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A STUDY OF HINDU ESCHATOLOGY

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

by

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CHAPTER I

THE PLACE OF ESCHATOLOGY

From the beginning of time man's own development of religions has been prompted by a feeling of weakness and uncertainty on his part as he faces life and death. The conditions of his life and occurrences in his life have forced on him a sense that there are forces outside of himself whose influences are felt in his life. His inability to comprehend or even investigate and examine these forces has brought on his feeling of weakness. The thought of death, which he almost invariably feels does not "end it all" for him, introduces him to the uncertainty of an existence after death, an existence he sometimes hopes for and sometimes fears. Because of the observable evidence of outside forces and the inner evidence of continued existence after death, man has developed in his religions an eschatology, a theory that is concerned with the end, whether it be his own end in death, the end of time, or the collective end of mankind and the world. In his theories of eschatology he has not only contemplated the possible conditions of his existence after death, but has been concerned with the influence which his life may have, for good or evil, on that existence after death. Hence, in his thinking about his end, he is occupied also with thoughts of gaining for himself the most pleasant existence after death by whatever means this may be done. His innate knowledge of a destiny to be achieved after death prompts him to try to get a preview of that destiny and, at the same time, work out a system by which he may be reasonably assured that he will actually achieve his destiny and help to shape it. W. St. Clair

Tisdall concurs with this position when he makes the following statement in his book on comparative theology: "True morality is based only on a hope of eternity."¹

The realization of the importance of eschatology and especially its influence on the lives and faith of members of the Christian Church has brought on an "eschatological emphasis" in modern Christian theology. Dr. William Robinson, who holds the chair of Christian Doctrine at the Butler University School of Religion, explains the emphasis by pointing out that in the thinking of modern theologians ". . . eschatology is considered, not as an addendum to Christian Theology, but as coloring the whole of it."² He observes that theologians, prompted by such an emphasis, are concerned with the eternal Christ Who was intemporalized -- leaving God's time (eternity) to live, die, and rise again in our own time. They deal with kairos, God's appointed time, not chronos, clock-time. They think of the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" as being the contemporary of all men; He penetrated our time 1900 years ago to fulfill the "eschaton events" of His life and death, but He is a true contemporary of all men through the presence of His Holy Spirit and the faithful "re-presentation" of the eschaton event in the sacramental acts of His people. Hence they propose a "proleptic eschatology" which views the Gospel events as the completion of time, a completion that assures the believer of the completion of God's eternal plan, but which

¹W. St. Clair Tisdall, Christianity and Other Faiths (London: Robert Scott, 1912), p. 122.

²William Robinson, "The Eschatological Emphasis," The Shane Quarterly (January, 1952), p. 21.

looks to the future for its consummation at the Last Day.³

Such an emphasis can be of great importance to the Christian Church and its members. It invites men who, because of their being governed and limited by time as they know it, can view the events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection only as something that happened at one point in "their time" to behold the eternal salvation of God with an understanding of "God's time" (eternity), a time in which past, present, and future are wrapped up into one constant Now. In God's time, the appointed time (kairos) of salvation existed before, during, and after what men know as time (chronos). Such a view brings out the eternal character of God's salvation in Jesus Christ and is closely allied with the doctrine of election. It emphasizes the "being" of the Christian in the Kingdom of his Lord as well as his "becoming." Thus it can offer the great comfort and assurance to men of all times which God intended in His revelation. It can speak to the believer of a fait accompli, not only as it was at one point in man's time, but in the eternal time of God.

Such an emphasis holds out meat to the Christian in the sacramental acts of the Church by clarifying them as a re-presentation of the one eschaton event that covers all time and eternity. Thus the Church "shows forth the Lord's death till He come." According to Dr. Robinson, viewing the sacraments eschatologically gives them a greater part in the motivation of the Christian life. He writes:

The sacraments are there for one thing, to remind us that we cannot play fast and loose with the historical realities of

³Ibid., pp. 21-30.

this life. Indeed, they are there that we might have power to transform the sordid realities of this life into something nearer to the Kingdom of God. . . . The eschatological notion forbids that in the sacraments we turn our gaze to heaven and forget this world.⁴

If his phrase "this life" is understood to mean the life the Christian is now living, a life in which he has the Life of those found in Christ, we may readily agree with him and thank him for his words. The life that has been made Life through faith in Jesus Christ is man's concern here and now. Seen eschatologically, this Life has been the believer's from before the foundation of the world, is his in time, and will be consummated at the end of time to be his into eternity. The faithful Christian will never play "fast and loose" with this life because, as a member of Christ's eternal kingdom, life has been transformed into Life, which is unaffected by death and has nothing to do with things that savor of death.

The eschatological emphasis as it is found in Christianity and its implications for the believer help to make Christianity the unique religion that it is. As God's revelation of Himself to mankind, Christianity preaches an eternity with God, an eternity of certainty and hope. In contrast with some of the religions developed by man's philosophical invention, it speaks with certainty of the fact of eternal life with God; in contrast with others it offers a living hope of an existence the marks of which are individuality, purpose, and bliss. It is in the latter category that the Hindu religion stands in sharp contrast with Christianity. Hinduism hopes for little for the individual. It is this Hindu eschatology which is the study of this paper. An attempt will be

⁴Ibid., p. 28.

made to retain objectivity, but as is usually the case when a Christian deals with ideas and concepts foreign to him, some subjectivity will, no doubt, be registered in the form of comparisons and contrasts.

The overwhelming fact which strikes a student of Hinduism and makes an accurate and fair study extremely difficult is this: Hinduism is not a systematized theology whose tenets can be pin-pointed and ascertained; it is rather an inclusive collection of religious and philosophical thought as it developed and changed through centuries. Sir Monier Williams gives us an idea of the virtual impossibility of codifying and systematizing Hinduism in the following quotation:

Starting from the Veda, Hinduism has ended in embracing something from all religions, and in presenting phases suited to all minds. It is all-tolerant, all-comprehensive, all-absorbing. It has its spiritual and its material aspect, its esoteric and exoteric, its subjective and objective, its rational and irrational, its pure and its impure. It may be compared to a huge polygon, or irregular, multilateral figure. It has one side for the practical, another for the severely moral, another for the devotional and imaginative, another for the sensuous and sensual, and another for the philosophical and speculative. Those who rest in ceremonial observance find it all-sufficient; those who deny the efficacy of works, and make faith the one requisite, need not wander from its pale; those who are addicted to sensual objects may have their tastes gratified; those who delight in meditating on the nature of God and man, the relation of matter and spirit, the mystery of separate existence, and the origin of evil, may here indulge their love of speculation. And this capacity holds for almost endless sectarian divisions, even among the followers of any particular line of doctrine.⁵

The same lack of unity within Hinduism is evidenced in the writings of Hindu philosophers themselves. They are forced to use phrases such as "most Hindu philosophers have accepted . . ." and "philosophers may differ . . . but most of them use . . ." and "although there are various

⁵Sir Monier Williams, quoted in India and Malaysia, by Thoburn, re-quoted by Clinton J. Bushey, The Superiority of Christianity (Kankakee: Clinton J. Bushey, c.1944), p. 85.

interpretations among the philosophers, most Hindus would agree . . ."⁶
This difficulty in establishing what makes up Hindu teachings heightens the importance of using interpretative materials written by Hindus themselves, wherever possible, that they may choose a representative Hindu philosophy and define and explain that philosophy themselves. In this respect, the newly published book edited by Kenneth W. Morgan, The Religion of the Hindus, composed of articles written by Hindu philosophers at his request and containing selections from Hindu scriptures has proved to be very valuable.

⁶Notably Radhagovinda Basak, "The Hindu Concept of the Natural World," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1953), p. 84.

CHAPTER II

HINDU ESCHATOLOGY, A PRODUCT OF ITS CONCEPT OF GOD

It is impossible to plunge into a study of Hindu eschatology without preparing oneself by looking at the Hindu concept of God and its attendant cosmogony. One cannot consider the ultimate end of a thing without being concerned with its beginnings.

In its highest and purest form, Hindu philosophy conceives of God as being an impersonal, neutral Supreme Being or world-soul, the essential qualities of which are existence, consciousness, and bliss. Dr. Robert Hume, in his book, The World's Living Religions, has interpreted Hindu thought and has arrived at this definition of the Hindu God: ". . . philosophically Brahma is to be interpreted as the absolute, infinite, eternal, omnipresent, impersonal, indescribable, neuter Being."¹ Along the same line the Hindu philosopher J. N. Banerjea writes:

The Supreme Being is described as "beyond the measure of all attributes," as the resting place of the Power which creates and sustains everything, and to which the created things return upon dissolution. The earlier Upanishads, referring to the three principal activities of the Supreme Being, creation, preservation, and dissolution, say, "everything is born in Him (in the beginning), is absorbed in Him (in the end), and breathes or is sustained in Him (in the period of its existence)."²

Such a conception of the Ultimate Reality behind the Universe must

¹Robert Ernest Hume, The World's Living Religions (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 24.

