Born Narendranath Dutta in a rich Middle Class family, Vivekananda studied in Presidency and later Scottish Church College. He became a member of the Brahmo Samaj. He came under the powerful influence of Ramakrishna at the time of near-atheistic belief resulting from the suffering which he saw all around him, and the death of his father and subsequent poverty. He stirred the West at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, ardently championing Hinduism as the universal religion. He accepted Ramakrishna as an avatar and founded the Ramakrishna Mission to promote social service in the Hindu structure. He sent missionaries to London and the USA to promote neo-Vedanta Hinduism. He incorporated many Christian ideas into Hindu teaching and gave Christ a high place. Vivekananda died while still young. He wrote many books which have been widely read both in India and abroad which have greatly influenced Hindus and westerners alike.
Swami Vivekananda tried to popularize Hindu beliefs among the people of the West. Basically his logic consists in drawing conclusions from observations in the world about us. He is a master of a priori reasoning, and of assuming that because one thing is so, others must also be. Often the first assumption is not demonstrable. This did not prevent him from going on to almost limitless lengths and reaching some rather startling conclusions.

To Vivekananda there are four ways to immortality, each on a different level—through bhakti-yoga, intense devotion or love for the Supreme Lord; through jhâna-yoga, knowledge that the individual soul is the same essence as the Supreme, the Substance of the universe, the Eternal Brahman. Another way is through Raja-yoga, the means of gaining complete conquest of the internal nature. Bhakti-yoga and Raja-yoga are really means to an end. Karma-yoga, the way of works is the other way.

Vivekananda believed that all men seek for truth. As he states it:

Man wants truth, wants to experience truth for himself; when he has grasped it, realized it, felt it within his heart of hearts, then alone, declare the Vedas, would all doubts vanish, all darkness be scattered and all crookedness straight. "Ye children of immortality; even those who live in the highest sphere, the way is found; there is a way out of all this darkness, and that is by perceiving Him who is beyond all darkness; there is no other way."1

In the introductory section of his book, Raja Yoga, or Conquering the Internal Nature, his position is briefly summarized:

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to

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manifest this divinity within, by conquering nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or physical control or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details.²

He summarizes the goal of Yogi concentration as realization. This can only be gained by direct perception, not by hearing about it, or reading concerning it, or even from the scriptures. This is beyond reason, perception, or inference, or the testimony of others.³ "Just as we come into direct contact with the evidence of our senses, so religion can be directly perceived in a far more intense sense."⁴ He felt that God could neither be seen nor felt, and so the central truth of religion, God and Soul, could not be perceived by the external senses. Because we are limited in what we can reason by the sense perceptions, we cannot really reason out the answers to religion, though we reason all our lives. The Yogis seek to transcend reason, sense-perception, and the intellect by developing a power within man and every creature.

"By the practice of Yoga that power is aroused, and then man transcends the ordinary limits of reason, and directly perceives things which are beyond all reason."⁵

The means of attaining to this state above intellect and reason, which Vivekananda calls "superconsciousness", is by concentration. This concentration is hindered by the past actions leaving behind impressions, called the Samskāras. When the individual tries to concentrate, then these often dormant impressions become active and fill the

². Swami Vivekananda, Rāja Yoga, p. 111, also pp. 213, 214.
³. Ibid., p. 174.
⁴. Ibid., p. 175.
⁵. Ibid., pp. 175, 176.
thoughts, simply because the individual is trying to repress and fix the attention on one idea. These sense impressions can be gradually controlled until the concentration is so fixed that external stimulations fail to arouse sense impressions in the mind. These sense impressions that retard concentration spring from ignorance, resulting in egoism, attachment, aversion and clinging to life. Ignorance is delusion, hallucination, since the true nature of the soul is eternal bliss.6

Ignorance is said to develop various types of sense impressions, such as dormant, attenuated or weakened, or even-powered—that is these impressions temporarily repressed by stronger ones that will manifest themselves when the more powerful ones are removed. Another type that ignorance may stimulate is called expanded; that is, they develop greatly under favorable conditions. These may be good or evil.7

Ignorance takes that which is finite, non-eternal, impure, painful, and non-self, and substitutes it for that which is eternal, pure, happy—the Atman and the Self. The thought that we are a body form, and not the ever blessed One is called a great delusion.8

Egoism thinks it experiences change, feels pleasure or pain. Yet the true "Self is the pure one, the ever holy, the infinite, the immortal, beyond all change." Thus it is never happy or sad or affected by anything.9 Attachment hinders concentration by causing the mind to dwell upon pleasure, no matter in what it is found.

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7. Ibid., p. 183.
8. Ibid., p. 184.
9. Ibid., p. 185.
"Never yet was there a great soul who had not to reject sense-pleasures and enjoyments to acquire his greatness. The cause of misery is the clash between the different forces of nature, one dragging one way, and another dragging another, rendering permanent happiness impossible."10

Aversion hinders by fixing the attention upon pain, with the result that we seek to avoid it.11 The clinging to life is basic to man; Vivekananda stressed that it is because of past experience in former incarnations that man fears death, and so this becomes a part of man's instinctive sub-conscious thought, which naturally affects the concentration.12

Ignorance can be overcome by constant discrimination. As one passes through the necessary experiences of life, he is meant, according to the Yogis to realize that all of these are unreal. By controlling the internal, the external is brought under control.

This is the real goal of practice—discrimination between the real and the unreal, knowing that the Purusha, (the Self of man) is not nature, that it is neither matter nor mind, and because it is not nature it cannot possibly change. It is only nature which changes, combining and recombining, dissolving continually. When through constant practice we begin to discriminate, ignorance will vanish, and the Purusha will begin to shine in its real nature—omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent.13

11. Ibid., p. 185.
12. Ibid., pp. 187, 188.
The reaching of the goal is not an easy task for most men, though Vivekananda held that it is possible to reach the final state even in this life. His acceptance of Patanjali's teachings caused him to state that the Yogi can hasten the process by creating extra bodies, called Kāya-Vyuha. In these he can hasten the exhausting of Karma. The made-bodies, as they are called, are controlled by "created minds" which the Yogi makes from egoism. All of these, however, are under the control of the one original mind. Thus the Yogi can complete more easily in one lifetime the process of gaining the experience of complete conquest of desires and control of the internal nature.14

He also accepted the idea that man can gain the control of his being to some extent through other means than concentration, but only concentration produces the desireless state that brings the realization of oneness with the universe, the setting free of the true self.15 The other means are through the power of words, or Mantras; through mortification and asceticism; through the use of various chemicals or medicines and through fortuitous circumstances of birth.16 Through some of these wonderful medicines it is claimed that some ancient Yogis are still living in the same bodies they had for centuries.

The progress upward is through a series of seven steps or gradations of true knowledge. The first of these is a realization that we know all that is to be known. This comes from a realization that we are no longer seeking knowledge because we become aware that we have arrived at truth. This is then followed by the complete ab-

15. Ibid., p. 265.
16. Ibid., p. 262.
sence of pain. No longer will anything anywhere be able to cause pain. The next step will be omniscience, all-knowledge attainment. Then the fourth step which is reached will be that the individual is no longer bound by a sense of duty. He has ability to discriminate between what he feels bound to do to attain and what he truly is. Next comes the cessation of mental struggles and difficulties, as the mind rests secure in its knowledge.

Lastly, we shall find that we are established in our Self, that we have been alone throughout the universe, neither body nor mind was ever related, much less joined to us. They were working their own way, and we, through ignorance, joined ourselves to them. But we have been alone, omnipotent, omnipresent, ever-blessed; our own Self was so pure and perfect that we required none else. We required none else to make us happy, for we are happiness itself. We shall find that this knowledge does not depend upon anything else; throughout the universe there can be nothing that will not become effulgent before our knowledge. This will be the last state, and the Yogi will become more peaceful and calm, never to feel any more pain, never to be deluded, never to be touched by misery. He still know he is ever blessed, ever perfect, almighty.17

The seeking of immortality through Bhakti-Yoga, intense love or devotion to God is summarized by Vivekananda thus: "One single moment of the madness of extreme love for God brings us eternal freedom."18 This Bhakti is held to be greater than either Karma or Yoga.

because these are pursued with an objective in mind, but Bhakti is both the means to an end and the end itself.\textsuperscript{19} This method of attainment is held to be superior to other methods, in that it is "the easiest and most natural way to reach the divine end in view."\textsuperscript{20} Forms and ceremonies have their value only in bringing the individual to the state of intense love for God.\textsuperscript{21} The Bhaktas feel that devotion, love, is the means to an end and the end in itself. With perfect love true knowledge comes unsought—perfect knowledge and true love are inseparable.\textsuperscript{22} Bhakti is not simply love for an object of desire, "but a series or succession of mental efforts at religious realization beginning with ordinary worship and ending in a supreme intensity of love for the Ishvara" or Supreme Lord.\textsuperscript{23} This Ishvara is held to be the highest possible form in which the Absolute Reality is capable of being realized by the human mind.\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{Bhakti} falls short in one aspect. It cannot truly be said to go beyond the comprehension of a personal god of love, because love is directed toward a personal being.\textsuperscript{25} For him the Supreme Being remains as an object of worship; his will remains subservient to the Supreme Will. As Creator, he is never merged completely with the creature; as Ruler of the universe, his position is unattainable. Thus Ishvara is the highest possible conception of God to the Bhakta. This God may be seen and felt and enjoyed. He is held to initiate the process by which the believer may comprehend God.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Swami Vivekananda, \textit{Bhakti-Yoga}, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p.4.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 11.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 13.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 20.
\end{itemize}
Vivekananda taught that "every soul is destined to become perfect, and every being, in the end, will attain the state of perfection." He felt that reading, study, and meditation could not in themselves bring this condition, but true spiritual awakening leading to a spiritual life could only come from another soul, a Guru, a teacher possessing the experience himself and the ability to share it with others. The highest of the teachers are the avatars of Ishwara; they can reveal God as man, which Vivekananda believed was the only way in which human beings could comprehend God.

The ideal state is reached by great attachment to God. This causes him to renounce all attachment for that which is not God. The attraction of God to him makes all other attractions disappear. The love of God so fills his heart that no other love can exist there. This prepares for the supreme devotion or Param-Bhakti. All forms and symbols are useless aids then to spiritual realization. He sees God, his Beloved, in every man. The beautiful, the sublime, the light, or darkness, the thousand experiences of daily life reveal Him. Behind all they see the Reality, working out His will.

He quoted Shri Krishna's reply to Arjuna as to who is the great Yogi: "Those who are concentrating their minds on Me, worship Me with eternal constancy, and are endowed with the highest faith, they are My best worshippers, they are the greatest Yogis." They are held to be greater than those who maintained devotion to God in His unmanifested form as the One Indescribable:

27. Ibid., pp. 27, 28.
28. Ibid., pp. 40, 41.
29. Ibid., pp. 82, 83.
Those who, having offered up all their work unto Me, with entire reliance on Me, meditate on Me, and worship Me without attachment to anything else — them, I soon lift up from the ocean of ever-recurring births and death, as their mind is wholly attached to Me.30

The Bhakta maintains life itself for the sake of the one Ideal of Love; in fact life is considered beautiful and worth living only on account of that Love. Life is enjoyable because the thoughts are filled with the Beloved. He reaches a state called Tadiyata or His-ness, which to him is perfection. This state is reached when man in mind at least, has attained God; he has reached out and touched the feet of God in his devotions, as it were. His whole being is then purified and transformed and his goal in life is reached.

Everything is sacred to him, because it belongs to the Beloved. When a person loves the Lord, the whole universe becomes dear to him, because it is all His.31

When this deep love comes, everything and everyone in the universe is loved and worshipped as manifestations of the Supreme, the Yogi has an uncomplaining resignation to the will of God. He regards pain or pleasure equally as the will of God, sent with loving purpose.32 He seeks nothing from God but delights only in giving all to Him.33 He is not concerned where God is or how He works, for to him God is eternally seated within, in his own heart reigning as the Almighty Light of Love.34

30. Swami Vivekananda, Bhakti-Yoga, pp. 84, 85.
31. Ibid., pp. 89, 90.
32. Ibid., pp. 93, 94.
33. Ibid., p. 108.
34. Ibid., p. 111.
The love of the Bhakta is variously compared to the love of calm devotion or Shanta, then to the love of a servant for his Master. This is succeeded by a love similar to that of friend for friend, with God as our Friend and Companion through which the devotee joins God in His enjoyment of the Universe. Then another higher type of love is compared to that of the love which parents show for their child to whom they are devoted. A still higher type is represented by the sweet abandonment of man and woman in love, with God representing the husband, and all His followers compared to a loving wife. They even represent a higher form as represented by the lover who others attempt to restrain, but who pursues his quest with even greater ardor.35

The Bhakta chooses to remain a dualist. He never aspires to become God; his delight is to enjoy the Beloved. To him this is the sum of all happiness, and he wants no more. To him love and the Lover are united in blessed Oneness.36

In the Jñāna-Yoga approach man must go on until he attains true knowledge. This may be the continuing search of several lifetimes, or for a few something that may be completed in a single life in a blazing moment of comprehension. God is declared to be the center of all religions, which Vivekananda compares to spokes of a wheel. Along these lines of radius each directs himself toward the center which is God. If this statement is true, then he declares that it is certain that at last everyone must reach the center. Men may comprehend Him in different ways, but at last with enlightened understanding they will lay aside all false ideas, and build from where man is, a true conception.37

35. Swami Vivekananda, Bhakti-Yoga, pp. 112, 121.
36. Ibid., pp. 123, 124.
Through instinct, reason, and inspiration he pursues the path of knowledge. The highest stage is that reached by the philosopher. He seeks to comprehend the Uncomprehensible One, to know the Unknowable. The summation of knowledge, at last he becomes aware that the Real is in all things. He fills the universe, is the Source and Existence of all things. Since He is in all, the philosopher concludes that he is a part of the Universal Being. He is It; he is That. God is everything and nothing remains which is not God. God is his own Self.

