it to rest but worked it out to its logical conclusion and made it a part of their growing philosophical system.

Destiny then is the "accumulated effect of a man's past karma."¹ The effect of deeds not only influences the present life, but also the ones to come. In this life one is reaping what he has sown in the past.⁵ Karma and transmigration are attempts to explain the

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1. Ibid., pp. 97, 98.
2. Ibid., p. 97.
3. Ibid., p. 97.
4. Nikhilananda, op. cit., p. 106.
5. Ibid., p. 106.

inequalities of life, as well as to state the principle of retribution. It is clear that sin and suffering are connected, but it is difficult to accept as a principle that good deeds and bad ones can be equated with so much happiness and so much sorrow.¹ Unmerited suffering is also eliminated by this doctrine. "It "tends to make men complacent in their prosperity and condemnatory of others in their misfortunes; it does not make sorrow easier to bear."²

By its teaching that the unfortunate are accursed, the 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.³

Men are afraid of these many births; they know that each deed must be rewarded or punished. It works itself out "automatically and inevitably in existence after existence. There is absolutely no escape from the clutches of this inexorable law."⁴ The Hindu experiences fear as he thinks of "the ocean of Samsara, into which he is plunged."⁵ It is difficult for the Hindu to grasp the message of the love of God which is an "antidote

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1. Cave, op. cit., pp. 71, 72.
2. Ibid., p. 69.
3. Ibid., pp. 70, 71.
4. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 97.
5. Appasamy: The Gospel and India's Heritage, p. 65.

to the harmful and depressing effect of the doctrine of Karma."1 The Christian message of the love of the Father who forgives the penitent and helps in the quest for spiritual reality seeks to replace the old belief.²

When men hold firmly to the doctrine of a loving God, as manifested in the life of Jesus and especially in his death on the Cross, no such fear as many devout Hindus have about the doctrine of Karma will remain. The most effective way of emancipating the Hindu mind from its subjection to the system ... is to make the Christian doctrine of God's Fatherhood absolutely clear and real. Unless the knowledge of the fatherly love of God sinks deep into the Hindu soul, the fear of the future consequences of actions in an endless cycle of births and deaths will remain.³

Each man must bear his own burden. No one else can do it for him. Hindus feel this terrible burden, for they try to carry it themselves. It is a crushing weight for them. The teaching of Jesus is that He will accept man's burden and carry it for him, for He has love for man, has shared in his experiences, and has known his difficulties and sorrows. "That evil Karma produces suffering has been demonstrated beyond all doubt on the mount of Calvary, where Christ was crucified; ..."⁴ Jesus' cross "condemns the doctrine of Karma as incomplete."⁵

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1. Ibid., p. 65.
2. Ibid., p. 65.
3. Ibid., p. 65.
4. Ibid., p. 125.
5. W. E. Tomlinson: "Some Messages of the Gospel of the Cross for Village India," The International Review of Missions, Vol. XXIV, No. 96, October 1935, p. 489.

There is a most important principle which is found in this doctrine and in the Christian belief concerning the forgiveness of sins. Each individual is responsible for his own sins. God calls man, but He does not force him to accept His forgiveness. Man must decide himself whether He will accept forgiveness.¹ "The principle of the sense of individual responsibility is carried too far in the theory of Karma. A man must bear his own burden; no one else can possibly help him."² This isolation of soul invariably produces fear. In contrast to this, "in the Christian doctrine of forgiveness while a man has his clear and definite responsibility he can always be helped by others."³ His friends and relatives can pray for him, can instruct and encourage him. God can and will help him.

leaves out the grace

The Christian believes that he will live in the presence of God in eternity. In that way he will learn to know Him.

This Christian doctrine of growth through eternity is free from some of the difficulties attached to the Hindu theory of transmigration. There is no thought here of various forms of embodied existence which range all the way from the lowliest types of plant life to the highest forms of heavenly existence. Also there are no rapid falls in spiritual grace and no sudden descents into misfortune. The Hindu doctrine of transmigration becomes a source of dread because of all these possibilities of different forms of existence and of rapid falls and sudden descents.

