



1.4.6). The gods were created after the universe (*Rig Veda* 10.129.6), but the gods created the universe (*Rig Veda* 10.90.6-14). Man was created (*Rig Veda* 10.129.9-12), but has always existed (*Bhagavad Gita* 2.12). How can these things be true?

Hinduism in contrast to faith in Christ...

Is a faith of uncertainty. Perhaps Brahman created the world, but perhaps he didn't (*Rig Veda*

10.129.10). The revelation of the Bible offers certainty. The Bible says God created all things from nothing (Genesis 1:1; Hebrews 11:3). Hinduism seeks escape from the world. Indifference is glorified (*Bhagavad Gita* 14.23-26). Christ improves the world while looking to life beyond (Matthew 5:16; 44-45). For the Hindu all suffering is *karma* (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 4.4.5; 5.11). In Christ suffering can come from chance (Ecclesiastes 9:11; John 16:33).

Hinduism is a false doctrine born out of a material desire to keep lower classes in their place. It offers no hope and no purpose, only the endless futility of imagined cycle after cycle of hopeless rebirth. In Jesus we see that this life is not all there is to existence. Christ offers eternal life. May we help our Hindu friends reject error and embrace the truth of the gospel!



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Faithful Sayings Issue 15.18 May 5, 2013

Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.

● Let us know if you have any questions.

ISSUE

15.18

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

May 5, 2013
2013



Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Steve Dixon
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Encountering Hinduism

By Kyle Pope

As of 2010 one billion people were identified as adherents of Hinduism, with an estimated 2.25 million living in North America (*Global Religious Landscape*, 28). Christians need familiarity with any belief held by so many people in order to help our neighbors, co-workers, or classmates come to faith in Christ.

Hinduism and Ancient Religions.

Compared to our own, the Hindu worldview seems quite strange, but it is actually very similar to pagan Greek and Roman religions. Hinduism involves many different cults, worshipping different gods in different ways. This is a challenge when studying with Hindus. I once studied with a young Hindu and was optimistic when he quickly accepted everything I told him about Jesus, but soon realized he was just adding Christ into his mixture of other gods, not seeing Jesus as the "name above all names" (cf. Ephesians 1:15-23).

The Caste System.

To understand Hinduism we must start with something that profoundly shaped its development. Around 1500 BC it is believed that a people known as the Aryans, migrated into India. Whether this was a conquest or a natural migration is unclear, but the existence of a

lighter skinned class of people identified as the “Brahmin” caste established a racial factor that underlies all Hindu belief: the *caste system*. This class structure, built into Hindu teaching sets five distinct social and religious classes: 1) *Brahmins* (the highest class of Aryan priests), 2) *Kshatriyas* (princes and warriors), 3) *Vaisyas* (merchants and landowners), 4) *Sudras* (farmers, laborers, and servants), and 5) Untouchables (those who practice so-called polluting occupations, who are considered



Olsen Park church of Christ

outcasts). Until recent years intermarriage between these castes was strictly forbidden, and contact between some castes was condemned. In 1950 the Indian constitution prohibited “untouchability,” but many continue this religious segregation to the present.

Karma, Reincarnation, and Liberation.

The word *karma* has come into English to describe the fact that people often get “what’s coming to them,” but many fail to realize that *karma* is a Hindu doctrine that sets the religious justification for the caste system. Why is one person born into the Brahmin caste while another is an untouchable?—because *karma* has dictated that his behavior in a past life placed him where he deserves to be. Hindus believe in a principle known as *samsara*, the idea that all the universe goes through endless cycles of birth, destruction, and renewal. On a personal level this is *reincarnation*, the idea that a person can be reborn in his next life as a human or animal, based on how he has lived in this life. Should people try to improve their social class? Not really, they should stay in their place because this is the order of the universe, or *dharma*—the moral order of things. Hindus call their own religion *Sanatana Dharma*—“Eternal Dharma.” The only real hope of Hinduism rests in *moksha*, or “liberation.” This is the hope that one day a person can be freed from these endless cycles of rebirth by attaining a higher level of existence. This is not salvation in a Christian sense, but more the idea of “becoming one with the universe.”

Religious Texts.

These principles are articulated in two categories of Hindu Scriptures. The first called *[rut]* (meaning “heard”) and the second *smriti* (meaning “remembered”). The oldest, the *[rut]* texts date to around 1000 BC and are known as the *Vedas*. Only those of the top three castes are permitted to read the *Vedas*. These are

hymns, sacrificial texts, and so-called “forest writings” (or *Aranyakas*) dealing with renouncing the world and meditating in the forest. The *smriti* texts date from 1000 BC-200 AD and include *The Upanishads* (commentary on the *Vedas*), *The Code of Manu* (formal rules of the caste system, written by Aryan priests), and the *Puranas* (epic stories of divine incarnations)—the famous *Bhagavad Gita* is a part of the *Puranas*. These texts are not considered “inspired” in the Christian sense, but held to be accounts of those who have “tuned in” (so to speak) to the truths of the universe.

Hindu Concepts of Deity.

The most unusual aspect of Hinduism is their concept of deity. The *Vedas* teach there are many gods. The gods Mitra and Varuna are said to jointly rule the universe. The god Indra (like the Greek god Ares, or the Roman god Mars) is a warrior god. In one of the *Upanishads* there are said to be as many as 3306 gods. But the same texts also teach there is only one god. The *Rig Veda* claims, “They speak of Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and the winged Suparna. The wise call the One Being by many names” (1.164.46). This “One Being” they call *Brahman*, but we should not confuse this with a biblical concept of the One true God. All living things are considered part of *Brahman*. It is universal consciousness, but not personality. The Hindu can have no personal relationship with *Brahman*, he can only recognize his relationship to it. *Brahman*, they teach, has had many manifestations. There is *Brahma*, (the creator god), *Vishnu* (the preserver god), and *Siva* (the destroyer god). Hindus believe that *Vishnu* has had nine incarnations (or *avatars*), some of which were animals, some human. *Krishna*, worshipped by the Hare Krishna sect, and praised in George Harrison’s song

“My sweet lord” is considered one of these avatars, as was Buddha.

Hindu Worship.

Hindu worship is largely individual, not congregational. Worshipers go to shrines to different gods, or perform rituals in their home to various gods. I used to have a Hindu friend that worshipped Ganesh, a god with the body of a man and head of an elephant every Thursday. Other rituals might include bathing in sacred rivers, or certain birth, marriage, and death rituals.

When You Study with a Hindu...

Here are a few points you might discuss:

Hindu texts contradict each other: *Brahman* is said to be unborn (*Chhandogya Upanishad* 6.2.1-2), but born from nothingness (*Rig Veda* 10.129.1-3). *Brahman* is said to be imperishable (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 4.5.14), but was once mortal (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*