When he comes near enough, he sees that he is no other than God, and he exclaims, "He whom I have described to you as the Life of the universe, as present in the atom and in suns and moons,--He is the basis of our own life, the Soul of our soul, Nay, thou art That." This is what the Jñāna-Yoga teaches. It tells man that he is essentially divine. It shows to mankind the real unity of being, and that each one of us is the Lord God Himself manifested on earth. All of us, from the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the highest beings to whom we look up with wonder and awe—all are manifestations of the same Lord.

The way begins with hearing great religious truths. This is followed by thinking about them, reasoning them out, impressing them on our minds, and meditating upon them. After meditation at last comes realization of them until they fill the whole life. The end is being or becoming, as the whole life is transformed into what it believes.

Based on the assumption that all bodies result from the com-
bination of particles, a force is held to be necessary to hold these particles together. Since bodies differ, this holding and motivating force must be apart from the body. It is something beyond the mind, since it controls the mind. The ancients called this the Ātman, the soul, and taught that it was something apart from the body and mind. Various philosophies are more or less in agreement that the Ātman is without form or shape. That which has neither form nor shape must then be omnipresent. Because the mind conceives thoughts of forms, space, time, and causation, it was held to be beyond the mind. The Ātman if beyond space, time, form, or causation must be infinite, according to Vivekananda. If the Ātman is infinite, then there can really be only One Soul. All ideas of individual souls are held to be without basis, and such souls not real. "The Real Man, therefore, is one and infinite, the omnipresent Spirit. — The Real Man, the Spirit, being beyond cause and effect, not bound by space or time, must therefore be free."42 Every soul is infinite; there is then neither birth nor death.

The body is not the Real Man, neither is the mind, for the mind waxes and wanes. It is the Spirit beyond, which alone can live forever. The body and the mind are continually changing, and are, in fact, only names in a series of changeful phenomena, like rivers whose waters are in a constant state of flux yet presenting the appearance of unbroken streams.43

42. Swami Vivekananda, Jñāna-Yoga, pp. 33, 34.
43. Ibid., p. 35.
Because the body is continually changing, Vivekananda believed that to talk of immortality in constantly changing things is foolishness. Only the indivisible infinite Spirit is the Real Man, the Unchanging.

He taught that when in our minds we feel a separation from the Infinite, the true nature of man, this opens the door to all mischief and all misery. In fact he said that it is:

--- the basis of all ignorance that we, the immortal, the ever pure, the perfect Spirit, think that we are little minds, that we are little bodies; it is the mother of all selfishness. As soon as I think that I am a little body, I want to preserve it, to protect it, to keep it nice, at the expense of other bodies; then you and I become separate.44

When a man realizes his true Self that he is Infinite, the Universe itself, he fears nothing; to him there is no birth or death. No one can kill him, he believes, for he is the "birthless, deathless, omnipotent, omnipresent Spirit."45 To him there is no misery, no wickedness. These are but illusions, Vivekananda believed. He felt that men should not be told that they are sinners, because this would weaken men. Instead, we should:

Teach them that they are all glorious children of immortality, even those who are weakest in manifestation. Let positive strong helpful thought enter

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44. Swami Vivekananda, Jhāna-Yoga, p. 43.
45. Ibid., p. 44.
into their brains from early childhood. -- Say to your minds, "I am He, I am He." Let it ring day and night in your minds like a song, and at the point of death declare, "I am He." That is the Truth; the infinite strength of the world is yours.46

All things move toward a common goal. Vivekananda taught that in time every person, plant, animal or other form of life "must reach the Infinite Ocean of Perfection, must attain to freedom, to God."47 As man goes on in his quest, he conceives the idea of a Personal God, a Being beyond the limitation of nature. As he pictures it, one declares, "Hear, ye children of immortality, hear, ye who live in highest places, I have found the way. By knowing Him who is beyond darkness we can go beyond death."48 But this idea of a Personal God is held to be only the beginning of religion.

The idea of a Personal God, the Ruler and Creator of this universe, as He has been styled, the ruler of Mayā, or nature, is not the end of these Vedantic ideas; it is only the beginning. The idea grows and grows until the Vedantist finds that He who, he thought, was standing outside, is he himself, and is in reality within. He is the one who is free, but who through limitation thought he was bound.49

46. Swami Vivekananda, Jnāna-Yoga, pp. 48, 49.
47. Ibid., p. 72.
48. Ibid., p. 76.
49. Ibid., p. 76.
In the Karma-Yoga method of attaining immortality, belief is held to be secondary to work. The work of Karma is not just activity. The Yogi "should be devoted to God; the knowledge of God should be the goal of life." In spite of this devotion he must:

work constantly, perform all his duties; give up the fruit of his actions to God. It is the most difficult thing in this world, to work and not care for the result, to help a man and never think he ought to be grateful, to do some good work, and at the same time never look to see whether it brings you name or fame, or nothing at all. 50

As an outworking of Karma the individual is normally expected to pass through four stages—a student, householder, monk, then a Sannyasin who has renounced the world. These have been somewhat abbreviated in modern times to the stages of householder and Sannyasin. The householder is expected not to brag, to boast of his powers, wealth, fame, or name. It is his duty to strive to become wealthy in order to support his family and others. He must also strive for knowledge and a good name, for truthfulness and kindness and honesty. He should be fearless, active. For the Sannyasin there should be nothing to attract him in beauty, money, power, or fame. 51

Work in itself is held to be both good and bad. Each will produce its own Karma or result. Every action is both good and bad. How then can work avail to help? The answer given is that if the individual does not become attached to the work done, it will not have a binding effect upon the soul. Every work we do, every thought has an effect on the mind. The sum total of all impression of the past life

51. Ibid., pp. 27-38.
reveals the character. If the thoughts and impressions have been good, the character becomes good; but if evil thoughts, actions, and impressions prevail, a bad character is produced with the individual scarcely becoming aware of it. The result will be a compelling drive to do evil, or in the case of the one who thinks and does good, he will be compelled to be good. The longer the process goes on, the more fixed the character so that for a good man to do evil, or an evil man to do good becomes almost impossible.\(^5^2\)

Beyond the state where the character is established toward good, Vivekananda stated that there is a higher level—the desire to be free. To him this was not alone freedom from the bondage of evil, but also freedom from the bondage of good. The individual must come to the place where great actions are performed, but these are not to make a deep impression on the soul. He should work not for any selfish goal, or to benefit relatives or friends. Love must be the true motive power of work—not to please ourselves, not for possessiveness or pleasure. Vivekananda pictures God as working not to gain anything to Himself, but because He loves the world—God is thus said to be unattached to the world, and when we truly love, we too become unattached. However:

> To attain this non-attachment is almost a life work. But as soon as we have attained this point, we have attained the goal of love and become free; the bondage of nature falls from us, and we see nature as she is; she forges no more chains for us; we stand entirely free and take not the results of work into consideration.\(^5^3\)

\(^{52}\). Swami Vivekananda, *Karma Yoga*, pp. 42, 43.

To bring about this possibility he suggests that to those who believe in a personal God the individual may regard his work of mercy and selfless charity as worship, then we may "give up all the fruits of our work unto the Lord, and worshipping Him thus, we have no right to expect anything from mankind for the work we do." Thus to the unselfish man work "cannot bind by giving attachment to results." 54

He summarizes the way of work as follows:

Now you see what Karma-Yoga means; even to the point of death to help anyone, without asking questions. Be cheated millions of times, and never ask a question, and never think of what you are doing. Never vaunt of your gifts to the poor or expect their gratitude; but rather be grateful to them for giving you the occasion of practicing charity to them. Thus it is plain that to be an ideal householder is a much more difficult task than to be an ideal Sannyasin; the true life of work is as hard as, if not harder than, the equally true life of renunciation. 55

Work is first performed as a duty. A definition of duty given is any work that directs us Godward. The duty we have toward the world and others may change, but we are responsible to fulfill the duty which is ours by birth or society or position in life. When these duties are done well, higher ones may be given. From work done through a sense of duty we may progress to a higher state, where work is not done because of duty, but as worship, or even more simply, for its own sake. 56

The duty is not to be thought of as pleasant or unpleasant. "When you are doing any work, do not think of anything beyond. Do it as worship, and devote your whole life to it for the time being." 57 This is the secret of attainment:

55. Ibid., pp. 44, 55.
56. Ibid., pp. 60, 61.
57. Ibid., p. 68.
The right performance of the duties of any station in life, without attachment to results, leads us to the highest realization of the perfection of the soul. — To the unattached worker all duties are equally good and form efficient instruments with which selfishness and sensuality may be killed and the freedom of the soul secured.

To those who would understand better what non-attachment means, Vivekananda explained that it is really complete self-abnegation. As we work to help the world we help ourselves; in doing good to others we have a great help to forgetfulness of self:

Every act of charity, every thought of sympathy, every action of help, every good deed, is taking so much of self-importance away from our little selves and making us think of ourselves as the lowest and the least, and therefore, it is all good. Here we find that Jnana, Bhakti, and Karma all come to one point. The highest ideal is eternal and entire self-abnegation, where there is no "I" but all is "thou", and whether he be conscious or unconscious of it, Karma-Yoga leads to that end.

Vivekananda taught that when a man has reached the place where his self-abnegation is so complete that he is ready to sacrifice mind and body and all he is and has for another being, he has attained the perfection of Karma-Yoga. A man may be an unbeliever in God, may never have prayed or believed, but by good actions alone he may reach the same point where he is willing to give up all. Thus the philosopher, who through knowledge gives up the seeming self as delusion; the worshipper who resigns himself to God's will, and the worker ready to sacrifice self for others all meet at the one point of self-abnegation.

The individual is still in the world and must learn to live in it without being carried away by either its misery or its pleasures. What work is performed is not done as though the individual were indispensable. Do not do the work for personal benefit; it can have no effect or Karma, if done for its own sake. He resigns himself to the good and evil in the world, but takes no part in attempting to explain or justify. The individual learns first by hearing, then by doing, after careful consideration of what has been taught. With the thinking and doing gradually comes realization and determination. This transforms the being into the unselfish worker.  

There is much involved in self-renunciation. It means:

giving up this little life; giving up this little universe; giving up this earth, giving up heaven, giving up the body, giving up the mind, giving up everything limited and conditioned. If we give up this little universe of the senses or of the mind, we shall be free immediately.

It is not in this world that man becomes free, but by going beyond the world of space and time by work. "I" and "mine" must be given up. The individual becomes resigned to the divine will, and is not concerned with rewards and punishments. "The idea of doing good becomes a part of" the "very being," and no outside reward is sought. The end result is summarized:

So the only way is to give up all the fruits of work, to be unattached to them. Know that the world is not we, nor are we this world; that we are really not the body; that we really do not work. We are the self, eternally at rest and at peace. --- Every

62. Ibid., p. 111.
good work we do without any ulterior motive instead of forming new links of the chain, will break one of the links in the existing chains. Every good thought that we send to the world without thinking of any return, will be stored up there and break one link in the chain and make us purer and purer until we become the purest of mortals.

Swami Vivekananda believed that the Vedanta was the one way to the realization of immortality because it was based upon eternal principles. The beliefs in Dualism and Qualified Monism he regarded as steps on the path toward this goal. To him God was both Personal and Impersonal, since the individual might, according to the theory of Ishtam, worship any God of his choice as a Personal God. The Personal God was not the highest realization, however. Every religious devotee was to choose his own way and follow that way. It would not be necessary to change religions. Conversion was not to be sought. He compared the individual religions to rays or radii from the sun. Those on one side might appear contradictory to those on the other. God is the sun of his illustration; the farther from Him the greater the contradictions would appear; the nearer to Him, the closer religious beliefs would be, until at last all religions unite at the common center. (However, some religions could be regarded as clouds hiding the sun.)