²J. N. Banerjea, "The Hindu Concept of God," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 48.

find its application in an identity of God with the universe. That this is the case may be seen in the words of Radhagovinda Basak, another Hindu, on the subject:

The Hindu Scriptures identify God with the Universe, the natural world of multiplicity and differentiations, believing that Brahman transforms Himself into the ever blossoming and developing form of the external world. . . . The Supreme Being is the whole universe, animate and inanimate. He is the origin of it, the place of its preservation, and of its dissolution at the end of the long cycle of existence. In thus believing in the identity of the Supreme Being and Nature, the Hindus see Him in everything, and everything in Him, and worship Him as abiding in all kinds of created things.³

How this manifestation of the Supreme Being, a neuter, impersonal Spirit, came into being as the universe which we know today is explained by referring to a sort of evolutionistic action in which the creative agent, Brahma, was first generated by the Supreme Spirit, Brahman, almost as if by accident. Through the personal agency of Brahma, the Brahman then "sported" by bringing forth an illusive universe produced from itself. For this illusory creativity the Hindus employ the term naya. It refers to things as they seem to exist and are observed by men but always reminds that the only ultimate reality is the spiritual world soul, Brahman itself. The Hindu interpretation of this illusive cosmic energy of the creator is worked out in complicated detail in their philosophy. Basak explains their understanding of the means and methods of Hindu cosmogony when he writes:

Philosophers may differ as to whether the Ultimate nature of the universe is monistic, dualistic, or pluralistic, but most of them use the concept of prakriti and the three gunas in explaining

³Radhagovinda Basak, "The Hindu Concept of the Natural World," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 83.

their point of view. Prakriti is the ultimate cosmic energy, primal matter which exists eternally. It is the uncaused first cause of the universe, that out of which the universe is formed, latent matter of the finest form. This prakriti, the primal cause of all that is created, is made up of the three gunas held together in a state of equilibrium. The gunas are the subtle essence of prakriti, the attributes or qualities or properties of primal matter. The first guna, sattva, is harmony, balance, of the nature of wisdom, purity or pleasure when found in its created form. The second guna, rajas, is activity, motion, of the nature of pain, stimulating and restless and energetic in its created form. The third guna, tamas, is inertia, heavy, of the nature of indifference, laziness, dullness, when found in its created form. . . .

Prakriti, the primal matter coexists eternally with purusha, the conscious principle of creation, the plurality of selves in the universe. Both are by themselves eternal, beginningless, undetermined, and inactive, devoid of characteristics, and formless; but prakriti is unintelligent, and liable to transformation through variations in the three gunas, while purusha is intelligent and unchangeable, and unaffected by the gunas. Prakriti in its transformation becomes a perceivable object, while purusha, the self, remains the perceiving subject.

Creation occurs through the union of prakriti and purusha. Philosophies differ as to whether that union comes about through the will of a creator or is the result of the combination of the two without the active intervention of any divine agent, but the natural world as known by men is the result of that union. . . . It is maya which brings about the union of the individual soul and primal matter. In some philosophies, maya is defined as illusion or ignorance: the illusion that the self and matter are the same, that one must be associated with the other; or ignorance of the true nature of the self, which binds it to this material existence. In other philosophies, maya is thought of as cosmic energy by which the creator brings the world into being, the power of the Supreme Being with which it sports in the illusive universe produced from itself and by which it makes all beings do what they do.

Thus, although there are various interpretations among the philosophers, most Hindus would agree that the natural world in which we live as human beings was created out of a combination of primal matter, prakriti, and cosmic spirit, purusha, by means of the action of maya, the illusive cosmic energy of the creator.⁴

In their thinking about creation, the Hindus have not contented themselves merely to have discussed the methods and details of such

⁴Ibid., p. 84.

creation; they are also concerned with the apparently endless succession of time, an endlessness which is entirely compatible with their idea of an uncreated world soul. They seem to have sought to express this idea of "eternity," an eternity that applies also to the existence of the illusive creation as they know it. They speak of a succession of created universes whenever "the will of the Supreme Being is moved to create anew,"⁵ and have outlined a "time-table" composed of a succession of aeons for our present universe. They divide the existence of the present universe into four aeons, of which we are in the last. A detailed presentation of this "time-table" is given by Basak:

The first aeon was the Golden Age and lasted 4,800 divine years, or 1,728,000 human years. The second aeon was a fourth shorter, darker, and lasted 3,600 divine years or 1,296,000 human years; the third was a fourth shorter, darker, lasting 2,400 divine years or 864,000 human years. The present age, which is the darkest and briefest of all, will last 1,200 divine years, or 430,000 human years. The total of these four aeons, 12,000 divine years, that is 4,320,000 human years, makes one divine aeon of the gods. One thousand of those, or 4,320,000,000 human years, make one day for Brahma, and a similar length of time is his night. Each such daytime of Brahma is the period of existence of the universe, and each such nighttime is the period of its dissolution. This state of creation and dissolution of the world goes on until Brahma completes his hundredth year, and then he is to return to the Supreme Being from which he came.⁶

The method of dissolution of the universes that have been produced by his illusive creation is also given:

Brahma brings about the time of universal dissolution and destruction by vanishing into Himself. When He is awake, the universe is animated and in operation, and when He with reposeful mind sleeps, the universe is dormant and becomes unmanifest. This is partial dissolution, in which the world is only withdrawn into its cause, Brahma, without undergoing any change in its form or content; but

⁵Ibid., p. 88.

⁶Ibid., p. 89.

when Brahma has completed His hundredth divine year there will come the great universal dissolution, in which the universe together with Brahma Himself is withdrawn into the unmanifest prakriti of the Supreme Being, Brahma, and having lost its cosmic form it will remain there in that subtle condition until the will of the Supreme Being is moved to create anew.⁷

Man, since he is part of the illusive creation, finds himself composed of an essential self and an empirical self. His essential self is that part or manifestation of the Supreme Being that he is. Hume quotes from the Chandogya Upanishad, one of the philosophical Hindu scriptures, to show this very point: "That Soul! That are thou!"⁸ Through the action of naya the essential self has been veiled in the physical, empirical self. The relationship between the essential self and the empirical self is taken up by R. N. Dandekar in the following passages:

. . . true philosophical knowledge concerning the nature of man clearly realizes the distinction between the essential self and the empirical self. This should not be misunderstood to mean that man possesses two selves. The real self is actually one, but under certain conditions it assumes an individuality characterized by a body, mind, and intellect, and that empirical self is then mistaken for the real self. The real self is neither the doer nor the experiencer, and is in no way involved in the changes of the phenomenal world, nor governed by the laws of time, space, and causality. It is of the nature of existence-consciousness-bliss, and thus identified with the Supreme Reality. The true nature of the essential self, and its identity with the cosmic self, can be realized only in an ecstatic, mystical state which transcends the normal states of human consciousness.⁹

and in greater analytical detail:

According to the most representative Hindu view, the body to which

⁷Ibid., p. 88.

⁸Robert Ernest Hume, op. cit., p. 25.

⁹R. N. Dandekar, "The Role of Man in Hinduism," The Religion of The Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 121.

the essential self is supposed to be attached as a result of the action of original ignorance is of three kinds: physical, subtle, and causal. The physical body is said to have been produced out of the five elements of earth, water, light, wind, and ether. It serves as the abode of all the experiences relating to the external wakefulness. At the death of the individual, only the physical body perishes, that is, dissolves into the five elements out of which it was produced.

The second body is known as the subtle body because it is made up of elements far subtler than the five elements of the physical body: mind, intellect, five vital breaths, five organs of action, and five organs of knowledge. . . . Consequently the subtle body becomes equivalent to the vital, mental, and intellectual functions together. . . .

The third body which the empirical self is believed to assume is called the causal body. The presence of the causal body is indicated in the condition of deep sleep when both the physical and the subtle bodies cease to function temporarily. Furthermore, the physical and subtle bodies seem to rise from the causal body, and to dissolve into it.¹⁰

It is this identification of the essential self with the Supreme Reality and the belief that the essential self is "veiled by maya in an illusive empirical self that forms the basis for the Hindu conception of the eschatological goal of man. Since man's existence as he is in the world is the result of an illusive creation or a primal ignorance which shrouds ultimate reality in darkness, and since he is "doomed" to remain an illusory creature through an endless succession of lives, his goal is to penetrate the shroud of ignorance by an intuitive knowledge of his oneness with the Supreme Reality and by "shucking off" his illusive empirical self to realize his destiny in absorption into that Supreme Reality as a drop of water is absorbed into the ocean. Instead of an eschatological emphasis which looks to the future for the perfection and completion of individuality and purpose in an

¹⁰Ibid., p. 123.

eternal communion with a personal God as in Christianity, the Hindu looks to the future for a release from present troubles, a cessation of endless existences, and a loss of identity in the world soul. This ultimate goal is to be striven for by the Hindu in every lifetime until he can ecstatically recognize the illusive nature of present existence and realize the ultimate reality. D. S. Sarma expresses the immediate and the ultimate goal of the Hindu when he writes:

It [Hinduism] is essentially a school of metaphysics, for its aim is not merely to make man a perfect human being on earth or a happy denizen of heaven singing for all time the glories of god, but to make him one with the ultimate Reality, the eternal, universal Spirit in which there are no distinctions -- no cause and effect, no time and space, no good and evil, no pairs of opposites, and no categories of thought. This goal cannot be reached by merely improving human conduct or reforming human character; it can be attained by transforming human consciousness. Accordingly the Hindu sages, by the ethical and religious disciplines they prescribe, contemplate nothing less than that release (moksha) which comes to man through the opening up of a new realm of consciousness. The Hindu scriptures, therefore, teach that the ultimate end of human life is liberation (moksha) from that finite human consciousness of ours which makes us see all things as separate from one another and not as part of a whole. When a higher consciousness dawns upon us, we see the individual parts of the universe as deriving their true significance from the central unity of spirit. It is the beginning of this experience which the Hindu scriptures call the second birth, or the opening of the third eye or the eye of wisdom. The consummation of this experience is the more or less permanent establishment of the transcendent consciousness which is the ultimate goal of man.