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1. Appamsamy: The Gospel and India's Heritage, p. 126.
2. Ibid., p. 127.
3. Ibid., p. 127.

The Christian doctrine avoids these difficulties while making it perfectly clear that the infinite possibilities of the soul can only be realized through eternity.¹

This cycle of births and rebirths is at the heart of the karma and transmigration theories. There is no indication that the Gospel writers believed in such a doctrine. There is reference to the new birth which refers to spiritual matters.² Eternity is for companionship with God.

The Christian hope of the future is thus based on a faith in God which is a present experience in God's love, and of the power and meaning of His reign. It is useless to make such a claim if we be as little liberated from bondage to the seen as Hindus have felt themselves to be from bondage to the karmic law. The Christian Gospel is the proclamation of the God made known in Christ's life and death and resurrection. It brings to us in time an eternal life which, God being what we know Him to be, we know death will not interrupt but consummate.³

Since the Hindus are earnest in seeking "to find ways of being liberated from the necessity of being reborn,"⁴ they have developed three ways of salvation. Salvation for the Hindus means release from endless rebirths.

The first way is the karamarga or that of works. A man must perform all the religious rites and duties which have been given for the family and the temple worship; most important of all is to follow all the regulations

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1. Ibid., pp. 129, 130.
2. Appasamy; What is Moksa?, pp. 224, 225.
3. Cave: op. cit., p. 84.
4. Soper: Religions of Mankind, p. 98.

for caste. This does not mean that he will not be born again, but at least the next life should be happier than this one.¹

Bhaktimarga, "the way of loving devotion to one or another of the divine beings he has chosen to worship,"² is a most important way. There has been "eager adoration of the gods."³ The Bhagavadgīta teaches the way of love and devotion.⁴

Through philosophical insight and intuition, the way of jnanamarga, salvation by knowledge, is the third path. "This is the only way by which man is able to secure release from transmigration, so that he will never be born again, but enter into the bliss of Nirvana."⁵ Philosophy is most important in the life of the Hindu. "In India all philosophy is religious philosophy; its object ultimately is always to secure release from transmigration."⁶

Quite in contrast to this is the Christian way ✓ which does not place emphasis on the efforts of man, but rather presents a way of salvation through Jesus Christ.

And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given

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1. Ibid., p. 98.
2. Ibid., p. 98.
3. Cave, op. cit., p. 131.
4. Ibid., p. 154.
5. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 98.
6. Ibid., p. 98.

among men, wherein we must be saved.¹

Eternal life is the result of faith in Christ.

Even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal life. And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.²

3. In the Light of Beliefs Concerning God

From the Rig Veda we learn that the earliest Hindu conceptions of God were polytheistic.³ In the Upanishads the gods are temporary manifestations of one absolute being who is behind all that exists. Brahman is eternal, the world soul, and the human soul was the same as Brahman.⁴

Brahman is defined as sat, chit, ananda; being, intelligence and bliss. These attributes are purely negative. Brahman is the knowing (chit) but not the knower; it is bliss, but this bliss has for its nearest analogy the bliss of deep and dreamless sleep, the bliss of insensibility. So this famous trilogy of attributes leaves Brahman undefined and attributeless. Neither by word nor deed can Brahman be revealed.⁵

Actually Brahman is impersonal; it should be used in speaking about the form. It is impossible to think of Brahman as holy or righteous. Brahman "is presented as a being beyond the distinction between right and wrong. That would lower him, ..., and bring him

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1. Acts 4:12.
2. John 17: 2,3.
3. McKenzie, op. cit., p. 78.
4. Soper: The Religions of the World, p. 99.
5. Cave, op. cit., p. 99.

down to the level of human frailty and finiteness."¹

Shankara taught that each man was really Brahman; salvation came when that fact was realized. When this state is reached, true freedom is the result and there are no more rebirths. Oneness in the universe was the teaching of Ramanuja. He believed in a personal God; souls were to be absorbed in God.²

Swami Nikhilananda has given us a modern statement concerning the Hindu belief about God.