The Swami regarded the great religious leaders as those whose personalities were unimportant, with their lives manifesting the principle of complete self-abandonment, with ambition not existent. He thought of them as being only instruments, controlled by principle, not personality, thus he regarded Buddha and Christ as "manifestations of the spiritual principle of Buddhahood and Christhood" and felt that

63. Swami Vivekananda, Karma-Yoga, p. 140.
Jesus had our nature; he became the Christ; so can we and so must we, Christ and Buddha were the names of a state to be attained. Jesus and Gautama were the persons to manifest it.

This attitude, of course, makes of little importance the earthly life of Christ or Buddha. He argues that God has manifest Himself in man, and if this has happened once, it must occur again. (That this is a law of nature so that no event can be singular, but must repeatedly occur because nature follows law, is a proposition that really cannot be demonstrated, and even if it were true in the natural world, it is not necessarily true in the spiritual world. God can supercede natural law if He so chooses. For example, if it is true that the Absolute exists alone without a second, and also true that what happened once must happen again, it would be possible to believe that more than one such Absolute could exist, which is impossible, if He is truly the Supreme One.) Vivekananda uses the argument to show that God has been manifested in all great religious leaders before Christ and after him, and that all these are "manifestations of the same Infinite God." In fact, he calls Krishna and Christ "one and the same Avatar" that manifests itself in another place of the "ocean of life." (Max Mueller, Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings, p. 109)

To him Christians were in error in making too much of the Person of Christ instead of emphasizing the principle of Christ-hood that he represented. He went so far as to claim that the record

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66. Ibid., p. 147.
of the life of Jesus did not need to be entirely true or historical. It was the imitation of his life that mattered.  

To Vivekananda the incarnations of Christ and others had meaning in man's search for immortality because he believed in the power of Māyā to create endless cycles of worlds such as ours. "The purpose of the incarnation is to help man to be liberated from the whole Māyā through knowledge of his true identity with God." He commented on John 1:1 which speaks of the Word existing from the beginning, and the Word being God:

The Hindu calls this Māyā, the manifestation of God, because it is the power of God—the Absolute reflecting through the universe is what we call Nature. The Word has two manifestations, the general one of Nature, and the special one of the great Incarnations of God—Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, and Ramakrishna. Christ, the special manifestation of the Absolute, is known and knowable. The Absolute cannot be known. We cannot know the Father, only the Son. We can only see the Absolute through the "tint of humanity", through Christ.

The purpose of Christ then was to help liberate mankind from the manifold manifestations of Māyā, to prepare the way for others to become Christs and unite with the Absolute. He was a Yogi who realized that he was "God in his spirit and showed others the path to the same spiritual realization as Messenger." Vivekananda said:

He (Christ) has no other occupation in life; no other thought except that one, that he was a Spirit. He was a disembodied, unfettered, unbound spirit. And not only so, but he, with his marvelous vision, had found that every man and woman, whether Jew or Greek, whether rich or poor, whether saint or sinner, was the embodiment of the same undying Spirit as himself. Therefore, the one work his whole life showed, was calling upon them to realize their own spiritual nature. ... You are all sons of God, Immortal Spirit, 'Know', he declared, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is within you'. 'I and my Father are one.'

M. M. Thomas summarizes his arguments concerning Christ:

Jesus renounced everything, most especially his ego-consciousness, so that to be unselfish, perfectly selfless is salvation itself, for the man within dies, and God alone remains. The pure in heart see God, because 'it is necessary only to clear away the dust and dirt, and then the Spirit shines immediately.' Giving up all to the poor and turning the other cheek and other principles of the Sermon on the Mount declare the ideal of renunciation, of unselfishness. (The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV., pp. 145ff.)

When John the Baptist presented Christ as "the Lamb of God" that "takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), Vivekananda saw this not as a sacrifice, but rather as Christ showing man the way to become

72. The Complete Works of the Swami Vivekananda, Vol. IV, p. 141. (This is the Docetist belief about Christ)
perfect. "God became Christ to show man his true nature, that we, too, are God."74

Both Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekananda had little use for the Christian idea of sin. Ignorance was possible, false knowledge was possible; man might be misled into believing that the universe was real or that he existed as an independent being. To say that man's nature was corrupt or that his actions offended God, he considered one of the worst types of error. Such beliefs bound man ever tightly in the ideas of ignorance and false knowledge and increased the length of time required to maintain *paravidya*, super-knowledge or ultimate knowledge which is the goal for all men.75

Vivekananda's concept was that of man "struggling to attain spiritual self-realization, and thus to him the ethical and moral teachings of Christ were not important. These, he felt, would make Christ only a moral man, while the idea of Christ as the Incarnate God alone would help man in realizing God. Therefore, he stressed the God side of the incarnation.76

He could not, however, completely dismiss the idea of morality; though he rejects the idea of good and evil and considers God beyond either good or evil, and calls these a part of illusion, "both chains and products of Maya." He found it necessary to state that "Good is near truth, but not yet the truth," considering that God is more nearly thought of as good than as evil. He compared evil to an iron chain that binds us, and good to a golden one; evil was a thorn in our flesh that needed to be extracted and thrown away. Then man could be once and for all free of such illusions.77 He was not opposed to the idea of good works, but taught that they must be performed in a spirit of detached disinterestedness. They must not be done for the sake of

75. Nalini Devadas, Sri Ramakrishna, p.163.
77. Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 2.
merit or to call attention to one's self, but simply because they were
the proper thing to do. No thought of reward, success, or failure
should enter the mind of the doer. Everything should be resigned to
God and not done as a duty or compulsion. Since good works and service
are part of the world of Maya, they have no part in gaining Mukti, li-
beration. Even Mukti he believed was a part of Maya since the Atman,
the true self within is always free.78 On another occasion, speaking
of liberation he said:

Of what consequence is it to the world if
you or I do attain to Mukti? We have to
take the whole universe with us to Mukti,
... Unparalleled Bliss! The Self realized
in all living beings and in every atom of
the universe.79

In other words, all will attain this experience together.
Once when asked how the freedom of Mukti could be attained, he replied
that the bad tendencies have to be "counteracted by the good ones, but
after that the good tendencies have also to be conquered." When asked
if Mukti could be obtained without the grace of God, he replied that
"Mukti has nothing to do with the grace of God. Freedom already is."80

Likewise, Vivekananda stated that life itself is unimportant
to think about. Death is not to trouble us:

There is only one thing, that you are;
you can see it either as matter or body
—or you can see it as mind or spirit.
Birth, life, and death are old super-
stitions. None was ever born, none
will ever die; one changes one's posi-
tion— that is all. I am sorry to see

78: Romain Rolland, Prophets of the New India, Part 1, p. 482.
79: Romain Rolland, Life of Vivekananda, p. 313.
80: Budhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p. 310.
in the West how much they make of death; always trying to catch a little life.

'Give us life after death! Give us life!' They are so happy if anybody tells them that they are going to live afterward! How can I ever doubt such a thing! How can I imagine that I am dead! Life is such a wonderful reality that you cannot for a moment forget it. You may as well doubt that you exist. This is the first fact of consciousness— I am. Who can imagine a state of things that never existed? It is the most self-evident of all truths. So the idea of immortality is inherent in man. How can one discuss a subject that is unimaginable? Why do we want to discuss the pros and cons of a subject that is self-evident?

There is the real man, the infinite, the beginningless, the endless, the ever-blessed, the ever-free.

This real man is spoken of in contrast to the man of space, cause, and time who has only relative existence in a world of Maya. The soul of man he regarded as "unconquerable, birthless, deathless, and changeless." To Vivekananda, there were two goals for his followers to reach. By means of Karma-Yoga men could, by intensely thinking about the good and service of others, "arrive at the vision of self that penetrates all living beings." Having reached this goal he then could return to the earth. The sanyasi is pictured as reaching the "threshold of final liberation", and then renouncing his own final realization in his desire to help others. The Jivanmukta to whom he com-

82. Ibid., p. 89.
83. Ibid., p. 205.
84. Romain Rolland, Prophets of New India, Part 1, pp. 660, 484.
pared Christ, is the saint who has reached the state of nirvikalpa samadhi and then returns to the world where he sees:

the Self in all beings, and possessed by this knowledge he devotes himself to their service, so that he uses up all the karma that has to be extended by the body. 86

The Jivanmukta is free in what he does in life. Because he knows that he "is all, and is one with all" he then is able to have faith in all and love for all. 86 Though Vivekananda rejected the idea of Christ's death for man's sin, he was able to concede that Christ as Jivanmukta could take over the karma of others. Karma is pictured as being so inexorable that it could not be set aside, yet the follower could be rescued by the Avatar taking the effects of the disciple's karma on himself. This could be done "because his own actions are spontaneously pure; he acts without attachment and, therefore, is not bound to the wheel of samsara." (Malini Devadas, Sri Ramakrishna, p. 98) 87 It was thus by his life that Christ could save men, and not by his death. In fact Vivekananda spoke of the crucifixion as a mirage, an illusion, saying that as God Incarnate Christ could not die. 88 His conceptions of Christ as a personal God he explains away as being a temporizing necessity for the benefit of those unable to understand the idea of a Supreme Being that exists alone, with all else only illusion. He said that this final realization was easier to grasp if first like a little child we pray to a personal God, as a heavenly Father, then our growth, with more education, will help us to realize the second stage of conceiving the thought of God within us. And finally we unite in mystic oneness with the Supreme, or to use a term Vivekananda

85. Romain Rolland, Prophets of New India, Part 1, p. 861.
86. Ibid., Part 1, p. 353.
uses, we realize the Supreme. 89

Vivekananda was definitely a universalist. In time all would gain immortal freedom. He said:

... It is only a question of time when you and I, and plants, and animals, and every particle of life that exists must reach the Infinite Ocean of Perfection, must attain to Freedom, to God. 90

Swami Vivekananda believed that every person has hope for immortality. He stated:

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy - by one, or more, or all of these — and be free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines; or dogmas; or rituals; or books; or temples; or forms, are but secondary details. 91

He taught that the true "I" was "a spirit living in a body. I am not the body. The body will die, but I will not die." He said that even if his body were to fall, he would go on living. He also believed that he had a past existence also. He then argued the "soul was not created, for creation means a combination which means a certain future dissolution. If the soul is created, it must die." 92

91. Ibid., p. XI.
92. Ibid., p. 5.
Vivekananda believed that the soul is not material substance, but uncreated. It centers in the body, but has no outer limits; it is free, unlimited in space:

In its very essence, it is free, unbounded, holy, pure and perfect.93

Somehow, - and he says Hindus do not know how, - the soul came to regard itself as imperfect and joined to a material body and conditioned by it. In spite of this admitted lack of knowledge as to how it came about, he insists that:

the human soul is eternal and immortal, perfect and infinite, and death only means the change from one body center to another.

In a new body center it continues its development or spiritual evolution upward or downward as the present is determined by the past actions and the future by the present.94 He pictured a rishi of Vedic times as at last breaking the unending chain of birth-death-rebirth by discovering and announcing to men:

Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! I have found the Ancient One, who is beyond all darkness, all delusion; knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again. Children of immortal bliss—what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss—yea the Hindu refuses to call

94. Ibid., p. 8.
you sinners. You are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest, and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter. (Addresses at the Parliament of Religions)

Vivekananda referred to the Vedas as teaching that at the head of all laws and in and through every particle of matter and force is a God, pure, formless, Almighty and All-merciful, friend and strengthener of man. (This type of activity would be that of a Personal God.) He also said that the Vedas taught "that the soul is divine, only held in bondage of matter."

Perfection will be reached when this bond will burst, and the word they use for it is, therefore, Mukti—freedom; freedom from the bonds of imperfection, freedom from death and misery.

He felt that a loving God will reveal himself to the pure souls even in this life, and thus man would have all the proof that he needed of the existence of a soul or the existence of God. Thus he stated that the object of the religion of Hindus is:

... By constant struggle to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God, and this reaching God,

96. Ibid., p. 10.
seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect.97

When man has reached this state of existence, what becomes of Him? Does he lose his individuality? Vivekananda thought otherwise. He taught that:

He lives the life of bliss infinite.
He enjoys infinite and perfect bliss, having obtained the only thing in which man ought to have pleasure, namely God, and enjoys bliss with God.98

He then argues that perfection is Absolute, and the Absolute is only one and cannot be an individual; then:

When a soul becomes perfect and absolute, it must become one with Brahman, and would only realize the Lord as the perfection, the reality, of its own nature and existence; the existence absolute, knowledge absolute, and bliss absolute.99

(An unprejudiced mind might seriously question the logic here used. In the first place, there is no evidence possible that a man has "realized God", since this would be, if possible, an entirely personal experience or conclusion. Secondly, it would be possible for a God of all power to reveal himself to man in any form, not necessarily as the form or formless Absolute Self. Thirdly, there is no proof that a vision of the Absolute will make a man Absolute. Though God is Absolute perfection, man as finite being will be capable of attaining only relative perfection, relative knowledge, relative bliss. He can enter

98. Ibid.
99. Ibid., p. 11.
into divine wisdom and joy as this ability is imparted to him without the necessity of becoming divine. In fact, if man becomes God, morality is impossible. Many individuals of differing moral codes have claimed to realize God. Many different ways are proposed. He further says that:

Therefore, to gain this infinite universal individuality, this miserable little prison-individuality must go. Then alone death ceases when I am one with life, then alone can misery cease when I am one with happiness itself, then alone can all errors cease when I am one with knowledge itself, and this is the necessary scientific conclusion. 100

(This is not a necessary scientific or logical conclusion. For infinite beings who are willingly subject to God's control by His Spirit happiness sufficient, knowledge sufficient can be made available to man. Man must reach oneness of thought and interest in order to share the rewards of immortality, but oneness of being is impossible for finite beings. There must forever remain a separation, or God ceases to be God. Indirectly we would make him such a one as ourselves. The desire to become like Him is noble; the desire to be God is the highest possible form of selfishness. If the desire to go to a heaven of bliss should be eliminated because it is a selfish desire, how much more so such a desire to be God. It is represented as though we say, when I have everything, I will want nothing; when I reach this greatest desire I can desire no more. Men who have everything the heart can wish are seldom happy or satisfied. Men who follow desire would first seek to be like God, to be equal with God, to be God, and then to be greater than God. Again if individual consciousness is retained on merging with God, as Vivekananda says, then God is not One.