Our political and social institutions, our arts and sciences, our creeds and rituals are not ends in themselves, but only means to this goal of liberation. . . . Men who have attained liberation have only contempt for the pleasures of this world; they have no attachments and are untouched by sorrow. They see the whole world of things and beings centered in one indivisible spirit, and the bliss they enjoy is inexpressible in human speech.¹¹

¹¹D. S. Sarma, "The Nature and History of Hinduism," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 3.

In another section he is still more specific in his terminology:

. . . In man the self, atman, is imprisoned in a particular body, mind, and understanding, all of which foster in him a congenital ignorance of his own infinitude and of his oneness with all beings. Moksha is liberation from this prison house of individuality.¹²
(Italics mine)

Gaius Glenn Atkins, in The Procession of the Gods, clarifies the nature of moksha or liberation:

For the Brahman existence is a delusion; once a man knows that -- as a troubled dreamer knows that he dreams -- he is free. Nothing is left to wake to, he is absorbed in the "All." The "immortality" of the last quotation [in which he had quoted from Hindu scripture] is not the immortality of the West. It is the immortality of a drop of water fallen back into the ocean. Both the Buddhist and the Brahman end in the entire dissolution of conscious personality.¹³

The process by which a man can achieve the realization of oneness with the Supreme Being is by its very nature difficult to comprehend for one who looks outside himself to God for an accomplished salvation. It is a process of self-discipline, of renunciation of physical attachments, of contemplation and meditation. Yet the mental and intellectual functions of man which are brought into play in contemplation and meditation are themselves considered a part of the illusive creation which must be rejected and from which the Hindu seeks release. But if such a process is virtually impossible for a Western Christian to understand, it is also admittedly difficult even for the Hindu devotee. Moksha is of a nature that it can be "realized or experienced only by the ecstasy of the saint. The process of self-realization is a mystical, intuitive

¹²Ibid., pp. 30 f.

¹³Gaius Glenn Atkins, The Procession of the Gods (New York: Richard R. Smith Inc., 1930), p. 239.

process rather than an intellectual process."¹⁴

Moksha, however, is the goal of every Hindu no matter which path he may choose to attain it. During the centuries of development of the Hindu religion many ways have been advocated to the devotee who seeks the final liberation. The way of Priestly Hinduism as found in the Brahmanas (1000-800 B.C.) emphasizes sacrifices; the Philosophic Hinduism of the Upanishads (800-600 B.C.) stresses knowledge, a "quiet, unstriving realization of one's real self as free from all changes, even from transmigration, and as completely absorbed in Brahma-Atman;" Legalistic Hinduism, as incorporated in the Laws of Manu (ca. 250 B.C.) sets forth a salvation to be obtained through obedience to law, particularly the law of caste; the Devotional Hinduism of the Bhagavad Gita (ca. 1 A.D.) offers salvation as the result of personal devotion to a personal deity.¹⁵ In the popular Hinduism of India today elements of each of these emphases may be found. This variance explains in part the prevalence of belief in a personal god and the great variety of gods, images, and spirits that are objects of worship. Philosophical Hinduism, with its presentation of an abstract, impersonal, neuter Supreme Being is by no means the religion of the masses. The variation in the concept of God on the part of sects and classes within Hinduism is explained away by Hindu philosophers who fit it into their picture by speaking of varying degrees of religious knowledge and capability. D. S. Sarma explains:

¹⁴Walter Eugene Clark, Indian Conceptions of Immortality (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 18.

¹⁵Robert Ernest Hume, op. cit., pp. 22-30.

If the metaphysical ideal is too advanced and abstract for a man, a theological ideal is set before him. At this stage the impersonal Absolute, Brahman, becomes a personal God, the perfect becomes the good, manifestation becomes creation, liberation becomes life in heaven, and love takes the place of knowledge. If he is not fit even for this stage, a course of ritualistic and moral action is prescribed for him. At this level the personal God is represented by an image in a temple, ritual and prayer take the place of meditation, and righteous conduct takes the place of love.

These three stages are only illustrative, not exhaustive. There are, in fact, as many stages as there are levels of culture in a vast community, and there are as many kinds of discipline. Hinduism provides for all classes of men from the highest to the lowest. In its hospitable mansions there is room for all sorts and conditions of men, from the mystic, who is very near the goal, to the illiterate peasant, who has not yet set his foot on the path. It does not thrust all men into the pigeonhole of a single unalterable creed.¹⁶

The worship of personal gods is considered the result of man's own illusive personality and his desire for concrete objects to which he can attach himself and show his devotion. Again, Sarma's description of this condition is very clear:

The common people have generally hungered for some concrete embodiments of the Divine, while the learned, who knew better, were tolerant of — and even encouraged — all popular forms of worship. Thus, in the course of time, through many steps which have been lost to us, the three important functions of the Supreme, that is, creation, protection, and destruction, came to be established in the imagination of the people as the three great gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, known as the Hindu Triad, or Trinity. . . .

Popular imagination that revels in the concrete has not stopped there. It has provided the great gods with their own appropriate heavens, their own attendants, their own vehicles, and even their own progeny. The more intelligent among the people understand the meaning of all this symbolism, but to the masses the symbols are ends in themselves. . . .

We represent the Supreme Spirit as a person because personality is the most intelligent and attractive concept of which our minds are capable. The Supreme Being is a person only in relation to ourselves and our needs. In Himself He is something above person-

¹⁶D. S. Sarma, op. cit., p. 5.

ality. When the sun blazing in the sky cannot be looked at by us, we use a smoked glass and then see it as a round, red disk. Similarly, when the Supreme Being in His glory cannot be perceived as He is, we perceive Him through our human spectacles and apprehend only some aspects of Him and think of Him as a person. Thus even the highest theism is only a sort of glorified anthropomorphism, but we cannot do without it.¹⁷

In the same vein S. Radakrishnan states in The Hindu View of Life: "The bewildering polytheism of the masses and the uncompromising monotheism of the classes are for the Hindu the expression of one and the same force at different levels."¹⁸ The encompassing nature of philosophic Hinduism is not even limited to the varieties of Hinduism itself, but reaches out to include also other religions, as is attested by Srinivasa Vasachari:

Hindu culture and the liberal Hindu goes a step further and says that the watchword of Hinduism is assimilation and not destruction and that it accepts even the truths of other religions if they fit in with the essentials of his religion. Though Hinduism is thus tolerant it is not eclectic in the sense that it takes something good from all religions and makes them a whole. It is unique because it is universal. Hinduism is thus synthetic as it discerns the truth that religion is one though religions may vary in details and that Brahman is not only in all beings, but also in their religious faith and Brahmanizing all jivas (lives) is his essential quality.¹⁹

This idea of stages of religious capability and knowledge and an intrinsic unity in the religions of all people allows the Hindu to view the variety of religious belief and practice in Hinduism itself -- even to the extent that common people see images as "ends in themselves" --

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 9-11.

¹⁸S. Radakrishnan, The Hindu View of Life (New York: Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 32.

¹⁹Srinivasa Vasachari, Essentials of Hinduism (Madras, India: Sri Visishtadvaita Sabha, 1948), Intro., p. xv.

without concern or alarm. Though to the people who are in these stages the personalization of god and the images and the ritual worship are ends in themselves the Hindu philosopher considers the stages as natural steps in man's growth in religious understanding on his way to moksha. He is aided in this outlook by his belief in not just one lifetime for the essential self, but a limitless series of reincarnations, a belief that was developed by the very fact that he saw such variance in religious understanding and practice.

CHAPTER III

REINCARNATION, AN ATTEMPT TO RELAX THE TENSION CAUSED BY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PRESENT CONDITIONS AND FUTURE HOPES

In the succeeding chapters it shall become increasingly difficult to arrange the material systematically without bringing material from one chapter into another. This is especially true in connection with this chapter on reincarnation and the chapter on karma, for the Hindu idea of reincarnation finds part of its support in the idea of karma, and karma, to the Hindu, must be understood in the light of reincarnation. It shall be attempted, however, to deal first with the greater subject of reincarnation, including the influence of karma on the doctrine, but reserving a detailed explanation of the nature of karma itself for a later chapter.

