

'THE HARE KRISHNAS'

During my lifetime the profile and popularity of 'The Hare Krishnas' as a religious grouping have increased substantially. In this article I want once more to publish the text of an early 'Take Heed' tract which was entitled "The Hare Krishna and The Bible". Before I get to that perhaps I could invite you to watch the first of 2 videos linked to this article. The first one traces the modern history of the Hare Krishna movement and can be viewed via this link –

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZcMe_2tMIY8

I want now to set out the text of the tract "The Hare Krishna and The Bible"

The Hare Krishna and The Bible

"They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge"
Romans 10:2

INTRODUCTION

A visitor passing through Belfast's Corn Market on a Saturday afternoon might be forgiven for thinking that he has happened upon the staging of a Multi-faith Jamboree as enthusiastic disciples representing various religious groups and cultures vie for the attentions of the public as they pass by. Some of the most colourful and 'musical' would be the members of **ISKCON – The International Society for Krishna Consciousness** – probably better known as **The Hare Krishnas**. Having encountered these devotees of Krishna a few times myself I have noticed how they seek to establish that their beliefs and Biblical Christianity are quite compatible with each other. In this leaflet I would wish to examine this claim and my hope and prayer is that the followers of **ISKCON** (such as Stella, John, Michelle and Seamus) would consider afresh both the Person and work of Jesus Christ for these are matters which affect eternal destinies. In this leaflet I will be quoting from the Bible and "**Search for Liberation**" (SFL) – a booklet detailing a conversation between **John Lennon** and **Swami Bhaktivedanta** (who brought **ISKCON** to the West in the mid 1960's) and which was published by **ISKCON**.

KRISHNA or JEHOVAH?

The followers of Krishna believe that he is the overall supreme deity and that everything is a projection from Krishna himself – this is really a form of Personal Pantheism (God is all and all is God). '**Krishna is supreme proprietor... Everything belongs to God, Krishna... Not only this planet... but all other planets in the universe**' (SFL p2). '**We are part and parcel of the Absolute**' (SFL 922).

Does the Bible agree with this view?

In the opening verse of Genesis we find that God created the heaven and the earth and **Hebrews 11 verse 3** informs us that God created the universe from nothing. We find that God is separate from His creation for Paul explains how men forsook this truth and fell into the sin of idolatry by worshipping the creation rather than the creator (**Romans 1:18-25**). The Bible goes on to reveal that this creator God, who is separate from His creation, is known as **Yahweh** or, as is more commonly used, **JEHOVAH** and often translated “**The Lord**” as in **Exodus 3 verse 15**. This is not merely a name to call God by but also has bearing upon His attributes and character. The Bible also teaches that God is a Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three co-equal, co-eternal Persons who constitute one God. (Recommended reading ‘**The Three Are One**’ by **Stuart Olyott**, published by Evangelical Press). This one God will not share His glory with any other god such as Krishna – “**I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another**” (Isaiah 42:8). Not only will this one true God not share His glory, but He states categorically that there are no other gods. “**Is there a god beside me? Yea, there is no god: I know not any**” (Isaiah 44:8). “**I am he: before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me**” (Isaiah 43:10). **KRISHNA** and **JEHOVAH** are ‘Gods’ in direct opposition to each other.

KARMA or SIN?

Being an offshoot of Hinduism **The Hare Krishnas** believe in the ‘**law of Karma**’, the law of cause and effect, namely that every action in this life will have a bearing upon what form of existence they will be given in the next life, as they believe in **reincarnation**. “**This present life is meant for manufacturing the next body... In this life we are creating our next body**” (SFL p11). This has the effect of eliminating any thought of final judgment and eternal punishment as they believe many opportunities will be afforded to improve one’s status.

Does the Bible agree with this view?

When a person does something which is contrary to the commandments of the God of the Bible that action is called ‘**sin**’. “**Sin is the transgression of the law**” (1st **John 3:4**). The Bible makes it plain that personal sins do affect our life after death. Jesus said “**Ye shall seek me and shall die in your sins: whither I go ye cannot come**” (**John 8:21**). So, to sum up, we can see that there is a similarity between the concepts of ‘**bad Karma**’ and ‘**sin**’ in that each affect a person’s future state.

REINCARNATION or RESURRECTION?

The Hare Krishnas believe in the transmigration of the soul when a body dies – at death the soul leaves the body and goes to inhabit a new one which will have been determined by the good or bad **Karma** from previous lives. “**When your body is finished ... you get another body, just as you may change your coat and shirt**’ (SFL p53). This by the way is not regarded as a blessing as the ultimate aim is to get off this cycle of birth and death, known as **Samsara**, get ‘**back to Godhead**’ and attain **Krishna’s ‘eternal abode**’ (SFL p55).

Does the Bible agree with this view?

The Bible makes it clear that we only have one earthly life “**It is appointed unto man once to die**” (Hebrews 9:27) and in **Luke 16:19-31** Jesus explains the two possible destinations for a man’s immortal soul after the death of his body. However, Jesus also tells us in **John 5:28-29** that all dead bodies will one day be **RESURRECTED**, be reunited with their souls and that then a great judgment will take place. The basis on which this judgment will take place we will now consider.

PURIFICATION and/or PROPITIATION?

The Hare Krishnas are continually seeking to cleanse and purify their hearts and by so doing they hope to escape from the cycle of **reincarnation (Samsara)** and get ‘**back to Godhead**’ – to dwell with **Krishna**. They hope to achieve **PURIFICATION** through two forms of **YOGA** (the aim of **YOGA** is spiritual to bring about ‘**union with God**’). Their devotion to **Krishna** through worship and service is known as **Bhakti Yoga** and the constant chanting is known as **Mantra Yoga**.