He is the all-pervading Spirit and Consciousness. He is the Reality of the world. As behind the changing body there is the unchanging soul, so behind this changing physical universe there is the changeless Spirit ... God is the Essence of existence, knowledge, and bliss. It is not that God exists; He is Existence itself. ... It is not that God knows; He is Knowledge itself. ... God is the Abode of blessed qualities alone. No anger or passion can ever inhere in Him. He does not punish or reward. Man is responsible for his own suffering or happiness. ... a Personal God can never represent the universal concept of Godhead. ... A Personal God is limited by His will and personality. Therefore the final truth about God is that He is impersonal. The personal God is explained by the Impersonal Absolute and strengthened by It. The different Gods of different religions, from the tribal deity of the primitive to the one God of the monotheist, are only different aspects of the Absolute revealed to limited minds.³

The God of the Christians is the Creator, but more than that He has shown Himself in Christ Jesus.

In the picture of Jesus the express image of the Invisible has come out. It is not a picture that has no life of its own. It is a picture in which

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1. Soper: The Religions of Mankind, p. 100.
2. Ibid., pp. 101, 102.
3. Nikhilananda, op. cit., pp. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

the Lord of the universe has found His own soul. The Painter and picture are one. The Artist feels that in most of His works He and they are not one. He is not satisfied with them; they do not represent Him in fulness or reality. Reproduction and creation are the attributes of the artist. When picture answers to painter, the consummation of art is reached. It is that according to the Christian view, is found in Jesus.¹

D. Christ the Final Answer

As the needs of the Hindus should be met through Christ, it is well to consider how it can be done.

...the chief emphasis in our stating of Christianity to non-Christians (should be) upon those things which are distinctive in the Christian faith, and not upon the common elements, whatever they may be. Frequently the reason given by non-Christians for not coming into the Christian fellowship is that they have found the same truths which the Christian evangelist has proclaimed within their own religion. I do not deny that this may sometimes be a rationalization, but in other cases the evangelist's desire to find some common standpoint must have had the effect of making it appear that the differences were not of such character as to justify sacrifice. I sometimes wonder whether the widespread conviction in Hinduism of the present day that all religions are the same has not been fostered by a faulty presentation of Christianity. And what is of unique importance in any preaching of Christianity is Jesus Christ himself.²

Christ is effectively presented to the Hindu when he is presented, not just as the Christ of the New Testament or the first century, but as the Christ who is alive.

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1. V. Chakkarai: Jesus the Avatar, p. 214.
2. M. H. Harrison: "The Christian Apologetic and the Claims of the Non-Christian Religions in regard to Revelation," The International Review of Missions, p. 461.
3. Ibid., p. 461.

The basis of these claims is found in Christ's teaching concerning Himself.

*Unity
Continuity*

No religious teacher ever made such stupendous claims for himself as Jesus did. He represented Himself as the fulfilment of the prophecies and hopes of the Old Testament; he claimed authority to abrogate the old Jewish Law, and to lay down a new Law for men; He sought of men a loyalty to His own person which for some of them meant forsaking all and following Him; He made the most exclusive claims for the significance of His death and resurrection. It is not uncommon for people at the present time to regard the making of such high and exclusive claims, or the reassertion of them by Christ's followers, as in itself a manifestation of intolerance. But this is obviously a complete misunderstanding of the meaning of the word. There can be no intolerance in declaring what one believes to be true and inviting the free assent of others.¹

The Christian message, centering in Christ, is not an emphasis on ideals which must be followed or an explanation of life and its problems about which men must make some kind of decision. "... it is rather the announcement of an event with which men must reckon."² Since God made Christ to be Lord and Christ, "There is a finality about that pronouncement. It is independent of human opinion and human choice."³ A man may choose to drink tea or coffee or the interests in a family may only be his and of value to him alone.⁴