As was mentioned at the close of the preceding chapter, the Hindu idea of reincarnation seems to have developed from the observation of stages or degrees in the religious capability and knowledge of its adherents and of great variance in their social, physical, mental, and intellectual conditions and environment. The fact that people are different in spite of having the same essential self, a manifestation of the Supreme Spirit, and in spite of having the same goal of liberation from the illusive creation in which they find themselves prompts the Hindu to believe that there must be a series of births in which man is "imprisoned in physical individuality" and during which he slowly but surely progresses toward his goal of liberation and a realization of what he is. D. S. Sarma speaks of this evident difference in spite of

identical essence and goal and suggests reincarnation as the only solution to the problem:

Since, however, this transformation of human consciousness into divine consciousness (which is the high destiny to which men are called) is not possible in the course of a single life, Hinduism believes in a series of lives for each individual and the continuity of the self in all of them, either here on earth or elsewhere. Otherwise there would be no meaning in millions of human beings dying even before they are in sight of the goal, and there could be no explanation for the glaring fact that some men are, even from birth, far better equipped than others for reaching the goal.¹

Walter Eugene Clark, in interpreting Hindu conceptions of immortality also concerns himself with the problem of the essential self realizing itself and its oneness with Reality during the short span of a single lifetime. At the same time he cites the Hindu answer to the unacceptable but amusing question about the capacity of heaven for including all the dead. He states:

India cannot believe in a soul created of nothing which has only one life, a few brief years in the course of which to determine for itself an eternal heaven or an eternal hell. To it such a doctrine seems unreasonable and unethical.

Transmigration put an end to the worry concerning the possibility of a second death and solved the problem of "why that world never becomes full."²

R. N. Dandekar sees only two alternatives for the person who accepts the essential self as a manifestation of the divine and moksha as its goal. His conclusion is:

The essential self is believed to exist in all serenity and aloofness, mystically united with the Supreme Being, until as a result

¹D. S. Sarma, "The Nature and History of Hinduism," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 4.

²Walter Eugene Clark, Indian Conceptions of Immortality (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 22.

of the operation of original ignorance the self seems to enter the stage of individuality. There it is conditioned by the body-mind complex and is involved in the world of human experience. At that point there are two possibilities: either the individual through true knowledge returns at once to the original state of the essential self, that is, attains liberation, moksha; or the individual continues his pilgrimage through various rebirths until he finally reaches that goal of liberation.³

The assurance of ultimate success on the part of the soul in its efforts to attain to moksha lies in the fact that it is considered a "portion" of the ultimate Reality. This element of assurance which has forced the development of the theory of reincarnation is summed up very clearly in the statement of W. J. Wilkins:

. . . this succession of life and death goes on until finally it attains to that condition wherein it is fit to return to the Supreme Spirit whence it came, and of whom, all unconsciously, it was a part. However low in the scale a soul may be, in due time it will rise to the highest, though the process may extend over millions of years. As all have come out from God, to Him they must eventually return. In the case of some there is an uninterrupted rise from the lowest to the highest; in others a more protracted course, owing to sins which have caused them to sink in the scale of being. Every failure must be counteracted by penance and good works in succeeding lives.⁴

In his explanation of the doctrine of rebirth or reincarnation, R. N. Dandekar asserts that there are four principles involved: the permanence of the essential self, the operation of original ignorance, the possibility of union with the Supreme Being, and the doctrine of karma. The permanence of the essential self is fundamental, for without such permanence the idea of rebirth would be meaningless. The operation

³R. N. Dandekar, "The Role of Man in Hinduism," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 125.

⁴W. J. Wilkins, Modern Hinduism (London: W. Thacker and Co., 1900), p. 402.

of original ignorance is also essential, for the whole process of rebirth is made possible by original ignorance (or illusive creativity), which causes the essential self to assume individuality in birth after birth. The possibility of liberation is also basic. It answers, for the Hindu, the eternal question: Whither Mankind? It points to the goal at the end of the bridges of rebirth, a goal which, if it is impossible to achieve, makes crossing the bridges meaningless.⁵ Dandekar's own words about the possibility of liberation are:

Although in common parlance we speak of attaining moksha, it should be remembered that the state of liberation is not something different from the real nature of the self. Hindu thinkers claim that moksha is not to be reached, nor to be created, nor to be got as the result of some modification or change, nor to be got as the result of attempts to gain refinement or perfection. Liberation does not imply that the self acquires something which it does not have, or becomes something which it is not. Liberation means realizing one's own true self which is already there but not realized because of the influence of original ignorance. It is only through the accident of ignorance that man feels divested of his true nature of identity with the Supreme Being. The concept of liberation is indeed morally very significant for it elevates man by denying all creatureliness in him.⁶

The fourth principle, karma, concerns reincarnation because it deals with the problem of individual differences in the world. Simply, it is a law of moral causation in which all actions of a man are considered to have an effect on his character, for good or evil. Since men are different in regard to environment, ability, mental capacity, etc., already at birth, it is thought that the differences must be the effect of causes in previous lives. Since the effects of certain actions do not fructify within the span of an individual's life, they must then carry

⁵R. N. Dandekar, op. cit., pp. 125-8.

⁶Ibid., p. 126.

over into another life and help to shape the individual's position in it.

The theory of reincarnation, once accepted, permits the construction of an amazingly imaginative and detailed system of its operation, and the Hindu philosophers have not been slothful in accomplishing this. Their scriptures and the teaching of their gurus (teachers) outline a very intricate mode of operation for reincarnation and its determining factor, karma. Their system keeps as its ultimate goal the release from illusive physical existence, but, at the same time, incorporates the same "illusive" physical properties in all the stages of transmigration (another term used for reincarnation in which the soul is thought of as "migrating" from body to body at death and at birth). Wilkins observes: "At death the soul takes to itself another body, like the one that is burned, by means of which it can enjoy the rewards or suffer the penalties of the actions of life."⁷ Included in the system is an elaborate presentation of the heavens and the hells of the personal gods, the deities, and the forefathers, all of which are a part of the illusive creation, a product of original ignorance, and hence not the final goal. These intermediate places and the conditions of men in them are discussed in the next chapter, with selected examples given in detail.

After the soul spends a period of time in one of the many heavens or hells, original ignorance again exerts itself on the soul and it is born again in a physical body. The type of body which the soul assumes depends on the actions of previous lives; they must all have their con-

⁷Wilkins, op. cit., p. 414.

sequence in determining the composition and the character of the new physical body, and the life that is to be lived in it. This is the action of karma, the idea that forces the belief in reincarnation. Some of the Hindu teachers have developed a very definite plan for the operation of karma in reincarnation. Wilkins outlines one of these:

Manu declares, without any hesitation, in what form a soul will come who is guilty of certain actions. In order to make his teaching clear, it will be necessary to give his views of man's organism rather fully, and also his classification of morals.

Actions are of three kinds --- mental, verbal, and corporeal; and they bear good or evil fruit according as they are good or evil. . . . As the acts are either mental, verbal, or corporeal, so are the punishments for those acts. For corporeal sins a man will assume after death a vegetable or mineral form; for verbal, the form of a bird or a beast; and for mental, the lowest of human conditions.

There are three qualities --- viz. goodness, darkness, and passion, one or other of which is the prevailing character of every soul. Goodness is true knowledge; darkness, gross ignorance; and passion all emotions of desire or aversion. The soul in which goodness prevails is given to the study of the Scriptures, devotion, corporeal purity, command over the organs, meditation on the Divine Spirit. The soul in which darkness prevails is given to covetousness, indolence, avarice, detraction, atheism, a habit of soliciting favors, and inattention to necessary business. The soul in which passion prevails is given to possess interested motives for acts of religion or morality, perturbation of mind, selfish gratification.

These qualities determine the position the possessors of them must occupy in their following birth. "Souls endued with goodness attain always the state of deities; those with passion the condition of men, and those immersed in darkness the nature of beasts." Each of these classes is again subdivided into three minor classes, and according to the amount of force of the prevailing quality will their position be higher or lower in the grade into which they are born. The gradation of these classes is given as follows:-

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|--------------|----------|--|
| I. Darkness. | Class 1. | Vegetable and mineral substance, worms, insects, and reptiles. |
| | " | 2. Elephants, horses, men of mlecha (i.e. non-Hindu) nations. |
| | " | 3. Dancers and singers, birds and deceitful men, and savages. |
| II. Passion. | " | 1. Actors. Those addicted to gaming and drinking. |

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|----------------|----------|---|
| | Class 2. | Kings, warriors, controversialists. |
| | " | 3. Heavenly musicians and servants of gods. |
| III. Goodness. | " | 1. Hermits, religious mendicants, Brahmans, and lower gods. |
| | " | 2. Sacrificers, sages, deities of the lower heaven. |
| | " | 3. Brahma, the genius of virtue. ⁸ |

In spite of the fact that they believe that the same soul carries over from life to life -- indeed, they maintain that "although the physical body perishes at death, individuality does not end"⁹ -- and that the inexorable action of karma determines the conditions of rebirth and is expressed in innate tendencies of character in the new life, the Hindus are not concerned with the fact that there is no apparent consciousness of previous existence. According to Wilkins, however, a belief in retribution for deeds performed in past lives without any recollection of the deeds or the lives might produce a tendency to be careless in morals. He states:

The belief in a succession of lives for each individual is universal among the Hindus, though they freely admit that they bring with them no memory of their past experience. . . . If nothing specially sinful can be remembered in adversity the reflection comes that the trouble must be a punishment for sin committed in a former birth. This idea must tend to make them careless in morals. Their present condition may be a reward for good conduct, or a punishment for evil. Who can tell?¹⁰

Of course, the Hindu may answer that he can always look to the future, to better lives as the result of present good, but this view, it would seem, does little to comfort or encourage a Hindu in present distress. This is especially telling when the "maze" of limitless rebirths ahead

⁸Ibid., pp. 414 f.