The **Mantra** form is regarded as being the more effective. ‘**Lord Krishna... preached that everyone should chant the hare Krishna mantra**’ (SFL p15) ‘**If one chants Hare Krishna one... gains spiritually**’ (SFL p6) ‘**Chanting the Hare Krishna mantra is the recommended process for cleansing our hearts**’ (SFL p31) ‘**If you want peace at all you will have to change your consciousness into Krishna consciousness... by the simple process of chanting the holy name of God**’ (SFL p42) ‘**Chanting takes one... to the spiritual platform**’ (SFL p45) ‘**No other means of spiritual realisation is as effective... as the chanting of the maha-mantra**’ (SFL p46).

Does the Bible agree with this view?

The Bible would agree that to enter into the presence of God **PURIFICATION** will need to have taken place as we are viewed as unclean because of our sins. Speaking of Heaven where God dwells the Bible says “**there shall in now wise enter into it anything that defileth**” (Revelation 21:27). The Bible also makes it clear that God’s righteous anger is kindled against sin (or bad Karma) “**Thou hast made my people Israel to sin to provoke me to anger with their sins**” (1st Kings 16:2). “**He wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger**” (2nd Kings 21:6).

So, **PURIFICATION**, cleansing of the individual, alone is not sufficient according to the Bible. In addition, the righteous anger of a holy and just God must be appeased or **PROPITIATED**. **Chanting a mantra coupled with loving, devoted service to God cannot achieve either of these two objectives – PURIFICATION and PROPITIATION**. In fact the Bible explains that man cannot himself accomplish these aims which are known as **SALVATION** “**Not by works of righteousness which we have done** (devotion or chanting) **but according to HIS mercy HE (GOD) SAVED us**” (Titus 3:5). The only one who can **PURIFY** us and provide an adequate, acceptable **PROPITIATION** is **GOD HIMSELF**.

ESCAPING SAMSARA or FINDING SALVATION?

As explained earlier the aim of **The Hare Krishna** is through devotion and chanting to cleanse and liberate himself to such an extent that he escapes the cycle of **Samsara** (reincarnation) and attains to the eternal abode of **Krishna**.

We have seen that the Bible teaches that **PURIFICATION** alone is not enough and that **PROPITIATION** is also required. Devotion and chanting fail to provide the way to God so how can one find **SALVATION** (purification and propitiation) which will guarantee entry into the presence of God at death? **God Himself has taken the initiative and solved the problem through the sacrificial offering for sin of Jesus on the cross at Calvary.**

Jesus suffered the punishment for our sins (bad Karma) **“He... bare our sins in his own body on the tree”** (1st Peter 2:24). Sins can only be cleansed (i. e. a person can only be **PURIFIED**) if blood is shed **“without shedding of blood is no remission** (forgiveness of sins)” (Hebrews 9:22). Is the blood shed by Jesus sufficient for this purpose? **“The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin”** (1st John 1:7).

So much for **PURIFICATION**, but what about **PROPITIATION**? Speaking of Jesus, John wrote **“He is the PROPITIATION for our sins”** (1st John 2:2). Paul wrote, concerning Jesus **“Whom God hath set forth to be a PROPITIATION through faith in his blood... for the remission of sins”** (Romans 3:25). **The Bible teaches that Jesus can PURIFY us and be our PROPITIATION and so bring us to God** **“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”** (1st Peter 3:18). Jesus didn't die for Himself, He **“died for the ungodly”** (Romans 5:6).

SELF REALISATION

The aim of **Krishna Consciousness** is **‘SELF REALISATION’** and is outlined in another **ISKCON** book called **‘The Science of Self Realisation’**. On page one we read **‘the aim and objective of human life... is self realisation... the perfection of life is to realise one's relationship with Krishna or God... not only human beings but all living entities are parts and parcels of God’**. On page four we read **‘an attempt to go back to the Godhead, even if half finished guarantees a good birth in the next life’**. On page 5 we read **‘the real destination of life... is to go back to Godhead’**.

Does the Bible agree with this view?

True **‘Self Realisation’** is found through understanding the message of the Bible. We must **REALISE** that we are all sinners who need a **SAVIOUR**. To those who **REALISE** this Jesus says **“Repent ye and believe the gospel”** (Mark 1:15). What is this gospel? **“That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”** (1st Corinthians 15:3-4). **SALVATION comes through trusting alone in Christ and His work and by relinquishing faith in self-sacrifice and devoted service.** **“God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ”** (2nd Corinthians 5:18). **“Having made peace through the blood of his cross”** (Colossians 1:20).

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ says “**Come unto me**” (Matthew 11:28). “**I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me**” (John 14:6). Jesus has died “**to save his people from their sins**” (Matthew 1:21) and promises “**Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out**” (John 6:37). **JESUS ALONE** is “**able also to SAVE them to the uttermost that come unto God BY HIM**” (Hebrews 7:25).

Following on from the text of that tract perhaps I could now invite you to watch the second of the two videos mentioned in the opening paragraph of this article. This video shows the influence of the late **George Harrison** (of **BEATLES** fame) and how his gift of a certain property to **The Hare Krishnas** has enabled them to establish a College and Temple in England. The video can be viewed via this link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJTIIZba9K0>

When you have watched that video you may then be curious to know whether or not **The Hare Krishnas** obtained planning permission for an alternative road to their property and were thus enabled to use it as a Temple. Well you can find the answer to that by going to

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhaktivedanta_Manor

Another link that provides information on the current use of and activities held at the property is as follows

<http://www.bhaktivedantamanor.co.uk/home/>

Finally, for a more in-depth assessment of **The Hare Krishnas** the following link will take you to a talk that I gave many years ago on this movement –

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aF07eMRQQ_Y&list=UUY6K5SN-Z7IIOKmXcIB51jQ