But Jesus is not a preference, not a value; he is truth. The truth about him is independent of human

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1. McKenzie, op. cit., pp. 132, 133.
2. D. T. Niles: That They May Have Life, p. 18.
3. Ibid., p. 18.
4. Ibid., p. 18.

preference. He is Lord, whether men like it or not, whether men accept it or not; and being Lord, he calls men to reckon with him.¹

Men do not acknowledge Christ by their own powers, but rather by the power that God gives.

This uniqueness ... which is declared by God...cannot be a conviction to which men are led by any natural transition of thought. It is rather a fact with which men are challenged and which establishes itself by the revolution it effects. Jesus is the fulfiller rather than the fulfillment. He fulfills by substituting a new basis for values and lordship. He is not the coping of a wall already raised. In Christ all things are brought under one head, that by him as Lord, all things may be judged. To speak in terms of Hinduism, does not point to him. But let a Hindu be disturbed by being brought into contact with Christ and Christian influence, and then only Christ can fulfill the yearnings of his soul.²

When Christ is truly known through His works and His Spirit, it is impossible to agree that "Jesus is only one among many incarnations. The devout Christian is never able to understand this claim. To put Jesus on a level with Rama, Krishna, or Buddha is impossible."³ It has been stated: "The place of Christ in Christianity seems to be without parallel in the Living Religions of the East."⁴

Christ reveals God which is not the case in Hinduism in the incarnations which are manifestations of

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1. Ibid., p. 18.
2. Ibid., p. 113.
3. Appasamy: Christ in the Indian Church, p. 45.
4. Sydney Cave: Christianity and Some Living Religions of the East, p. 101.

the gods.¹

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...Christ has proved intelligible to men of every race. It is the message of Christ alone that the Church has to give to the non-Christian world, for in Him the character of God has been revealed. ... No preaching of Him is truly Christian which is not at the same time a preaching of the holy love of God. He is not one Lord among many; a rival to pagan gods. He is but one God, and He is known through the Son and in the Spirit. Faced with the bewildering variety of men's thoughts of God, the Church has for its prime message this, that God has been revealed in Jesus Christ.²

Men who have proclaimed the message of Jesus Christ in other lands and those who have come to follow Him from other religions continue to bear witness to the fact that He is the only Lord and Saviour of men. "It is our firm Christian belief that among all the great religious figures in the world there is no one except Jesus who could be regarded as an Incarnation of God."³ One of the leaders of the Indian church has said:

Our message is that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. We believe that God revealed Himself to Israel, preparing the way for His full revelation in Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord. We believe that Christ is the Way, for all, that He alone is adequate for the world's need. Therefore we want to bear witness to Him in all the world.⁴

Portions of a statement from the International Missionary Council held at Tambaram, Madras, India state the finality of Christ.

There are many non-Christian religions that claim the allegiance of large multitudes. We see and

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- 1. Ibid., p. 103.
- 2. Ibid., pp. 107, 108.
- 3. Appasamy: The Gospel and India's Heritage, p. 259.

readily recognize that in them are to be found values of deep religious experiences and great moral achievements. Yet we are bold enough to call men out from them to the feet of Christ. We do so because we believe that in Him alone is the full salvation which man needs. Mankind has seen nothing to be compared with the redeeming love of God in the life and death and resurrection of Christ. What He is for us, judge and redeemer, teacher and friend, brother and Lord, we long to see Him become also for others. ...we believe that all religious insight and experience have to be fully tested before God in Christ; and we see that this is true as well within as outside the Christian Church. Christ is revolutionary; He brings conversion and regeneration when we meet Him, from whatever point we may have started.¹

"Jesus Christ is unique, and he is with us, now and forever,"² a statement of faith, shared by all those who believe in Christ.