100. Swami Budhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p. 11.
but many. There is no proof that man can merge with God. Men have made this claim, but this is far more likely to be illusion than the claim that all individuality is illusion, that the universe is illusion. The particular does not become the universal; the finite cannot become infinite. There is the possibility of some degree of union of thought or action, but not Absolute Existence, Consciousness, Knowledge, or Bliss. Vivekananda's guru Ramakrishna claimed to have realized many gods, such as Siva, Pama, Krishna, Kali, Hanuman, and Christ, each with different moral ideals. He equates religions with each other which are greatly different in their moral ideals and beliefs. Vivekananda says there are no sinners, yet he frankly admitted on one occasion that the problem of good and evil has not been solved by Hinduism. He also wrote repeatedly of good actions, but all actions could be called good actions if there is no distinction between good and evil, or good and bad. Evil is more than the relationship to space - time - causation that he suggests. It is living contrary to the foundation principles of God's government as revealed in His laws. Evil does not need to proceed from a being equal with God or greater than God if the existence of individuality is allowed, where- in the individual has the power of choice of loving acceptance and obedience, or of going contrary to God's will. Evil could have risen spontaneously by a created being choosing not to follow good or God's will and law. Indeed in free choice is involved this possibility of disobedience, thus giving rise to evil. For an individual to have existence without free choice is slavery.

102. Ibid., p. 196.
(If God is Absolute and man's existence comparable to a few drops of ocean borne spray, to spark's flying upward from the fire, or a river merging with the sea, these illustrations all teach that personal existence —said to be illusion—would cease with merging with that from which they sprang. Further, if only God is Absolute being, then why should there be any existence, even illusory, apart from Him? To call this the "play of the gods"—here it must mean in monism the Absolute—does not agree with the picture of a God existing formless, attributeless, in ineffable peace as elsewhere suggested. Further, if there is really no personality of man, then there can be no morality; if man is uncreated or really non-existent, then there is no need for morality that governs relationship between individuals. Vivekananda and other Advaitists cannot on the one hand claim that God sent avatars into the world to destroy evil, and at the same time deny the existence of evil by calling it the "other side of the coin".) (See unpublished thesis by J. R. Chandran on Christian Apologetics in Relation to Vivekananda, p. 325.)

Vivekananda plainly states that "man is to become divine by realizing the divine". He also states that "every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man." This is not true of Christianity rightly understood. Christianity recognizes God as immanent, but also transcendent. God's immanence is revealed:

The Eternal Word revealed in creation, in nature, in human life, is the true answer to the demand that God's immanence should be completely acknowledged. (C. F. Andrews, The Renaissance in India, p. 160)

104. Ibid., p. 15.
Another contention of Vivekananda, later amplified by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in that all religions are essentially the same and lead to the same goal. Vivekananda states that there are four paths that reach the goal: those of work, love, psychology, and knowledge. He says:

We have found that in the end, all these four paths converge and become one. All religions and all methods of work and worship lead us to one and the same goal. *(The Ideal of Karma Yoga)*

(Thus obviously cannot be true. Just as in real life there are diverging roads that end short of the goal, so there are many religions which do not reveal the way to God. There are mercenaries in every religion, of course; there are sincere seekers in every religion, but many fall short of explaining man's relationship to God and the hereafter. To equate all does injustice to those whose teachings come close to universal truth. As many religions point out, salvation is by faith and God's grace; and not by human effort alone. Christians would, no doubt, not agree with his conclusions that the first Christians who preached about a time of equality and plenty of food and drink in a "millenial religion" were, of course, "ignorant fanatics". Even those "fanatics" he called the sincerest of men. The description scarcely fits the early apostles of the Christ Christian faith who went everywhere preaching, proclaiming the story of a risen Christ whom they knew and had seen alive after he had died. The miracles of Christ gave added witness to his claim to be the Equal with God. Awak-

107. Ibid., p. 27.
ened as from a dream, they began to realize that God had indeed become man. The resurrection of Christ electrified them; this is the reason why a despised illegal religion could reach in so short a time to the known world. No other religion had, or has demonstrated its truth by the resurrection. One who died now lived. He alone could tell man what is beyond death.

Vivekananda states the man is really not the agent who works, "We are the Self, eternally at rest and at peace." Even if this were true, it must be established, not merely assumed. He then states that:

Liberation means entire freedom—freedom from the bondage of good, as well as the bondage of evil. A golden chain is as much a chain as an iron one. (The Secret of Work)

He even suggests that after evil is "subdued and held in control in the corner of the mind;" after that the good tendencies have also to be. To believe this would destroy the foundations of character. Character is the result of a series of choices leading to good actions.

Vivekananda states man should work through love, should work through freedom. Then he adds:

Every act of love brings happiness; there is no act of love which does not bring peace and blessedness as its reaction. Real existence, real knowledge, and real

109. Ibid., p. 35.
110. Ibid., p. 35.
love are connected with one another, 
the three in one; where one of them is, 
the others must also be; they are the 
three aspects of the One without a 
second—the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. 111

He then suggests that this existence becomes relative seen as the world, knowledge becomes relative seen as knowledge of worldly things and bliss as the foundation of all true love. This love he holds never produces pain. Work may be a result of love, an impelling love that is duty. May it not be stated in reply to Vivekananda's reference to Krishna telling Arjun that he must work or the universe would die, that there is a moral obligation resting upon the Creator to uphold and sustain that which He has caused to be? Men, too, may feel the obligation; some may call it love; most others would call it duty. The man who knows the way to life has a moral obligation to tell others. Thus the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:16, "For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe unto me, if I preach not the gospel."

Vivekananda asks:

Do you think that man, the Infinite Spirit, was born to be a slave to his eyes, his nose, and his ears? There is an Infinite Omniscient Spirit behind that can do everything, break every bond; and that Spirit we are, and we get that power through love. We have to take ourselves where we are as materialists, and must take the help of matter, and go on slowly, until we become real spiritualists, and feel ourselves spirits, understand the spirit, and find that this world which we call infinite is but a gross external form of that which is behind. (First Steps to Bhakti) 112

111. Swami Budhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p. 37
112. Ibid., p. 47.
Vivekananda says in *The Teacher of Spirituality*, that "every soul is designed to be perfect, and every being in the end will attain to that end." He continues:

Quickening influence comes from outside, and that works upon our own potentialities, and then that growth begins, spiritual life comes, and man becomes holy and perfect in the end. This quickening impulse which comes from outside, cannot be received from books; the soul can receive impulse only from another soul and nothing else. 113

Here he feels is the need for the Guru, one who himself knows the way. These true teachers he believes will be "self-effulgent"; we will instinctively recognize truth. Vivekananda's own guru, Ramakrishna, had an almost mesmeric effect on people, including other religious leaders like Keshub Chandra Sen. 114 (It is true as the Bible says in Jeremiah 10:23, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Unless he has help from outside he cannot rise toward higher living, for "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jeremiah 17:9. That help cannot come from man, for all men are in the same general classification, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Romans 3:10. It is by the grace of God that help comes. The agency of this help to the Christian is the Holy Spirit of God, the means by which God can speak to the hearts of men everywhere, by which He is omnipresent.)

Vivekananda taught that the guru must "be sinless", that "in

spiritual sciences it is impossible from first to last that there can be any spiritual light in that soul which is impure.  

Vivekananda contends that every being will eventually become perfect, yet he sets forth the belief in endless cycles of evolution and involution, which in effect negates the possibility of this occurring in any reasonable time or with any real meaning or purpose to the history of man or divine purpose in the universe. The context indicates that this is complete purity, absence of evil, desire, or selfish motive.

Vivekananda said that there are two classes of men who do not worship God as man — he said that all others must worship God as a kind of super-man, because they can conceive of nothing else, as long as we are men. The classes who do not worship God as man he declared to be the human brute; and the Paramahamsa (highest Yogi). These he said had "gone beyond humanity ... thrown off his mind and body, and gone beyond the limits of nature," In fact:

All nature has become his Self. He has neither mind nor body, and can worship God as God, as can a Jesus or a Buddha. ... Those that have attained the highest knowledge also do not worship God — having realized and become one with God.  

(The Teacher of Spirituality)  

117. Ibid., p. 58.  
118. Ibid., p. 60.
Bold statements these are; but who is to confirm them? This is similar to gnosticism of the first and second century which placed such emphasis on higher or "true" knowledge, and made the world unreal. Jesus could worship God, for He knew Him; He was God. Many scholars believe that Buddha did not recognize the existence of a God, and made non-existence the goal of life. Only as man dies can he really have neither mind or body. When he has not them, he is no longer existent. Buddha claimed there was no soul, and the presentation of the Scriptures makes man a soul as the combination of breath and body. (Genesis 2:7) Except in imagination man cannot go beyond nature, beyond humanity. Declarations or assumptions or philosophies which claim anything contrary must be established with undeniable proof. Miraculous demonstrations may be presented—or they may seem such—but these must be examined with greatest care and accepted only as a part of the evidence. Vivekananda correctly states that Christ does not come as a hobgoblin or into a "spiritualistic seance to dance." He is right in saying that "fools", "horrible demoniacal men" and "devils" can heal and perform miracles. Any Christian should accept that in seeking after Christ we are seeking:

Not those foolish things of miraculous display, but the wonderful powers of the Spirit, which makes man free, gives him control of the things of nature, takes from him the badge of slavery, and shows Christ to him.

120. Ibid., pp. 61, 62.
121. Ibid., p. 62
Vivekananda said that true religion "must be able to show the soul." This he equates with showing "us God and the truth in ourselves." Religion he equates with being, not believing, a process which begins with worship, any kind or religion - different for every man. (The Need of Symbols)\\(^{122}\) Prayer and desire for heaven he considers as a part of Karma, necessary to be given up as the Bhakta strives for union with God. The desire to go to heaven need not be selfish in the sense of getting and having things; it can rise in the desire to forever be with the Lord, to find life's satisfaction with Him as the Bhakti desires.

In discussing Raja-Yoga as a way to life, Vivekananda says that the direct experience of Christ—who saw God, the disciples, who felt God, the Rishis who claimed to experience various truths is the foundation of knowledge. (The Aim of Raja Yoga)\\(^{123}\) It is true that experience and observation are the basis of knowledge, but the further claim is made that "one experience in this world in any particular branch of knowledge" must absolutely be an experience that has been repeated millions of times and will be eternally. Uniformity is the rigorous law of nature; what has happened once can happen always.\\(^{124}\) This is illicit process of logic. To insist that all must feel the soul, or see God to have true religion is going into the area of the unjustifiable assumption. There must be; there have been experiences absolutely unique which have not been repeated.

Vivekananda said:

\\(^{123}\) Ibid., pp. 71, 72.
\\(^{124}\) Ibid.
Man wants truth, wants to experience a truth for himself; when he has grasped it, realized it, felt it within his heart of hearts, then alone, declare the Vedas, would all doubts vanish, all darkness be scattered, and all crookedness be made straight. 'Ye children of immortality, even those who live in the higher spheres the way is found: there is a way out of all this darkness, and that is by perceiving Him who is beyond all darkness; there is no other way. 125

Raja Yoga attempts to set forth the methods to attain that perception. The method consists of concentrating the mind and turning it back upon itself to penetrate and reveal its inmost secrets. 126 The purpose is to "take away all our misery!"

When by analyzing his own mind, man comes face to face, as it were, with something which is never destroyed, something which is, by its own nature, eternally pure and perfect, he will be no more miserable, no more unhappy. All misery comes from unsatisfied desire. Man will find that he never dies, and then he will have no more fear of death. When he knows that he is perfect, he will have no more vain desires, and both these causes being absent, there will be no more misery—there will be perfect bliss, even while in this body. 127

A further purpose is declared:

125. M. M. Thomas, The Acknowledged Christ, pp. 72, 73.
126. Ibid., p. 75.
127. Ibid., p. 74.
The man who has discovered and learnt how to manipulate the internal forces will get all nature under his control. The Lord proposes to himself no less a task than to master the whole universe, to control the whole of nature.128

He later explains that there are really no external-internal divisions in nature.