⁹R. N. Dandekar, op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁰W. J. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 417.

of him is considered. The original ignorance is so difficult to expel, especially since it cannot be done by gaining knowledge as we know it, that Hindu Scriptures speak of millions of lifetimes through which a man must pass if he has slipped below the category of human existence and of hundreds of thousands of lifetimes which must be spent in human existence before moksha can be achieved.¹¹ It would seem, then, that the possibilities for his advancement would appear so meager and remote that the Hindu would despair of attaining to moksha and live a self-centered life, without thought for gods or men. This lack of assuring power and the tendency to lead to despair is clearly evident in the following statement by Wilkins:

In conversation with learned and ignorant, priest and people, when speaking of the future, I have received only one answer to the question, What will be your condition in your next life? With sorrow and pain they reply, "God knows; we cannot say. If our present life is good, we shall be happy; if evil, we shall be miserable;" but whether they have reason for hope or fear, they are unable to say.¹²

Since he has no consciousness of previous lives, is it unthinkable to suppose that he might look to future lives almost as though a stranger will be living them for him? This idea is hinted at in the little book, Popular Hinduism, in which the author lists a number of objections to the idea of transmigration. One of his points is: "By transmigrations persons virtually become new beings, so that they are in reality punished for the actions of others."¹³

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., pp. 417 f.

¹³J. Murdock, Popular Hinduism (London: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1897), p. 63.

In its system of reincarnation, Hinduism does not take up the question of the beginnings of reincarnation: how or why original ignorance became operative. Dandekar expresses the Hindu attitude toward this question in these words:

The question as to how or why the original ignorance becomes operative is by its very nature philosophically inadmissible. Thinking can take place only after the creation of minds, which come into being through the operation of original ignorance. When before the operation of original ignorance there existed only one Ultimate Reality, who could have been the thinker and what could have been thought?¹⁴

To the Christian who has wrestled with the problem of the origin of evil and has concluded that the only possible solution lies in placing the origin of evil in the perversion of good by man himself, this does not give much satisfaction.

Allied with this lack of explanation as to the origin of evil (in the case of Hinduism, original ignorance which causes reincarnation) is an apparent contradiction in Hindu philosophy. On the one hand it teaches an absolute spiritual progression of the universe toward Ultimate Reality; yet on the other hand it speaks of ages in the history of the world's existence and points out that the ages are becoming shorter and darker¹⁵ as "righteousness" is becoming more and more uncommon. Its sages speak picturesquely of the "cow of righteousness," which once stood firmly on "all four," as standing precariously on one leg in the present age.¹⁶ How can the two ideas be compatible?

¹⁴R. N. Dandekar, op. cit., p. 122.

¹⁵Radhagovinda Basak, "The Hindu Concept of the Natural World," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 83.

¹⁶D. S. Sarma, op. cit., p. 15.

Undoubtedly, the average Hindu, who believes in a personal God or worships images, is concerned mainly with what shall become of him immediately after death. Wilkins, in speaking of the believed effectiveness of ritual and ceremonialism, says:

When a man performs acts of worship with the object of obtaining some special benefit, such as rain, or reward in heaven, he gains only what he seeks -- a temporary blessing, and a temporary residence in heaven; but when he has no special boon to gain, and moved only by a desire to please the gods, frequently performs ceremonial acts of religion, he too will be rewarded with the highest bliss and be forever exempt from a body, the source of all ills.¹⁷

A desire to gain some special benefit has been the motivation of religious service in every religion developed by man. Statements such as Sarma's: "The more intelligent among the people understand the meaning of all this symbolism, but to the masses the symbols are ends in themselves,"¹⁸ would seem to support an idea that the attempts at worship and service and appeasement on the part of the average Hindu are motivated by a concern for present conditions and future lives rather than "only by a desire to please the gods" or with the highly abstract concept of moksha in view. Moksha, it appears, is a very remote, almost unachievable idea; reincarnation and the individual's condition in the next life, while also remote at times, are of much more immediate concern.

¹⁷W. J. Wilkins, op. cit., p. 416.

¹⁸D. S. Sarma, op. cit., p. 10.

CHAPTER IV

HEAVEN AND HELL, INTERMEDIATE PLACES IN HINDU ESCHATOLOGY

The belief in realms of the dead, worlds in which the souls of the dead exist and enjoy the fruits of their good works or suffer the punishments for their evil works, is generally accepted in Hinduism. However, it must be noted at the outset of a study of such places that the belief in them is not fundamental to the Hindu. There are Hindus on both ends of the scale of religious knowledge and understanding who do not accept them. In the first chapter of his book, Popular Hinduism, O'Malley explains the Hindu belief in heavens and hells. He also mentions these exceptions to the rule:

For example, in Madras, in parts of which orthodox Hinduism has not yet displaced animism, the idea that virtue will be rewarded and wickedness punished in some future state is hardly to be found as part of the religion of a large section of the population, while even the hope of heaven and fear of hell have very little vogue except among Brahmans and the higher castes. In other parts of India the beliefs about heaven and hell are indeterminate. Some have merely a hazy idea that there is a future life to be spent in some kind of heaven or hell according to one's deserts, the good being blissfully happy and the wicked suffering torment. Some think that a man remains in one or the other until he has completed the period to which he is entitled by his deeds in the past and is then reborn, others that the soul is reborn immediately after, or some time after, death without going either to heaven or hell. Throughout her three years' residence in a Punjab village Miss Young never heard anyone formulate any conception of what his or her state might be after death, and no one had any idea of personal immortality.¹

A material heaven of this kind does not, however, form part of the creed of deeper thinkers, to whom the final consummation is the union of the soul with God in spiritual bliss and consequent free-

¹L. S. S. O'Malley, Popular Hinduism (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), pp. 31 f.

dom from rebirths.²

In general, however, the existence of the heavens and halls of the gods and man's placement into one of them for a period of time is accepted by the orthodox Hindu. Such a belief fits easily into his scheme of things and supports his ideas of reincarnation and of karma.

In explaining the conditions of the existence of a man in this state, Hinduism makes use of its philosophical description of the composition of the empirical self. As was pointed out in Chapter Two, the body is considered to be composed of three kinds: the physical, the subtle, and the causal. The physical body is that which man inhabits during life; it perishes at death. The subtle body, "the vital, mental, and intellectual functions,"³ continues after death. According to R. N. Dandekar:

The most important role of the subtle body is played in connection with the transmigration of the self from one body to another, for it is believed that the subtle body serves as the medium through which the inexorable law of karma operates. Although the physical body perishes at death, individuality does not end. Individuality ends only through moksha, release into final identity with the Supreme Reality. Death is only a junction where the self changes the body and perhaps the route of the journey. . . . The subtle body is the medium by which the individual changes from one physical body to another.⁴

In interpreting this same point in Hinduism, Wilkins speaks with less subtlety, but perhaps, more understandably as a result. He asserts: "At death, the soul takes to itself another body, like the one that is

²Ibid., p. 12.

³R. N. Dandekar, "The Role of Man in Hinduism," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 123.

⁴Ibid.

burned, by means of which it can enjoy the rewards or suffer the penalties of the actions of life."⁵

The importance with which the average Hindu views this intermediate existence after death is attested by the fact that he has an elaborate set of rituals for the dying and for the dead,⁶ all of which call for meticulous observance. The scope and intent of these rituals is clarified by Wilkins in the following passage:

The first set of funeral ceremonies is adapted to effect, by means of oblations, the re-embodiment of the soul of the deceased, after burning his corpse. The apparent scope of the second set is to raise his shade from this world (where it would else, according to the notions of the Hindus, continue to roam among demons and evil spirits) up to heaven, and there deify him, as it were, among the names of departed ancestors.⁷

Just how important these rituals are considered to be, and hence how important also the effects hoped for, may be seen from the fact that the survivors of an individual continue to perform rituals even after he has been buried for some time. Wilkins observes:

If these rites are neglected, the soul of the departed cannot enter into the company, nor enjoy the blessedness of the Pitris, or ancestors, who are made happy by the offerings of their descendants. . . .

Not only in connection with funerals, but on joyous occasions, especially at weddings, offerings are made to the deceased. By means of these the dead are supposed to share in the festivities of the living members of their family.⁸

The Hindus explain that although they have no real evidence of the exis-

⁵W. J. Wilkins, Modern Hinduism (London: W. Thacker and Co., 1900), p. 414.

⁶Ibid., described in detail pp. 369-401.

⁷Ibid., p. 393.

⁸Ibid., pp. 396, 394.

tence of other worlds, the belief in them is not incompatible with their philosophic system. In fact, they assert that because of their philosophic system with its belief in the essential self, reincarnation, and the operation of karma they are forced into acceptance of the existence of such other worlds. Basak declares:

Their strong belief in the doctrine of karma and a revolving cycle of existences determined by good and bad actions in this life has led them to conceive of many other worlds where men might be born after death to experience the fruits of their moral and immoral deeds. The Upanishads clearly state that a man's acquired knowledge, his faculty of impressions, and his karma (which is made up of the results of actions in life), follow him at death and cause his rebirth. The combination of those factors causes him, in strict justice, to be born in one of the other worlds, either the world of the gods, the world of Brahma the creator, or the world of Brahman the Highest Being.⁹

The "worlds" mentioned in the preceding quotation are but a general classification of the "innumerable worlds in space." Basak continues with a more detailed explanation of the system of worlds:

The number of worlds is conveniently counted as three or fourteen, but they are only representative of the innumerable worlds in space as part of the vast universe. The conventional three worlds are known as the earth, the sky in which the luminaries move about, and the heavens; in post-Vedic times the three were often referred to as the heavens, the land of the mortals, and the nether world. The fourteen worlds are usually counted as seven rising from the earth and seven descending into the nether regions.