E. Summary

In this chapter it has been shown that there is a vast difference between syncretism and finality. The syncretism of Hinduism which is ready to accept any god or good from any other religion is quite different from Christianity which presents Christ as superior to all.

Naturally when the Christian message is presented to the Hindu it must be shown how Christ is different and greater than their gods. The demands of caste are most important for the Hindu, but in contrast

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1. The Authority of Faith, "The Madras Series" Presenting Papers Based upon the Meeting of the International Missionary Council, at Tambaram, Madras, India, December 12th to 29th, 1938, Vol. I, pp. 184, 185.
2. Soper: The Philosophy of the Christian World Mission, p. 231.

to that there is the brotherhood of all men in Christ. All of life is colored for the Hindu by the doctrine of karma and transmigration; fear and a blind acceptance of the state in which they find themselves stifle the desire to improve themselves. Christ can bring a new hope to them and the assurance that through Him there will be eternal life with the Father. Quite in contrast to the impersonal Being and the countless gods the Hindus worship, the God revealed through Christ is one and is a Father to all who believe in Him.

The needs of the Hindu can be met in Christ, for He is the Son of God who was sent into the world to die for all men. India needs to be shown through Christ that she requires a love for her fellowmen, a love for a personal God, and an eternity with Him without fear of rebirth. All of this is possible today in Christ through His Spirit. Life can be met for all men triumphantly by living in Him and Him alone.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of this thesis to show the relationship of Christianity and Hinduism by certain doctrines and beliefs which are characteristic of them both - particularly the syncretism of Hinduism and the exclusiveness of Christianity. From the time the Church of Christ was established until today, there has been concern about the relation of Christianity to other religions; there has been an interplay wherever they have met each other. The age-long tendency of Hinduism to absorb other religions and some of her chief doctrines in relation to Christianity's reaction to them has been a real issue for a number of years.

In Chapter One the basis of syncretism in Hinduism was cited through quotations from their own Scriptures and the actual practice of religious toleration throughout the centuries. Today both the illiterate and the educated within the Hindu fold are willing to accept what they consider divine and holy from any religion, provided they can continue to follow their own most cherished beliefs.

Christianity's finality was the main emphasis in Chapter Two. The Biblical and historical foundation for the exclusiveness of Christianity were discussed. Today among Christians, as through the centuries, it is still a working principle that Christ is the only way of

salvation.

The third chapter included a contrast of the syncretism of Hinduism and the finality of Christianity. Three main doctrines of Hinduism were discussed and the Christian answer through Christ was shown for each one.

Christ made it very clear in His ministry that He came to seek and save those who are lost. He came for all men, that He might draw all unto Himself. His was the only way which was open to all. The Hindu community has been divided in caste and sub-caste groups which have created divisions and prevented unity among the people. Christ comes to India to make all men brothers through Him as Elder Brother and God as Father. The fellowship of all men is found through Christ rather than through prescribed Hindu caste law.

Karma and transmigration have become most basic doctrines among the Hindus. Through Christ all men know that they are evil, but they also learn that it is not the way of works, but the way of faith which is open to all men as the means of salvation. The type of rebirth which shall be a man's lot is determined by his deeds in his present life. There is only one life for the Christian instead of the many as in the Hindu belief. Christ has the key for life now and hereafter.

The idea of an impersonal neuter being as God has been expressed many times in Hindu theology; it is

a common belief. Christ, however, came to show men through love and a perfect life here on earth the Father and His great love for men. The impersonal "It" of the Hindu becomes the Father-God of the Christian. Man is capable of fellowship with this Father through Christ rather than the absorption into an impersonal mass.

Finally, Christ was presented as the only way of salvation for all men.

When Christ is brought to India, He must be presented in a way which will have meaning for the Hindu. It must be remembered, however, that the demands of Christ should be presented with clarity and force, in order that the Hindu may know that Christ is not just another god to whom they offer their gifts. His exclusive claims must always be presented with love.

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