The Christian looks forward to the day when "he shall know as also he is known." (1 Corinthians 13:12) To know Christ by experience, to know God are often spoken of. But God forever remains above man's knowledge. If God could be fully known, he would cease to be the transcendent God. As the Apostle Paul said in Romans 11:33, 34, "Of the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" Man by looking within for a source of wisdom is in danger of being self-deceived. The Scriptures both Christian and the Vedas present God as in control of nature. Man has not been given this power. Likewise, in the Bible it was the mighty being who was cast out of heaven who said, "I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). It was precisely this false knowledge offered man—"Ye shall be as gods." "Ye shall not surely die." (Genesis 3: 5 and 4)

Jesus said in John 17:3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." This knowledge of God is nowhere presented as absolute knowledge, just as the perfection of man is not absolute, but rather maturity, complete-
ness. To know God does not need to be interpreted that God can be fully known by man; the finite cannot comprehend the Infinite One.

Vivekananda rejected the idea of God as a heavenly Father. He said:

Nothing could be more foolish to the Hindu mind than to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven." The Hindu, when he worships thinks that God is within himself. (Hints on Practical Spirituality) 129

The Christian does not deny that God may reside within man by His Holy Spirit, but he also believes that a Supre-Personal God who sees and hears and knows dwells in a heaven of heavens, as does the Bhakti.

Vivekananda stated that "I Am" is the first fact of consciousness. He called life an unforgettable wonderful reality. So self-evident did he hold this to be that he felt it unnecessary even to discuss the arguments for and against it. He said:

The idea of immortality is inherent in man. How can one discuss a subject that is unimaginable? (Such as death)

Earlier in the same paragraph he had written:

Birth, life, and death are but old superstitions. None was ever born, none will ever die, one changes one's position—that is all. 130

130. Ibid., p. 86.
Men are well aware of the fact of death. None but Christ has clearly proven life to exist beyond the grave. As Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 9:5, "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything." In verse 6, "Neither have they a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun." In verse 10, "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whether thou goest." The facts are that all wish to live beyond or after death, but the feeling that man is immortal is not universal.

Vivekananda wrote about man being "an infinite circle whose circumference is nowhere, but the center is located in one spot," whereas, "God is an infinite circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose center is everywhere." He further stated of God:

He works through all hands; sees through all eyes; walks on all feet; breathes through all bodies; lives in all life; speaks through every mouth; and thinks through every brain. Man can become like God and acquire control over the whole universe, if he multiplies infinitely his center of self-consciousness.\textsuperscript{131}

These ideas are strongly subject to question. It is true that God cannot be measured by man; His Divine Energy fills the universe, upholding and sustaining all things. But to make God the thinker, the Doer in every man takes away the foundation of moral responsibility. In fact, Vivekananda seems to intend just that. He said:

You are good because you cannot help it; another is bad because he cannot help it. ... such is the law of balance.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{131} Swami Budhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p.89.  
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p. 90.
He indicated that the cause of the good or bad action was the "submerged millions of our old conscious thoughts; old conscious actions become petrified." The idea that there is no external limit to man's self-expansion outward from the center would logically then be interpreted to mean that the self is infinite—and, therefore, God, since infinity belongs alone to Him. But who is to say that man has no external limits of expansion? This is contrary to all observation. Man is very limited in space, time, and power. Only God is not. It is easier to make a statement; to establish it as fact is necessary before extending an argument or supporting a system of belief upon it. God may be aware of all that is seen, heard, thought, and done; His sustaining power is necessary for the life of man, but His immanence in His creatures is limited by their willingness to prepare for His indwelling. It is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible to believe that God is indwelling in every man to the same degree. Surely the saint reveals more of His presence within than the rogue. And if God is the thinker and doer within man, why should man be held responsible for his actions or suffer their effect or Karma?

Vivekananda felt that man must first control the subconscious mind, and then, of course, the conscious, and beyond this he stated that there was a work above the conscious state which he called the superconscious.

When this superconscious state is reached, man becomes free and divine; death becomes immortality, weakness becomes infinite power, and iron bondage becomes liberty. That is the goal, the infinite realm of the superconscious.¹³⁴

¹³³ Swami Rudhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p. 91.
¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 91.
It is said that the individual who is able to reach this superconscious state is the true Yogi, who is able to reach this state after long self-concentration. Who is to say that such a state is attained? It is possible that an individual can be either self-hypnotized or self-deceived, by self-concentration. It is also possible that a person by this means can make himself susceptible to spiritualist influences. An effect may be produced, but it is extremely doubtful that a true super-conscious state of the mind is possible to man, except in moments when he is under direct control of another spirit—divine, as in prophetic inspiration; human, as in hypnotism or mesmerism, or satanic as in spiritualism. There is no proven power within man that can be this super-conscious power.

Vivekananda's discussion of the formation of the universe with cyclic periods of dissolution and evolution does have some agreement with a belief held by some modern astronomers that the universe is self-creating and self-destroying. This is denied by those believers in God who can conceive of a God able to project divine Energy and bring the universe out of nothing. (It requires faith in a God big enough, powerful enough. If universal particles are eternal substances from which evolves a universe, then the universe is itself given an attribute of God. And this is exactly where advaita philosophy leads—to call the universe God and at the same time to call it unreal, only apparent, existing only in name and form. To deny the visible, the demonstrable, the solid, and compare it to a mirage, a seeming existence only is to strike at the very foundation of modern science. A mirage can be demonstrated to be non-existent; the universe can be proven by scientific tests to be real. Using as the basis the Upani-shad argument that he who has knowledge of one lump of clay knows all clay in the universe, the question is asked:
What is that, knowing which we know everything in the universe? The idea of the Advaitists is to generalize the whole universe into one—that something which is really the whole of the universe. And they claim that this universe is one, that it is one Being manifesting itself in all those various forms. They admit that what the Sāṅkhya calls nature exists, but say that nature is God. It is this Being, the Sat, which has been converted into all this—the universe, man, soul, and everything that exists, (The Vedanta Philosophy) 135

He then showed how the leading or chief Advaitists (non-dualists) call the universe "the apparent evolution of God." Name and form cause differentiations in man's mind. Actually the illustration of knowing one lump of clay is a weak one. There are very many types of clay—sandy, micaeous, gritty, silty; it varies in color, texture, use, etc. A different type of clay is needed for fine chinaware than for bricks; still another makes firebrick or another mud bricks. Knowing one type of clay may give a false idea concerning others. The universe can be explained in the barest outline; there is knowledge of it almost limitless yet to be gained. It is subject to fixed laws; its motions, eclipses, etc. can be calculated with a high degree of accuracy. Men can rely upon its mechanics and physical characteristics sufficiently to go to the moon and return safely to earth. All scientific evidence points to a truly existent universe, subject to more or less clearly discernable laws; no real evidence can be produced to prove that nature or the universe is God. The evidence would rather indicate

dualism—a God in control of the universe. Conceivably there could have been a time when God existed alone in the universe; how and where, none knows. But when God created the universe, he made it conform to natural laws. It is not God, but under God's direction and control.

Vivekananda's announced goal for man is to give up the individualized self. When this is done, delusion vanishes and man realizes his true nature.

The prison of misery has become changed into Sat, Chit, Ananda—Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute—and the attainment of this is the goal of the Advaita Philosophy.136

There are individuals to whom life is not a prison of misery. They really enjoy life. And if anything is instinctive in man, it is the belief in individuality. To give up this idea of an individual self is contrary to basic nature. The central teaching of Christianity is the survival of this personality after death. Individuals may become one with each other, one with God without Absolute oneness—one in will, desire, purpose, aim, hope, service, work, loyalty, consecration, with the identity of each individual preserved. The Apostle Paul said that "then shall I know, even as also I am known." 1 Corinthians 13:12. Partial knowledge will give way to fulness of understanding.

Vivekananda says that "in the universe, behind the Universal mind there is a soul that exists, and it is called God." "In the individual it is the soul of man." He then asks a very important question:

Is this mind the creator of his body, and his soul the creator of his mind? That is to say, are his body, his mind,

and his soul three different existences, or are they three in one, or are they different states of the same unit being? (The Real and Apparent Man)\textsuperscript{137}

He then discusses the positions taken on this point by dualists and non-dualists. The dualist would have the soul feel pleasure, pain, and enjoyment. He then argued that the soul of man, being separate from mind and matter must be immortal. The reason stated is that the soul is not the result of combination. Decomposition is equated with mortality:

That alone which is not the result of composition can never become decomposed, and therefore can never die. It is immortal. It has been existing throughout eternity; it is uncreate. Every item of creation is simply a composition; no one ever saw creation come out of nothing. All we know of creation is a combination of already existing things into newer forms. That being so, the soul of man, being simple, must have been existing forever, and it will exist forever. When this body falls off, the soul lives on.\textsuperscript{138}

As to what happens to the soul he said:

Those that are very spiritual, when they die, follow the solar rays, and reach what is called the solar sphere, through which they reach what is called the lunar sphere, and through that they reach what is called the sphere of lightning, and

\textsuperscript{137} Swami Rudhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p.123.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
there they meet another soul who is already blessed, and he guides the newcomer forward to the highest of all spheres, which is called Brahmaloka, the sphere of Brahma. There these souls attain to omniscience and omnipotence, become almost as powerful and all-knowing as God Himself; and they reside there forever according to the dualists, or, according to the nondualists they become one with Universal at the end of the cycle. 139

The class which does good works with selfish motives has another fate. When the body dies, because their karma of good works must be fulfilled, they are taken to the "lunar sphere" of the various heavens where they receive god-bodies and "become gods", living there for a long period of time. When their good Karma is used up, the bad karma takes over. The souls lose their god-bodies; they must return to earth, the only place where bad karma can be dealt with—in a human body.

They fall back again to the earth; they come down through the spheres of air and clouds, and all these various regions, and at last reach the earth through raindrops. There on the earth they attach themselves to some cereal which is eventually eaten by some man who is fit to supply them with material to make a new body. 140

There is a third class of wicked men. When they die their souls become ghosts or demons, and live somewhere between the lunar sphere and this earth. 141 Eventually these "fall back to the earth and

140. Ibid.
141. Ibid.
Vivekananda summarizes the three groups:

We see then, that those who have nearly attained to perfection, in whom only a little impurity remains, go to the Brahmaloka through the rays of the sun; those who were a middling sort of people, who did some good work here with the idea of going to heaven, go to the heavens in the lunar sphere and there obtain god-bodies; but they have again to become men, and so have another chance to become perfect. Those that are very wicked become ghosts and demons, and then they may have to become animals; after that they get another chance to perfect themselves.  

He emphasizes that actions in the places of reward are simply the result of past *karma* and do not produce any new karma, either good or bad. Only actions done here on earth have attached karma.

Man, therefore, according to the Vedanta philosophy, is the greatest being that there is in the universe, and this world of work the best place in it, because only herein is the greatest and best chance for him to become perfect. Angels or gods, whatever you may call them, have all to become men if they want to become perfect. This is the great centre, the wonderful poise and the wonderful opportunity, this human life.

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143. Ibid., pp. 124, 125.
144. Ibid., p. 126.
It scarcely needs to be said that most of these ideas would be seriously questioned by anyone with a knowledge of physics or other sciences. For example, many chemical compounds are the result of partial decomposition of elements. Some of these materials, as oxides, etc., are extremely stable, much more so than such elements as potassium, flourine, sodium, iron, lithium, hydrogen, phosphorus, and many others. Secondly, the Bible record of the origin of the soul is a record of a combination of the body and mind plus the life force or breath of life. Since it cannot be proven that an entity called the soul exists apart from life of the body, the existence of the soul from the eternity of the past is not demonstrable, but must be assumed or taken by faith. All extra-sensory perceptions are explainable on the basis of information provided by an outside source, such as angels or demons. Their origin within the mind cannot be proven scientifically. So-called memories of previous existences are also possible to explain on the same basis: a spirit power who wishes to confuse men and cause them to believe in a previous existence in order to support a philosophy or theory which causes disbelief in a Personal God to whom man is accountable for his actions.

The idea of the various spheres is unsupportable by evidence. The ideas of souls travelling up moonbeams or the sun's rays is more like science fiction than philosophy or religious truth. So-called immaterial souls falling with material raindrops to the earth is likewise greatly subject to question. Entering animal bodies or man bodies (which already supposedly have souls) is scarcely any easier to accept. Vivekananda wrote in several places of the theory of ether filling all space, and gave this as an indication of agreement with science. At the present time no scientist supports the theory of ether, and none of repute would support an idea of solar or lunar or lightning, or other
spheres through which the soul is said to travel, nor that life on earth came from the moon. And why is karma applicable to this world alone? On what basis could men conclude that the millions of stars do not support at least one other world with life like our own? How also could a person who is filled with impurity be taken to Brahmaloka even for a short while, just because of a few good deeds? Would he not be a discordant note in a land of peace? Concerning the soul and its origin, upon what basis could it be said to be eternal even if uncreated? If the Bible picture is correct—and it has not been proven otherwise—the soul was in fact never created. It has no independent existence or life, it never lived before birth or after; it is not subject to death, but it ceases to be at death, until God restores the identical personality at the resurrection of man in the last day.