The nether regions are described in some Puranas as having lands of various colors where dwell many a demon, Yaksha, and Naga. After visiting these nether worlds the sage Narada is said once to have returned to heaven and reported to the gods that those places were more beautiful than the heavenly ones. Even the recluses are attracted, he said, by the beautiful appearance of the daughters of the denizens of those regions. The sun's rays, though shining there, do not heat the people and the moon's rays, though giving light, do not make them cold. The demons enjoy excellent food and

⁹Radha Govinda Basak, "The Hindu Concept of the Natural World," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 90.

drink, and time glides imperceptibly for them. The great serpent Sesa resides there, holding the earth on his thousand heads and causing earthquakes when ye yams.

The fourth world, 88,000,000 miles above the earth, is the residence of the sages who deserve to stay for an aeon. Above the fourth world is the world of the sons of Brahma; above that is the world of the companions of Brahma, and finally, in the seventh heaven, which is 1,848,000,000 miles above the earth, is the world where the immortal beings live. The demigods and ascetics live in the space between the earth and the sun. All these worlds re-enter the body of the first originator at the time of the universal dissolution.¹⁰

Each of the worlds is described in minute detail by the devotees of the sect which promotes its belief. Thus the world of Yama, who is worshipped as Death and the lord of the spirit-world, is described in the Padma Purana:

At the extremity of the earth southward, floating on the waters, is Sangryamani, the residence of Yama, the judge of the dead, and of his recorder, Chitragupta, and his messengers.

Those who perform works of merit are led to Yama's palace along the most excellent roads, in some parts of which the heavenly courtesans are seen dancing and singing, and gods and heavenly choristers are heard chanting the praises of other gods; in others, showers of flowers fall from heaven. There are houses containing cooling water and excellent food, pools of water covered with flowers, and trees which afford fragrance and shade. The gods are seen riding on horses or elephants, or carried in palanquins and chariots, some of whom, from the glory emanating from their bodies, illumine the ten quarters of the world. Yama receives the good with much affection, and feasting them with excellent food, thus addresses them: "Ye are truly meritorious in your deeds; ye are wise; by the power of your merits ascend to an excellent heaven. He who, born in the world, performs meritorious actions is my father, brother, friend."

The wicked have 699,000 miles to travel to the palace of Yama to receive judgment. In some places they pass over a pavement of fire; in others, the earth in which their feet sink is burning hot; or they pass over burning sands, sharp stones; also burning hot showers of brass instruments, burning cinders, scalding water, and stones, fall upon them. Burning winds scorch their bodies; now

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 90 f.

they fall into hidden wells, or pass through narrow passages in which snakes lie concealed. Sometimes they are enveloped in darkness, their road winding through trees with thorny leaves; or they have to walk over broken pots, bones, putrefying flesh, or sharp spikes; whilst tigers, jackals, giants, etc., beset them. They travel naked, their hair is disordered, their throats and lips are parched, and their bodies are covered with blood and dirt. As they walk some are wailing, some weeping; horror is depicted on every countenance. Some are dragged along by leathern thongs round their necks, waists, or hands; some are dragged by their hair, ears, or feet; others, again, are carried with their head and feet fastened together.

On arriving at the palace they behold Yama clothed with terror, 2½0 miles in height, his eyes distended like a lake of water, with rays issuing from his purple body. His voice is loud as thunder, the hairs of his body are as long as palm-trees, a flame proceeds from his mouth. The noise of his breathing is greater than the roaring of the tempest; his teeth are exceedingly long; and his nails like the fan for winnowing corn. In his right hand he holds an iron club, his garment is formed of animals' skins, and he rides on a terrific buffalo. Chitragupta also appears as a terrible monster, and makes a noise like that of a warrior about to rush into battle. Sounds terrible as thunder are heard, as punishments suited to offences committed are ordered on the offenders.

Addressing the criminals before him, Yama says, "Did you not know that I am placed above all, to award happiness to the good and punishment to the wicked? Have you never given your minds to religion? Today with your own eyes you shall see the punishment of the wicked. From age to age stay in these hills. You have pleased yourselves with sinful practices, endure now the torments due to these sins. What will weeping avail you?" Yama next calls on Chitragupta, the recorder, to examine into the offences of the criminals, who demands the names of the witnesses; let them give their evidence in our presence. Yama, smiling, though full of rage, commands the Sun, Moon, Wind, Fire, the Heaven, Earth, Waters, Day, Night, Morning, and Evening, and Religion, to appear against the prisoners, who, hearing their evidence are struck dumb, and remain trembling and stupefied with fear. Yama then, gnashing his teeth, beats the prisoners with his iron club till they roar with anguish; after which he drives them to different hells.¹¹

O'Malley goes even further into the torments suffered in the different hells after judgment by Yama. He summarizes:

Horrible are the punishments devised by oriental imagination.

¹¹W. J. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 405-407.

According to the offences of which they have been guilty, they may be despatched to a hell of darkness, of fire, of burning oil, or of molten lead, or plunged head downwards into a sea of mud. They may be torn by dogs, or gored by pigs, or have their eyes plucked out by vultures, or be transfixed by spears and arrows, or be flung down from trees and rocks hundreds of miles high.¹²

These examples of the conditions in the Hindu heavens and hells could be multiplied many times, but that will be unnecessary here. The exquisite description of the horrors or of the blessings are not so important for our purpose than the fact that such places of reward or punishment are believed to exist, and are an integral part of Hindu reincarnation. Many religions have believed in the existence of other worlds in which the spirits of the dead enjoy material blessings or suffer material punishments, but Hinduism's emphasis -- at least in its philosophical presentation -- is not the existence in other worlds, but the return of the soul to the present world in reincarnation. The heavens and the hells are merely intermediate places necessary in their system for the change of the soul from body to body, either higher or lower in the scale of life, as the result of the inexorable karma. This point is noted by O'Malley when he says of the Hindu hells:

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 the earth and starts a new existence.¹³

What is more important than any imaginative interpretations of the life after death is the determining factor of that life and of any possible

¹²L. S. S. O'Malley, op. cit., p. 11.

¹³Ibid.

future existences, karma, by which the Hindu's position is determined, living or dead.

CHAPTER V

KARMA, THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN HINDU ESCHATOLOGY

Belief in karma is one of the common beliefs of Hinduism.¹ No matter how the philosophies of the many sects of Hinduism may disagree regarding other points, almost all of them accept karma as a basic influence in the make-up of man. The definitions of karma are many as far as wording is concerned, but all of them have to do with the law of cause and effect as it is found in nature. Perhaps the clearest and most meaningful definition is supplied in "The Nature and History of Hinduism" by D. S. Sarma. He writes:

The law of karma is a moral law corresponding to the physical law of causation. Just as the law of cause and effect works in the physical world, the law of karma works in the moral world. When we put our fingers into a fire, they are burned, and similarly, whenever a man steals, his moral nature is injured. The more often he steals, the more thievish he becomes. On the other hand, whenever a man helps his neighbor his moral nature is improved. The more often he helps, the more beneficent he becomes.

The law of karma is only an extension beyond the present life of this invariable sequence that we see in this life -- for the law of karma postulates that every individual has to pass through a series of lives, either on earth again or somewhere else, before he obtains moksha or liberation, and it further explains that what we are at present is the result of what we thought and did in the past life and that what we shall be in a future life will be the result of what we think and do now. We carry with us our own past. The mental and moral tendencies that the soul acquires in a particular life as a result of its motives and actions work themselves out in suitable surroundings in the next. New sets of tendencies are acquired which again seek a suitable environment in which they work themselves out. This process goes on through several lives, the individual sliding upward or downward in the moral scale until his

¹D. S. Sarma, "The Nature and History of Hinduism," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 13.

soul obtains liberation.²

That the theory of reincarnation has found its source and its main pillar of support in the doctrine of karma may be clearly seen in the second paragraph of the above quotation. The firm belief that every action is the result of a cause and must in turn lead to an effect has prompted the whole development of the idea of a series of lives in order to give time for and continuity to the workings of cause and effect.

The law of karma was first introduced into Hinduism during the age of the Upanishads³ (ca. 800-600 B.C.) and has been continued and developed ever since. In it the Hindu is certain that he has found the only adequate explanation for the variance in the conditions of men and for the presence of evil in the world.⁴

In his book, Doctrine of Karma, Swami Abhedananda goes into detail to explain the Hindu karma to American readers. The book is composed of a series of lectures which Swami Abhedananda delivered to American and European audiences during a tour of the two continents. In "breaking down" the law of karma he made use of the following divisions and explained each as summarized:

1. The law of causation.

The law of causation is the most universal of all laws. All the forces of nature must obey it and none can transcend it. It is, in

²Ibid., p. 22.

³Ibid., p. 31.

⁴R. N. Dandekar, "The Role of Man in Hinduism," The Religion of the Hindus, edited by Kenneth W. Morgan (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1953), p. 127.

brief, the fact that no event can occur without having a definite cause behind it. Similarly, no event can occur without being a cause which will produce its own effect. There is, then, in nature a chain of causes and effects; each cause is the effect of a previous cause, and each effect becomes in turn a cause.