Vivekananda wrote:

It is not that the soul and the mind and the body are three separate existences; for this organism made of these three is really one. It is the same thing which appears as this body, as the mind, and as the thing beyond mind and body, but it is not at the same time all these.

Man is a combination; the composite is the soul—the total being that man is—a personality differing from all others because that combination of body and mind and environment makes each one a little different.

146. Ibid., p. 128.
Typical of the reasoning of Vivekananda is his declaration that God only appears to be in many forms because of name and form. The very reason why name and form exists is difference. Certain forms have certain names. Even though, as an example, amethyst, chalcedony, rock crystal, agate, sardonyx, jasper, carnelian, and related minerals are all quartz, yet they are not identical. Microscopic impurities cause colour changes; the degree of hardness may vary. Likewise all life differs; man, insects, plants, animals—all alive, all have name and form because they are different.

Vivekananda uses the illustration of the wave and the sea, and equates them in substance, differing only in name and form: take away name and form and there is only one. He leads up to a conclusion:

So this whole universe is that one Unit Existence; name and form have created all these various differences. As when the sun shines upon millions of globules of water, upon each particle is seen a most perfect representation of the sun, so the one Soul, the one Self, the One Existence of the universe, being reflected on all these various globules of varying names and forms, appears to be various, but is in reality only one. There is no "I", nor "you"; it is all One. It is either all "I" or all "you." This idea of duality, of two, is entirely false, and the whole universe as we ordinarily know it, is the result of this false knowledge. When discrimination comes, and man finds there are not two but One, he finds that he is himself this universe. 'It is I who am this universe as it now exists; a continuous mass of change. It is I who am beyond all changes, beyond all qualities, the eternally perfect, the eternally blessed.'
There is, therefore, but one Atman, one Self, eternally pure, eternally perfect, unchangeable, unchanged. It has never changed, and all these various changes in the universe are but appearances in that one Self. 147

While it can readily be admitted that man investigating truth will find evidence of one God pervading the Universe, controlling, directing, upholding all; Himself the cause of its existence, yet it does not follow that knowledge of the universe is false knowledge. Even if man finds God's power pervading all things, the next conclusion "he is himself this universe" does not logically follow. He is a part, not the whole; it is under God's control, not man's. Nor does the further conclusions that I am "beyond all changes" "all qualities" the "eternally perfect" follow. The part never can be the whole; the finite cannot become the Infinite, the imperfect the perfect. What cannot be proved is here simply boldly set forth as fact when it is contrary to reason and every known scientific truth. Likewise the statement, "It is either all 'I' or all 'you!'" Upon what basis can such a statement be made? Scientific evidence would indicate that it is neither one of these alternatives; we, instead of being the universe are an infinitesimal part of it. This is not to deny that there is a basic similarity in that all material things are made up of protons and electrons and nuclei of various atoms in different arrangements for each separate element. The chief weakness of his argument is that the real world is made unreal, whereas the invisible is made to be all important; since the soul is not visible and God is not visible these may be equated in some minds. Vivekananda, like other Vedanta Advaita mystics, fails to limit self-transcendence. A projection of self is not God. Man is unable to comprehend the supreme transcendence of God. As Vivekananda says, he can understand him only as Man. 148

147. Swami Budhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p. 129.
148. Ibid., pp. 58, 59.
Man is limited in knowledge and can know only by revelation. The feeling of immediacy, illumination, etc., can be the result of spiritualism; therefore feeling is dangerous evidence. Because man's nature is corrupted by evil he cannot "break through" to God. This is why Vivekananda found it necessary to deny man's sinfulness. Rationalizing philosophy which seeks to interpret scientific facts is greatly weakened when the "facts" later prove not to be real truth, and where only suppositions are stated as facts which later evidence shows to be untrue. We cannot prove philosophical conclusions by the scientific method; the interpretation is related to one's already established viewpoint; however when philosophy proves contrary to that which can be scientifically demonstrated, the philosophy is obviously inadequate or in error.

It is a statement partly in agreement with fact to say "There is ... but one Atman, one Self, eternally pure, eternally perfect, unchangeable, unchanging." As the Bible also says, "I am the Lord, I change not." (Malachi 3:16) God is a pure and perfect being. God does not dwell alone; He is a God of activity, controlling the universe. The Bible presents God as the creator of the starry heavens and of this world and life upon it. (Exodus 20:11); (Isaiah 40:12,26,28; 40:29). Telescopes reveal the distant stars; men accurately chart the path of sun and moon, predict eclipses, etc. All scientific evidence demonstrates that the universe is real and not illusion. To say as Vivekananda goes on to say that "all these various changes in the universe are but appearances in that one Self"149 is to ignore God's transcendence.

149. Swami Rudhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p. 129.
The universe is constantly changing; the nature and character of God do not. The changes are real and often predictable. They are not appearances of God, but are demonstrable facts of nature, revealing the infinite variety to be found in the great Creator.

Vivekananda compared the universe to an ocean of thought where each individual is a point called a particular mind:

> You are a mind, I am a mind, everyone is a mind; and the very same universe viewed from the standpoint of knowledge, when the eyes have been cleared of delusions, when the mind has become pure, appears to be the Unbroken, Absolute Being, the ever-pure, the unchangeable, the Immortal.¹⁵⁰

The difficulty in this reasoning is epistemology. Who is to establish what is delusion and what is truth? Vivekananda proceeds further to say that for the soul there is no birth or death. The ideas of "higher heavens and lower worlds, all vanish immediately for the perfect."¹⁵¹ He pictured nature as changing, like the pages of a book as it is read; "but the soul is ever the same—eternal."¹⁵² Death is simply a change taking place "in nature, not in you." As an illustration he referred to the apparent motion of the sun across the sky, while in fact it was the earth rotating, not the motion of the sun that caused the effect; or as the landscape apparently moves when viewed from a moving vehicle. So the visible effects are said to be unreal, the invisible real. The Advaitist says that "spheres and devils and gods,

¹⁵⁰ Swami Budhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p. 130.
¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 131.
¹⁵² Ibid.
reincarnations, and transmigrations are all mythology; so is this human life. That the first statement is true many could agree; but that does not prove the second. What kind of Supreme Being could it be who would allow all the suffering and trouble that exists in the world just as a bad dream or illusion, a cosmic joke? There are more reasonable explanations of life, suffering, and the universe than this. Vivekananda, after calling the human life mythology stated:

The whole thing as it appears is pure mythology, and the greatest of all lies is that we are bodies, which we never were, nor even can be. It is the greatest of all lies that we are mere men; we are the God of the universe. In worshipping God we have always been worshipping our own hidden self.

The worst lie you can ever tell yourself is that you were born a sinner or a wicked man.

He argued that when man’s vision is changed, man finds that:

He is really omnipresent, that all time is in him, and that he is not in time; that all the heavens are in him, and that he is not in any heaven, and that all the gods that men ever worshipped are in him, and that he is not in anyone of these gods, ... the real nature of man stands revealed to him as being higher than heaven, more perfect than this universe of ours, more infinite than infinite time, more omnipresent.

154. Ibid., pp. 132, 133.
155. Ibid., p. 133.
than the omnipresent ether. Thus alone, man becomes fearless, and becomes free.  

When this happens he pictured misery, pain, fear, death, pleasures, earth, heavens, birth and death, even the universe itself vanishing away. All nature is a mirage; "the real man is the One Unit Existence."  

There seemed to be no limits to which Vivekananda's oratory could lead him in making statement after unsupported statement. Finite man, "more infinite than infinite", "more perfect than the universe", omnipresent, deathless. How little we really know of the universe; how little even of these wonderful bodies and minds of ours we really know. More has been discovered in the past twenty-five years than men ever knew before, and still man is only on the threshold of understanding. The mechanism of thought, emotion, judgment, vision, hearing, taste, touch is basically understood; desired actions can be produced, once learned, by proper electrical stimuli at the proper brain centers; emotions of pleasure, anger, fear, etc, turned on and off by an electrical switch.  

These investigations cannot be dismissed as simply illusion; neither can the miracle of birth or the tragedy of death.  

Vivekananda said that no one has any rights; no one has any separate existence: "There is neither man nor woman; the soul is sexless, eternally pure."  

If this is carried to its logical limit, then all the talk about the soul is really meaningless, for where there is but One the many separate souls do not exist. If man is "the whole universe", there is no place left for God; if God is, there is no place left for man. He well asked the question:

157. see Newsweek, 21 June 1971, pp. 36-40.
158. Swami Budhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p.137.
Suppose we have realized this oneness of the universe, that we are that One Infinite Being, and suppose we have realized that this Self is the Only Existence, and that it is the same self that is manifesting in all these phenomenal forms, what becomes of us after that?  

He sought to answer the question by suggesting that when he realizes that God is the Universe and all in it is God he will love more intensely as he realizes that his wife, the husband, even the enemy is God Himself. In fact he felt that he would not only consider the holy man as God Himself, but he "will also love the unholiest of men because he knows the background of that unholiest of men is even He, the Lord, ... his little self is dead and God stands in its place." This attitude he felt would transform the world into an abode of peace; all jealousy, struggle, hate, and evil would vanish forever. His formula is given:

If one-millionth part of the men and women who live in this world simply sit down and for a few minutes say: "You are all God, O ye men, and O ye animals, and living beings, you are all the manifestations of the one living Deity," the world will be changed in half an hour.  

Unfortunately, if a Personal God exists, and I am sure that He does, He can only be God as He remains distinctly separate from the Universe He made and controls. Man in his search for realization of God may

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160. Ibid., p. 139.  
161. Ibid., p. 140.
find something that is not God, but a power seeking to usurp the honour and glory due to God. Instead of the thoughts of great thinkers leading to 'God-realization' in man, and the very air charged with the thought "Thou art That", and the suns and moons of the whole universe proclaiming "Thou art That" as Vivekananda claimed, does not man's intellect reveal the very opposite truth? Does not the truly spiritual man see in the works of God a glory and power far beyond man? Does not the very immensity of the universe humble him? One long ago, who meditated often on God said:

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Surely Aesthetics reveal that a personal God, a lover of beauty, made the universe. Instead then of the very air being charged with the idea "Thou art That", thinking men see in the world about them the working of a Divine Intelligence. Every fresh scientific truth concerning nature, the universe, or man serves to widen the unbridgeable gulf between man and God. Man may be regarded by others as having "become divine", but though he may become godly, as men say, he cannot become God. Immediacy may seem to be confirmed, a mental peace, a satisfaction, an awareness may be produced. These however, are not proofs sufficient, because all this and more can be produced by hypnosis, even by self-hypnosis. Therefore it is within the realms of possibility that the "experience" so sought after may prove to be the real illusion, the clever counterfeit replacing empirical truth.

163. The Holy Bible, Psalms 8:3,4.
Vivekananda spoke of "the Jñāni-Yogi, the philosopher, the thinker, who wants to go beyond the realm of the visible:"

Not even myriads of systems of worlds will satisfy him; they are to him but a drop in the ocean of existence. His soul wants to go beyond all that into the very heart of being, by seeing Reality as It is; by realizing It; by being It, by becoming one with that Universal Being. ... To him God is the life of his life, the soul of his soul; God is his own Self. Nothing else remains which is other than God. All the mortal parts of him become pounded by the weighty strokes of philosophy, and are brushed away. What at last truly remains is God Himself. (The Ideal of a Universal Religion)164

He then explained that the Life of the Universe was present in worlds and atoms alike, and is the basis of the human Soul. More than this, Man is That One.

This is what this Jñāna-Yoga teaches. It tells man that he is essentially divine. It shows to mankind the real unity of being and that each one of us is the Lord God Himself, manifested on earth.165

If as Vedantists claim, God is without attributes, how can man be of identical essence? Philosophers may seek to dispose of the reality of the universe, but it remains daily becoming better known. Without a divine self-disclosure man cannot know God. Divine history reveals

165. Ibid., p. 161.
God throughout history at work with man, but always transcendent. Man’s purpose is to be with God, not to be God. As far as the “weighty strokes of philosophy” are concerned, the weight of the strokes is considerably blunted by the fact that philosophers do not agree either in India or the West, often presenting exact opposites as truth. One says that the universe, earth, man are unreal; another says they are the only Reality we know; another says the apparent universe is a manifestation of God. If the pantheistic idea of God is accepted then there is no place where God as Being exists—no personality centralized in one place if His invisible essence fills the universe as a part of all things. Revelation in the Bible discloses that there was a time when God existed before the earth and the worlds were made. Just how or where He existed we are not told, except of a “heaven of heavens”. But when the universe was made, it was not God. It is substantial, subject to empirical knowledge. God is the Ultimate Reality, but exists as the Transcendent Person as well as the Immanent Spirit. Were Vivekananda to say that “all of us, from the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the highest being to whom we look up with wonder and awe—all are manifestations of the “power and wisdom” of the same Lord,” then his words would not be debatable. Since God is purity and without trace of evil, man to be united with him must be sinless—and man is not and cannot be by his own efforts.

Vivekananda said that in India men first began to inquire into the nature of man, and “Here first rose the doctrines of the immortality of the soul.” (The Future of India) There is little in ancient Indian history that can be accurately dated, but it is known that very anciently Greeks, Egyptians, Harrimans, and Babylonians inquired into these

166. The Holy Bible, Genesis 1:1; Psalms 90:2; Hebrews 1:2; 11:3 and many others.
168. Ibid., p. 162.
matters. In the West Plato is credited with similar ideas and teachings. Before Plato immortality of the soul was earlier taught by the Greek philosopher Pythagoras in the 6th century B.C. The Egyptian idea of the ka may have been similar, but not enough is known today to be sure. Others have asserted that the Vedas do not teach the belief in the immortality of the soul. This idea most clearly comes from the Upanishads, which were written within Greek times; the idea could have been borrowed from the Greeks, or the ancient Egyptians (from the Isis-Osiris cults) or from the Babylonians. It may have been introduced by the Aryans.

Vivekananda said on one occasion:

What is this life? You are Hindus, and there is the instinctive belief in you that life is eternal. (The Future of India)\textsuperscript{169}

He went on to say that he did not believe that a Hindu could be an atheist. He then added:

Life is short, but the soul is immortal and eternal, and one thing being certain, death, let us take up a great ideal and give our life to it.\textsuperscript{170}

All know indeed that life is short and death is certain to come, but all do not know that the soul is immortal and eternal. Since this is not in the empirical realm, it must be assumed, taken for granted, or accepted by faith. The mature thinker will refuse to accept statements by others which lack foundations in the sense experience. He will suggest these as tentative conclusions, but withhold judgment until the evidence

\textsuperscript{169} Swami Budhananda, \textit{Selections from Swami Vivekananda}, p.179.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., p. 180.
is in. He may be inclined to accept them, but should present them to others as what they are — theories, to be tested, evaluated, approved or rejected as the evidence reveals.

Vivekananda referred to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (highest Guru) as "my teacher, my master, my hero, my ideal, my God in life." (Reply to the Calcutta Address)\(^{171}\) He referred to his life as "the worst of all lives that you have ever seen, ... or ever read of," "the most marvelous manifestation of soul-power that you can read of, must less expect to see." "His character ... was so great that if I, or any other of his disciples, spent hundreds of lives we could not do justice to a millionth part of what he really was."\(^{172}\) Here certainly Vivekananda appeared convinced to such an extent that he could employ hyperboles such as this one. For certainly if he is consistent in believing that all men are really God, one man is no more God than another. Ramakrishna himself never claimed to be God, though his disciple Vivekananda did. Vivekananda also called him one of the great incarnations of God.\(^{173}\)

Vivekananda wrote concerning the individual souls and their relation to one another:

> How is it possible that my soul can react on your soul, where is the medium through which it can work, where is the medium through which it can act? How is that I can feel anything about your soul? What is it that is in touch with both your soul and my soul? Therefore there is a metaphysical necessity of admitting another soul, for it must be

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172. Ibid., p. 187.
a soul which acts in contact with all the different souls, and in and through matter; one Soul which covers and inter-penetrates all the infinite number of souls in the world, in and through which they live, in and through which they sympathize, and love, and work for one another. And this universal Soul is Paramatman, the Lord God of the universe. Again, it follows that because the soul is not made of matter, since it is spiritual, it cannot obey the laws of matter, it cannot be judged by the laws of matter. It is therefore unconquerable, birthless, deathless, and changeless, (The Vedanta).\(^{174}\)

He then referred to the soul: "Changeless, all pervading, un-moving, immovable, eternal is this Self of man."\(^{175}\) He said that the Gita and the Vedanta also taught that it is both all pervading and omni-present.\(^{176}\) He added the further idea that the soul is the same amount of energy expended, whether it appears as amoeba, worm, man or Buddha, and that it is constantly in a process of spiritual evolution upward to divinity. This led him to conclude:

As such it follows that every soul is infinite. From the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the noblest and greatest saints, all have this infinite power, infinite purity and infinite everything. Only the difference is in the degree of manifestation. The worm is only manifesting just a little bit of that energy, you have manifested

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174. Swami Ráthánáná, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, pp. 204, 205.
175. Ibid., p. 205.
176. Ibid.
more; another god-man has manifested still more, that is all the difference. But that infinite power is still there all the same.177

Just as when one irrigates a field he opens the way for only a small portion of the water available:

So every one of us, every being, has as his own background such a reservoir of strength, infinite power, infinite purity, infinite bliss, and existence infinite—only these locks, these bodies, are hindering us from expressing what we really are to the fullest.178

This evolution upward is possible because eternal principles, the eternal Vedic laws, are in every soul, whether of "the soul of the ant, or the soul of the god."179 All that is necessary is for the ant "to evolve and get the body of a sage or a Rishi, and the Vedas will come out, eternal laws expressing themselves."180 This means that man does not have an external Saviour, but his salvation is from within. There is as much possibility for salvation of the lowest man as in the Buddha; only a little more time is involved.181

Vivekananda's necessity of admitting the Param-atman as interpenetrating and working through all souls would at first seem to be dualistic. He then, however, stated that the Self of man is the eternal un-
changing Self. This, of course, is a step he already had taken in his thinking; the effect, however, is to confuse the Worker with the tool; the Greater with the less; the Whole with the part. Because God is all pervading and eternal it does not logically follow that the soul under his control partakes of these qualities. It comes back to his argument that the soul becomes perfect, therefore infinite, therefore Absolute. These steps do not necessarily follow. Man is incapable of Absolute perfection; therefore he is not infinite, not the Supreme Being. Vivekananda may refer to him as Personal-yet-impersonal, but this is only verbal sleight-of-hand to try to account for a Supreme being transcendent and controlling all, yet pantheistically immanent. It is plain that he did not really believe in a Personal God. To him this idea was only illusion, a temporary help to souls unable to comprehend God in his true nature—Impersonal Spirit. For example he refers to a personal God:

This God is illogical and impossible, as all of you are aware. We need not go into the defects of the "design theory," as all our Kshanikas have shown them full well; and so this Personal God fell to pieces. ...

How can you prove the existence of this God? On the other hand it can be almost disproved. There is not a shadow of proof as to His existence, and there are very strong arguments to the contrary. How will you prove His existence, with your God, and His Omens, and an infinite number of souls which are substance, and each soul an individual? You are not as
a body, for you know today better than
even the Buddhists of old knew, that
what may have been matter in the sun
has just now become matter in you, and
will go out and become matter in plants;
then where is your individuality ... ?182

He then suggested that because a man thought differently as an adult or old man than as a child the mind has no individuality, and that because he was not aware of the existence of various parts of his body, there was no proof of their existence, if consciousness is a proof of existence. He asks then, "Where are you then with your personal God theories? How can you prove such a God?"183

Actually the teleological arguments for God are not the only ones. They have been denied, but still not refuted. The main arguments against them used (as also by Vivekananda) concern the existence of evil in the world, and apparently unequal opportunities. These points have already been considered, so will not be enlarged here, except that to say they do not cancel out the positive arguments. Secondly, not all subscribe to the idea of the runa, nor to the idea of the existence of souls apart from the combination of body and mind. Nor is there evidence that individual souls know all other souls. A Personal God could, by His divine Spirit, and still remain a Person. Also the fact that various elements which are a part of my body today once were a constituent of some plant or animal does not prove evolution. There is in fact no proof available of the existence of anything more than a life principle in bacteria, plants, insects, or animals. No evidence of

182. Swami Budhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, pp. 210, 211.
183. Ibid., p. 211.
their possession of a soul is available. The idea of their evolution is purely hypothetical. In all recorded history of the world, and in all the fossil records there is not the slightest proof that one variety of life became another kind. There are hundreds of "missing links" in the evolutionary theory. No animal ever gained new limbs, brains, digestive tracts, etc. All evidence shows only adaptation to environment of existing organs; mutations have produced different varieties but not new kinds. Flies remain flies; reptiles remain reptiles; dogs remain dogs; monkeys monkeys, and man man.

The idea that a man thinks differently at a period of maturity or old age than he did as a child proves nothing concerning God. It only proves that man is an individual, capable of learning, capable of intellectual development. If anything, because no two men are ever exactly similar, it shows that man was meant to be an individual, with his own independent thought and action.

Vivekananda called it "illogical," "immoral," cowardly to call man a sinner and to seek forgiveness and help from God. He pictured man as groveling, crawling like a dog "before this imaginary being." He said: "Here is the universe, man made it; why depend on an imaginary being outside, when nobody ever saw, or felt, or got help from?" There is nothing unjust or immoral in the act of the being who made man taking upon Himself the results of man's wrong doing and transforming him in this life into a new creature, and giving him a new power to obey God's just laws. Buddhists and Hindus alike call murder, theft, and adultery evil; why then is it wrong to call the one who does these things a sinner?

184. Swami Budhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p. 211.
Vivekananda said when speaking of the universe and the individual:

You are, therefore, an individual, and then alone, when you are the whole of it, when the realization of 'I am the Universe' comes. That is why the Vedantist says that as long as there are two, fear does not cease. It is only when one does not see another, does not fear another—then alone fear ceases, then alone death vanishes, then alone Samsara vanishes. Advaita teaches us therefore that man is individual in being universal, not in being particular. You are immortal only when you are the whole. You are fearless and deathless only when you are the universe; and then that which you call the universe is the same as that you call God, the same that you call existence, the same that you call the whole. It is the one undivided Existence which is taken to be the manifold world which we see, as also others who are in the same state of mind as we.185

Who is to say that man must be the universe, the whole in order to be immortal? Why must individuality cease? The whole of nature teaches that while life is possessed by all, all are distinct from each other—individuals. The individual self is not capable of infinity. It is a part and can never be the whole. Vivekananda likewise mistook the evidence of the divine Witness within man. God by His Spirit can speak to man's mind, can control man's mind by his resignation to the divine will, without man being God. He is only under God's control.

The Supra-Personal God, far beyond man's possible comprehension, by His Holy Spirit becomes the Personal God, dwelling in the soul temple of the human mind. 186.

Vivekananda said that we "cannot have two Gods, God and Satan; you must have only one, and dare to call Him good and bad; have only one and take the logical consequences." 187 The Bible does not present Satan as a God, but as a created being who rebelled against God. 188 He was leader of the angels, and verse 4 indicates that one-third of those in heaven were cast out with him. (Colossians 1:16 says that God created all principalities and powers and things in heaven.) Isaiah 14:12-14 tells of Satan's rebellion in heaven, using another of his names, Lucifer. Ezekiel 28:12-19 tells us more details of his fall, under the figure of the prince of Tyre, in words that could apply to only one being, Satan. Infinite wisdom permitted Satan to rebel and did not destroy him for his deeds, but there is only One Supreme Being; His very nature is opposed to evil. Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." The time will come when God can destroy Satan (and evil) and no one will wonder why. But because Satan was highly placed in heaven and the universe knew no death or evil some would naturally wonder why, if God destroyed him when he first rebelled. Sin cannot be excused or defended; neither should God be blamed for it. It was to preserve individuality that God allowed the experiment with evil.

Vivekananda set forth the same principle that the Arya Samaj did, that all truth is found in the ancient Vedas:

186. The Holy Bible, 1 Corinthians 6:19.
All that is necessary for the perfection of man, and for the attainment of freedom is there in the Vedas. You cannot find anything new. You cannot go beyond a perfect unity, which is the goal of all knowledge; this has already been reached there, and it is impossible to go beyond the unity. Religious knowledge became complete when "Tat Tvam Asi (That Thou Art) was discovered, and that was in the Vedas" (The Sages of India). 189

He then qualified this to suggest that guidance and application based on these counsels was given from time to time by various great teachers as the need arose. He quoted the saying of Krishna from the Gita:

Whenever virtue subsides and irreligion prevails, I create Myself for the protection of the good; for the destruction of all immorality I am coming from time to time. 190

His major idea is that the Vedanta teaches "principles, not persons," because, he asked:

How is it possible that one person, as Mohammed, or Buddha or Christ, can be taken up as the one type for the whole world, nay, that the whole of morality, ethics, spirituality, and religion can be true

190. Ibid., p. 233.
only from the sanction of that one person alone? Now the Vedantic religion does not require any such personal authority. Its sanction is the eternal nature of man, its ethics are based upon the eternal spiritual solidarity of man, already existing, already attained, and not to be attained. 191

Vivekananda would reduce Christ to a principle; to him the historic Christ was not important, but His showing the way to life was; however he felt other avatars had done the same. 192 He however ranked Christ and Buddha as the two greatest incarnations yet produced. 193

Vivekananda said that "Nature outside cannot give us any answer as to the existence of the soul, the existence of God, the eternal life, the goal of man." 194 He then went on to explain that these things cannot be revealed to the senses; "the Infinite, the Unchangeable, the Unbroken, the Indivisible, the Eternal" can only be revealed by being a Rishi (sage). 195 He then adds:

Men found out long ago that the soul is not bound or limited by the senses; no not even by consciousness. We have to understand that consciousness is only the name of one link in the infinite chain. Being is not

193. Ibid., Vol. 7, p.5.
195. Ibid.
identical with consciousness but consciousness is only a part of Being. ... Beyond that (consciousness), beyond the senses, men must go in order to arrive at truths in the spiritual world.  