The same principle is applicable to man and his bodily and mental action. No action of his can be conceived of as not being the effect of some previous cause; nor can it help being a cause which will produce an effect. Karma, as the law of causation, is both cause and effect in man; everything he does or thinks or wills can be traced back to a cause in his past, and everything he does, thinks, or wills, being both cause and effect, will also effect his future life or lives. Nothing is so trivial or insignificant as not to have had a cause or, in its turn, to effect a result. Thus, "under the sway of this all-pervading law of karma, there is no room left for chance or accident," nor is there room for supernatural powers or agencies.

The results of the various causes can be classified as good, evil, or mixed, but in this world of relativity the classifications are never purely defined. Ordinarily, a result must be judged by the preponderance of good or evil in it to determine whether the cause was good or evil.

2. The law of action and reaction.

This law, included in the law of causation, implies simply that like produces like. It shows that "each effect is latent in the cause and each cause is latent in the effect." It is used to explain why a character is good or bad, and places the responsibility for character

defects on the individual, for each defect (and, it must be added, each good quality) of character is the result of past actions. "Our present character is the resultant of our past and our future will be determined by our present acts." This phase of the law of karma vitiates the "hypothesis of predestination and grace;" it makes man a free agent who can create his own destiny. "What we call rewards or punishments of God are nothing but the reactions of our own mental and physical actions."

3. The law of compensation.

The law of compensation is this: "A cause must always produce an effect of similar nature both in quality and quantity. . . ." Just as there is no profit or loss, but always perfect balance and harmony in the interaction between the phenomena of nature, so in the mental, intellectual, moral, and spiritual planes, an effect is never out of balance with its cause and a cause will always bring about an effect of equal quality and quantity.

4. The law of retribution.

Similar to the law of compensation, it deals with the commensurate effect on the doer of a wrong action. Since the effect is latent in the cause it may be said that the "wicked act and its result or reaction which we call punishment grow on the same stem." Every wrong action brings its retribution causally first in the inner nature of the soul and is later felt in external circumstances. Thus the law of karma maintains that the "virtuous reward themselves and the sinners punish themselves by their own thoughts and deeds."⁵

⁵Sri Sivananda, Doctrines of Karma (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta-Math, 1944), pp. 3-42.

R. N. Dandekar, in his treatment of the subject of karma, mentions and "disproves" several objections that have been raised against it.

The objections and his refutations are as follows:

One objection which is likely to be raised against the doctrine of karma is that if each existence is the result of the actions in the previous existence, then how could there be a first birth in the series of rebirths? Such a question is philosophically inadmissible, according to Hindu thought, for the world of existence is beginningless. It is impossible to visualize an individual without antecedents. If the essential self were unaffected by any antecedents, it would not be born at all and thus would not assume individuality.

A second objection is perhaps more pertinent. We may accept the belief that the series of births is beginningless, and that the individual's past actions condition his present life, and that the individual himself is accountable for what his is in his present life -- but do not the individual's past deeds now become, in a sense, extraneous forces so far as his present is concerned? The past, even though it is his past, is already determined, and it determines his present, thereby leaving him no freedom to shape it as he would like. He cannot say that he will see that his actions are such that they will lead to a better life next time for the simple reason that his actions in this life are not really his, they are predetermined. Such an objection is met by the Hindu thinkers by postulating a twofold consummation of all actions. First, every action produces its direct results which determine our present body and the condition directly relating to and consequent upon our birth. Concerning these we have no choice; we must accept them as they are ordained. But our past deeds also produce indirect results in the form of innate tendencies which prompt us to act one way or another. It is necessary to emphasize that these innate tendencies prompt but do not compel us to act in a particular manner, thus affording ample scope for initiative and self-determination on the part of the individual. Therefore, although the individual's birth and initial environment are predetermined, he has before him the gratifying prospect of being able to master his innate tendencies which are the mainsprings of all his actions.

Thus we see that the doctrine of karma includes within itself the possibility of moral progress. In spite of the initial conditioning of our present life, we can employ every moment in it to make ourselves whatever we wish to be. And when it is realized that the present life represents not the whole term allotted to an individual but only a stage in the soul's progress towards its goal, even that partial predetermination does not matter much. Teaching as it does that in the ultimate analysis the individual is himself the architect of his own life, this doctrine of karma does not preclude free will, which is the very basis of ethical conduct, nor does it countenance such a thing as cruel fate or an unjust god. Though

apparently a blind mechanical force, karma, it must be remembered, essentially represents the cosmic power of righteousness which forever encourages man on his march toward a higher spiritual goal.

One final difficulty arises concerning the law of karma. How can karma be reconciled with the spiritual goal of liberation, moksha? Do not even good actions produce their results and thus keep the individual involved in life? The Bhagavad Gita has shown a satisfactory way out of this difficulty. It teaches that man's actions attain their consummation in the form of direct results and innate tendencies only if he performs those actions with a feeling of attachment for their results. If, however, he acts, as he must by the force of the law of karma, but at the same time acts in a spirit of passionless detachment toward the fruits of his actions, he will be leaving the road open for the soul's progress toward ultimate release, moksha.⁶

The sentiments expressed by Dandekar in his refutation of the final objection to karma are duplicated by Swami Abhedananda in the final portion of his book, Doctrine of Karma. The Swami is a practitioner of that type of yoga called Karma Yoga, and after having explained the nature of karma in the initial chapters he proceeds to show how the knowledge of the doctrine is used in the practice of Karma Yoga, or the philosophy of work. He states that a man is inescapably forced into constant action by the working of karma and that in his actions, whether significant or insignificant, mental or physical or spiritual, he is inescapably acted upon by karma.⁷ However, here, too, the distinction between the man who is involved in the illusive, physical existence and the essential self, the atman, which is one with the Supreme Reality is brought into play. Karma's influence is felt by the man who is veiled by original ignorance and accepts his illusive physical being as real-

⁶R. N. Dandekar, op. cit., pp. 129 f.

⁷Swami Abhedananda, op. cit., pp. 78-84.

ity, without realizing that his essential self, "the inactive Knower of actions,"⁸ the manifestation of the atman of the universe, is the only ultimate reality. When this distinction is recognized and experienced by an individual he may detach himself from physical desires and ambitions and separate himself from selfish motives for working and thus achieve the freedom which is his through such a realization of his true Self. In the words of the Swami, the law of karma can be broken and freedom be gained "by working for work's sake and not to fulfil selfish desires."⁹ Just what he means by the phrase "working for work's sake" is explained by the Swami in the following:

In India every individual life is divided into four periods, each of which is fixed for paying off debts to some portion of the world -- to parents, society, spiritual teachers, or to our own higher Self. The debt which we owe to this higher Self can be paid by realizing our true nature, by knowing who and what we are in reality, and by emancipating the soul from the bondage of nature as well as from the irresistible law of Karma, which keeps it on the phenomenal plane. . . . If we keep this idea ever in our minds as we work in the family, in society, in the state, we shall work without seeking any result, whether personal glory, wealth, or even moral satisfaction; and all work performed in this spirit will purify our souls from selfishness, hatred, jealousy, and anger. . . . We shall no longer work through attachment to the fruits of our labor, and shall, in consequence, play our parts without reaping the results of sorrow, suffering, and disappointments, which too often come when the motive of our effort is a selfish one. Then also shall we be in no danger of wrong doing.

. . . The moment, however, that we realize that this body is a part of the universal body, that this intellect is a part of the cosmic intellect, that the knower of the mind, the senses, and body is not any one of these, but stands outside, and that this knower is our true Self; then we let the body work with the full consciousness that we are neither actor, worker, nor doer, and we remain untouched by the consequences of our actions. The one essential thing is never to forget that the work done by mind and body is in reality not performed by the true self, but by nature.

⁸Ibid., p. 93.

⁹Ibid., p. 87.

. . . Then we can let our hands and feet, our bodies and intellects, remain constantly active, without thinking of results or forgetting that we are not in reality the actors.

. . . He who can thus act is free from all the laws which bind the ordinary individual. His whole work is for mankind. All that he does is a free offering to the world. He has no interests in results; yet he works tirelessly, and through his labours his mind and heart become purified. Then on the mirror of his pure heart reflects the divine Spirit dwelling within him; and he feels that his mind and body are merely the instruments through which the Divine will is manifesting its power. Of such an one the Bhagavad Gota tells us: "Having abandoned attachment for the fruits of action, ever content, dependent on none, though engaged in actions, nothing at all does he do."¹⁰

In speaking of the motivation for this "work for work's sake" the Swami is careful to point out that such work cannot spring from any selfish desires for good for oneself, nor yet from a feeling of duty or a desire to please others (and so reap the rewards of karma). Such motivation would be the very antithesis of his contention that works must be performed, "having abandoned attachment for the fruits of action."¹¹ It would involve the doer in the cyclic action of karma, the very thing which he seeks to escape. The only true motivation is love, which "frees from all duties, from all bondage, from all attachment to physical nature."¹² The Swami explains:

The final end of duty is freedom and Divine love, and with the awakening of this love comes all knowledge. Divine love and Divine wisdom are one. They unfold simultaneously and lead to God-consciousness. The moment that a man loves all living creatures as he loves himself, he has known the Self of all and has risen to the realm of God-consciousness; he is no longer on the human plane. Divine love means expression of the feeling of oneness. . . . In thus seeing oneness, he performs his highest duty, becomes one

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 89-91, 95, 97-8.

¹¹Ibid., p. 98.

¹²Ibid., p. 119.

with God, and declares as did Jesus the Christ, "I and my Father are one." . . . The universe is one ocean of Divinity, and all fear of death and punishment must vanish with the realization of this Truth. The real Self never suffers. It is already divine and free from birth and death. . . . He who has understood the one supreme duty and fulfilled that, has reached freedom and gained Divine love and Divine wisdom on this earth. He transcends all the law of Karma, the law of compensation and of retribution, and enters into the abode of everlasting existence, intelligence, and bliss.¹³

Karma, when thus fitted into the picture of the Hindu philosophical ideal of realization of oneness of the Self with the Supreme Reality, has little to do with determining man's end. It itself is a part of the illusive creation which separates mankind from this realization. As such it must not be considered either a good or a bad thing in the minds of the Hindus. It is not a means by which they can obtain the ultimate goal of self-realization or moksha. It is merely a statement of the way things are in the illusive creation; it is an impersonal, unchangeable law that controls and shapes that illusive creation. It is something that must be recognized as a part of maya and transcended by the soul if it is to attain to moksha.

However, within the "illusive creation," in which every Hindu realizes himself to be, it is of eschatological importance. It is the determining factor in the individual's cycle of reincarnation. It determines progress or regress along the path toward spirituality on the basis of past actions. Its action offers the Hindu the chance for progress by holding before him the law of action and reaction. His belief in karma assures him that every good action he performs will improve his character and give him a chance to begin the next life in a better

¹³Ibid., pp. 121-4.

environment, under better conditions, and with noble tendencies of character. Though karma is of no immediate help in achieving moksha, it does hold out the hope that even within the illusive creation he may improve, until, after many, many reincarnations, he may eventually arrive at the state in which he may achieve a true realization of his Self and thus attain to moksha.

Any study of the doctrine of karma must take into account the fact that it is a doctrine that has been developed by man. It is the result of his attempts to find the spiritual truth of the universe by looking at himself and at the universe, without considering or accepting God's own revelation of this Truth. It is not surprising, then, that karma teaches what it does. It is the only possible logically constructed view that man may take toward the problem of good and evil. It appears in one form or another in every natural religion, and is built on the logical contention that evil is received in return for evil action and good is received in return for good action. The doctrine of karma has been developed more highly and founded more securely in psychology by the Hindus, perhaps, than any other doctrine of works, but it does not escape categorization as a doctrine of works. It is a religious belief that encourages and fosters ideas of work-righteousness.

There is much psychological truth in the law of karma, for evil is its own retribution. Also the Christian recognizes the fact that God punishes sin with sin. Nor is God a vigilant executor of His Law. As in the Hindu explanation of karma, no executor is needed. God's Law is self-executive; a sinner is punished by the very fact that he has deviated from the holy life prescribed in the Law and thus has defiled and

corrupted his character. However, the contention on the other end of the scale of karma, that good actions produce good results in man and improve his character, while perfectly logical to natural man, is unquestionably false and misleading to men who have been brought to see God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. Such a contention for work righteousness is the direct antithesis of God's revelation of grace in Christ for a fallen mankind whose will has been enslaved by evil and who can choose only evil. Christ lived, died, and rose again to seek and to save those who could in no way help themselves. They were conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity,¹⁴ and the imagination of their hearts was evil from their youth.¹⁵ The Word of revelation is clear when it says that man is dead in sin and his only chance for quickening is through the gracious action of God's Holy Spirit.¹⁶ To contend, then, that by doing good can improve himself, his conditions, and his character, is to say that an evil tree can bring forth good fruit, a contention of natural man which is decidedly refuted by Jesus Christ.¹⁷

An acceptance of karma, in addition to prompting a trust in man's own works, leads also, it would seem, to fatalism, doubt, and despair. The fact that a man believes that he is what he is as a result of previous lives -- of which he has no conscious remembrance -- would lead him fatalistically to accept present conditions "because he must deserve

¹⁴Ps. 51:5.

¹⁵Gen. 8:21.

¹⁶Eph. 2:1.

¹⁷Matt. 7:18.

them as a result of past actions." The fatalistic view with which the life of an individual is looked upon may be clearly seen from the fact that the Hindus believe that on the sixth day after the birth of a child Vidhata, a form of Brahma, comes and writes upon the child's forehead the main events of its life. The parents of a new-born child go to great ceremonial lengths in their efforts to appease Vidhata that he may be propitious and arrange a life of prosperity for their child. The belief carries on throughout the life of the individual, for the phrase "It is written on my forehead" is often used by the Hindu to explain a painful experience.¹⁸ With such an outlook on life, doubt of one's ability to change it and despair of ever overcoming the influence of karma and achieving moksha must eventually follow.

Another condition which, it would appear, follows belief in karma is a lack of concern for the welfare of fellow-men. Since karma is inexorable and is always considered to be just, the conditions of individuals, no matter how miserable they may be, must be accepted as the individual's just retribution for evil done in his past. To attempt to change his conditions or in any way interfere with the operation of karma is unthinkable, even impossible, to the devout Hindu. Thus a whole-hearted acceptance of the doctrine of karma would seem to negate the ideal emphasis of "working for work's sake" and doing good in unattached abandon in an effort to transcend the operations of karma and achieve the ultimate goal of Hinduism, moksha.

¹⁸W. J. Wilkins, Modern Hinduism (London: W. Thacker and Co., 1900), p. 10.

CHAPTER VI

HINDU ESCHATOLOGY, AN ESCHATOLOGY OF THE NATURAL MAN

A study of Hindu eschatology by a person whose background lies in an understanding of present conditions and future hopes as they are explained and presented in Christianity must always lead him to the conclusion that Hinduism has been developed as a result of man's inner compulsion to search after spiritual truth and as a result of his innate knowledge of right and wrong, accompanied, as it always is, by a sense of guilt.

A man who stands outside of revelation has access to only two sources to which he may turn for testimony concerning the spiritual Truth of the universe: himself and the world around him. What psychologists would call man's "religious instinct" reveals that in himself man feels a conscious proof of the existence of spirits other than his own, which spirits and his are engaged in some form of contact and interaction. These spirits may be those of other man or of some other force or being, whose presence and activity are felt even when other men are absent. However, such innate knowledge of a force outside of man, often referred to as his "natural knowledge of God," does not present much information as to the nature of that force or God. It only bears testimony to its or His existence.

Similarly, when he looks at nature a man sees evidence of a force or God who sustains and governs nature and in whom nature has its source. However, the silent testimony of nature, too, is lacking regarding the nature of this force or God.

Such a man, with his limited information about the nature of the force behind the universe, must draw conclusions from and construct a system of "theology" on the foundation of what he can observe. Thus the Hindus, with their "natural knowledge of God," have observed the variance in the conditions of men and the presence of evil in the world and have developed a theology in which their "God" is an abstract, impersonal world soul. This is so that they will not be forced to conclude that a personal, capricious Spirit is responsible for the suffering and evil in the world. Somehow the idea that evil had its origin with man himself does not seem to occur to natural man. In natural religions evil is always something that is superimposed on man, something from outside that claims man as its "victim," something that can be prevented by appeasement of the forces that control it. The Hindus prefer to think of evil as "something that is here, the origin of which we cannot question," but to them the idea of a personal God is unthinkable without also concluding that He is the origin of evil. So they have developed an impersonal world-soul, an abstract idea that cannot be morally responsible or liable to blame. They see themselves as part of this world soul, and yet somehow they are not a part, for they are affected by suffering and evil, and any manifestation of an impersonal, abstract world soul should not be so affected. As a solution to this difficulty they have conceived of maya, a beclouding illusion of individuality and physicality which veils the reality of the world soul for them.

The presence of evil in the world and the realization that every individual does not measure up to perfection combine to make up another

factor in determining the course of Hindu theology. Man's innate knowledge of right and wrong and his interminable feeling that he is guilty of not being what he should be has led the Hindus to develop a theology of escape. They shift the blame for the fact that they feel that they are not what they should be to their "illusive physical nature." Accordingly, their eschatological ideal is to be "liberated" from all the cares, sorrows, pains, etc. of physical life by a release from physicality. Their sensitive philosophical approach to this ideal has led them to go even further in their desire to escape. They long, not only for spirituality and loss of physical troubles, but for absorption of their personality into the impersonal world-soul and the loss of responsibility that would come with such a lack of individuality.

Hindus, naturally, would not agree with this interpretation of the development of their religion, but for the Christian, who understands the Bible's teaching of man's "natural knowledge of God" and his "natural knowledge of the Law," any analysis of a natural religion must begin with and be conducted in light of man's universal searching for God and spiritual understanding and in light of his universal sense of guilt. To the Christian, who has been brought by God's grace to see His revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ, and through faith in Christ's atoning work has a living hope for a continuance of personality in a perfect, eternal fellowship with God, the development of Hinduism is understandable for its conclusions are the natural conclusions for a man without God's revelation. It takes man as far, perhaps, as is possible for him to go without revelation, but it leaves him where all

natural religions end up, in escapism. Not having a God-given "living hope" for time and eternity it cannot have an eschatological emphasis, but only a de-emphasis of the world and a longing for release from troubles, from fears, from responsibility.

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