This he called the realm of the super-conscious, in which the few realize God. He concluded that unless a man sees God, he is not able to tell others about Him, he does not really know Him. To an extent this is true; however man cannot see or really know God in this life. He must accept the word of One who did see and know Him.  

As to the existence of a super-conscious state, this has already been discussed as possible only in supernatural revelation such as to a prophet, or in a hypnotic trance, or in spiritualism. Consciousness is a manifestation of being; being possesses other qualities. Super-consciousness would be a projection of self; this has limits. Since man is not God, the projection of self is only imaginary if it proceeds beyond self to God.

He, Jesus, plainly claimed exclusively to represent God. John 3:16 speaks of Him as the "Only begotten Son"—unique, the only one of its kind, the only real Incarnation. This is what Christ amplified; so called other "man-Gods the embodiments of God" cannot therefore be such as Christ was. Vivekananda also referred to Him as "God and not man." denying the true humanity of Christ. He referred to him as a sexless soul, with only a seeming body. He called him a "disembodied, unfettered, unbound Spirit." He then claimed that Christ taught that all men were the embodiment of the same undying Spirit as Himself:

198. Ibid., 1 John 4:1.
Within you is something that can never be tyrannized over, never be trampled upon, never be troubled, never be killed. You are all Sons of God, Immortal Spirit. "Know," he declared, "the Kingdom of Heaven is within you." 200

Vivekananda claimed that when Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is within you he meant we should look within:

'Why goest thou to seek for the Kingdom of God,' asks Jesus of Nazareth, 'when it is there, within you?' Cleanse the Spirit and it is there. It is yours by right. You are the heirs of immortality, sons of the Eternal Father.

... For whoever gives up this life for His sake, finds the life immortal. 201

Vivekananda held that there were two processes by which one could know the Absolute. The positive method is to extend the circle of love until we "reach the one universal love." The other negative method is:

"Neti, Neti"—"not this" "not this" --stopping every wave in the mind which tries to draw it out; and at last the mind dies, as it were, and the Real discloses itself. We call that Samadhi, or superconsciousness.

201. Ibid., p. 261.
This he further explained: "Really this world dies and I remain. I am the only one that remains." (Questions and Answers)²⁰²

When asked if this might be self-hypnotism he answered that man is already hypnotised and needs to be dehypnotized. Man regards sun, moon, stars, lightning, as real; dehypnotism will show him that these are unreal. These being a part of Maya are illusion, and must be disregarded. He said:

Throw away even the Vedas, throw away even the Personal God, throw away even the universe, throw away even your own body and mind, and let nothing remain, in order to get rid of hypnotism. From where the mind comes back with speech, being unable to reach, knowing the Bliss of Brahman, no more is fear. That is dehypnotism. 'I have neither vice nor virtue, nor misery nor happiness; I care neither for the Vedas nor sacrifices nor ceremonies; I am neither food nor eating nor eater, for I am Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, Bliss Absolute, I am He, I am He.'²⁰³

A theory that would abandon every form of empirical knowledge for that which is based on feeling alone is in danger of leading to self-deception or hypnotism, no matter what it may be called. How can man, limited in knowledge and power, subject to death, call himself the Absolute and equate himself with the universe? To call his own source of authority, the Vedas, body, mind, the universe, even the Personal God hypnotical illusion should cause a thoughtful person to weigh most carefully the statements made. He even said that knowledge

²⁰² Swami Ruhlananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda, p. 298.
²⁰³ Ibid., p. 301.
was possible only in Maya; in the super-conscious state this is superseded. 204

Vivekananda compared the universe to a "gymnasium in which the soul is taking exercise," and said that "after these exercises we become gods." And then:

The value of everything is to be decided by how far it is a manifestation of God. Civilization is the manifestation of that divinity in man. 205

Both are Maya, the inexplicable state of striving at one time to live, and a moment later to die. Beyond this is the true nature, the Atman. While we recognize a God, it is really only the Self, which we have separated ourselves from and worship outside of us; but it is our true Self all the time; the one and only God. 206

If what he says is true, worship is pointless; there is no moral code, no ethical standard—good is evil and evil good. There is no God to which man is responsible; he is responsible only to himself, the only God there is. It is not possible to accept his emphasized statement that "life is and must be accompanied by evil," or that the evil in the world results in good. How like the verse in Romans where Paul says:

205. Ibid., p. 305.
206. Ibid., p. 314.
And not rather (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say) Let us do evil that good may come. Whose damnation is just. 207

Evil is an intruder in the universe, a temporary existence to be destroyed by God. It never was a part of God's nature; for it is in direct opposition to all that God is—good. Good and evil are not God's play. No man can enjoy evil without being contaminated by it. God is not a blissful vegetative Being. He is an active, loving God in control of the universe. Evil did not take God by surprise; he made provision to meet it before it ever rose and sent Christ to die that He might destroy evil completely out of the universe.

Vivekananda said that man should give up bondage to desires and passions and "become a son, be free and then:"

You can "see the Father," as did Jesus. Infinite strength is religion and God. Avoid weakness and slavery. You are only a soul, if you are free; there is immortality for you, if you are free; there is a God, if He is free. (Inspired Talks) 208

It is the glorious privilege of Christians to become sons of God. 209 Man becomes free in becoming, by God's power, free from evil in all its forms. Surrendered to God's control by His Spirit man

207. The Holy Bible, Romans 3:8.
209. The Holy Bible, Romans 8:14.
can live a new life. But man is not only a soul. Immortality in the
Christian Scriptures is promised to those who receive an incorruptible
body. Man's "vile" body is to be changed, "fashioned" like the
"glorious body" of the resurrected Christ.211

Vivekananda said that man must not become attached to money;
it should be used by man as God's custodian:

Let name and fame and money go;
they are a terrible bondage. Feel
the wonderful atmosphere of free-
dom. You are free, free! O
blessed am I! Freedom am I! I
am the Infinite! In my soul I
can find no beginning and no end.
All is my Self. Say this un-
ceasingly. ( Inspired Talks )212

Vivekananda said concerning man's nature:

Never forget the glory of human
nature. We are the greatest God
that ever was or ever will be.
Christ's and Buddhas are but waves
on the boundless ocean which I am.
Bow down to nothing but your own
higher Self. Until you know that
you are the very God of Gods there
will never be any freedom for you.
( Inspired Talks )213

212. Swami Budhananda, Selections from Swami Vivekananda,
p. 322.
213. Ibid., p. 326.
To this he added the thought that "I am the real existence, and all else is a dream save as it is I." "You are the infinite." He offered no real proof of the veracity of these daring statements. What is the criterion for evaluation? Not the mind—that is Maya. Not the body—it is unreal. Not empirical knowledge—that is false knowledge. What then is truth? Only what Vedantists said? Only what Ramakrishna taught, or Buddha or Christ? If it is the experience of realization, whose ideas are the basis? Because there is such a wide variety of reported experience, it is most difficult to decide which of these can be taken as the standard. Because of differing ethical codes professed, the situation is still further complicated.

Vivekananda said that heaven and hell to the old Aryans were temporary, because they could not outlast the cause. This ignores the possibility that heaven was man's true home. God is the cause; He is eternal. Hell is not eternal, because evil is not; it one day will be abolished.

Books are useless to us until our own books open; then all other books are good so far as they confirm our book. ... How can we understand Jesus until we are his equals? It is all in the dream to feed five thousand with two loaves, to feed two with five loaves; neither is real, and neither affects the other. Only grandeur appreciates grandeur, only God realizes God. The dream is only

215. Ibid., p. 328.
the dreamer, it has no other basis. It is not one thing and the dreamer another. The keynote running through the music is—"I am He, I He"... Everything is the living God, the living Christ; see it as such... We are the light that illumines all the Bibles and Christs and Buddhas that ever were. (Inspired Talks)216

It is no doubt true that only God can realize God. Man never can. There is no way of proving that "I am He" is true. We can never be the unique God-man that Jesus was. Until we have proof to the contrary it is not proper to dismiss miracles as recorded by competent eye-witnesses as unreal. The dream is a fantasy in the mind; it cannot be the dreamer. The siren music that would bewitch man to believe that he is God cannot come from Him; He would not deceive man. Everything good is God's handiwork but is not God. Everything evil is a perversion of good. The light that illuminates the sacred books is from God. Christ is presented in John 1:9 "as the true light that lightens every man coming into the world." Man is not the light. God is. Man is the object of the light, not the source.

Vivekananda summarized the Hindu religion as emphasizing that man must "realize God even in this life." This realization he considered as the higher or true knowledge. To this he added: "To know God is to become God." (In Defense of Hinduism).217 Perhaps it is for this reason that the Bible states in Romans 11:33:

217. Ibid., p. 413.
0 the depth of the riches both of
the wisdom and knowledge of God!
Now unsearchable are his judgments,
and his ways past finding out!

Again in Job 37:23:

Touching the Almighty, we cannot
find him out: he is excellent in
power, and in judgment and in
justice: he will not afflict.

It is not possible for man to know God. Man can only under­
stand about God what is revealed in nature and what God chooses to re­
veal to him. To go beyond this is to assume that which is beyond the
prerogative of man.

He felt that only Hinduism and Buddhism were successfully
withstanding the onslaughts of modern science. However, in India's uni­
cersities and schools today it is possible to see that modern science
has been as devastating to religion in India as much as elsewhere, per­
haps more so. India does not hold sole claim to the world's spiritual­
ity, moral perfection or idealism; Vivekananda himself repeated several
times the statement that all religion is one; elsewhere these might sur­
vive even if they did not in India. Many other religions have the idea
of an absolute or Supreme Being.

In his defense of Hinduism, Vivekananda's high point was
reached in declaring:

Let us take our stand on the one
central truth in our religion, the
common heritage of the Hindus, the
Buddhists and the Jains alike—
the Spirit of man, the Atman of
man, the immortal, birthless, all-pervading eternal Soul of man, whose glories the Vedas themselves cannot express, before whose majesty the universe with its galaxy of suns and stars and nebulae is as a drop. Every man or woman, nay, from the highest Devas to the worm that crawls under your feet, is such a Spirit evolved or involuted. This difference is not in kind but in degree.

This infinite power of the Spirit, brought to bear upon matter evolves material development, made to act upon thought evolves intellectually, and made to act upon itself makes of a man a God.

First, let us be gods, and then help others to be gods, "Be and make." Let this be our motto. Say not man is a sinner. Tell him that he is a god.218

Commenting further on the idea of man's innate goodness he continued:

Let us know that all that is negative, all that is destructive, all that is mere criticism is bound to pass away; it is the positive, the affirmative, the constructive that is immortal, that will remain forever. Let us say, "We are" and "God is," and "We are God."219

219. Ibid., p. 422.
He stated that this was not true of the body of matter, but of the Spirit. Man is to "manifest the divinity within you." Certainly Vivekananda was using impassioned language when he referred to man as greater than the universe in glory. Furthermore, his reference to the evolution of man from the lower forms of creation, once thought to have scientific support, is no longer an unquestioned theory. For an example, Dr. Paul Lemoine, Director of the Paris Natural History Museum wrote in *Encyclopaedia Francaise*:

> The theories of evolution, on which our student youth was cradled, constitute a dogma which all the world continues to teach; but each in his speciality; zoologist, or botanist, comes to the conclusion that none of the available explanations are adequate. (Article by W. H. Emerson in "The Fallacy of Evolution").

Other authorities with similar views are referred to.

In a letter to Miss Mary Hale in 1895 Vivekananda wrote:

> You have not yet drunk of that fountain which makes "reason unreason, mortal immortal, this world a zero and of man a God." Come out if you can of this network of foolishness they call this world. Then I will indeed call you brave and free. (Letters).

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Westerners find it difficult to believe that this human life, this universe is but the playground of God. Vivekananda's language is scarcely complimentary of a Personal God:

That Love Infinite that brought me into being has guarded every one of my actions, good and bad (don't be frightened) for what am I, what was I ever, but a tool in His hand, for whose service I have given up everything—my beloved ones, my joys, my life? He is my playful darling, I am His playfellow. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the Universe! What reason binds Him? He the playful one is playing these tears and laughter over all parts of the play! 'Great fun, great fun,' as Joe (Miss Josephine MacLeod) says.

It is a funny world, and the sunniest chap you ever saw is He—the Beloved Infinite! Fun, is it not? Brotherhood or playmatehood—a school of romping children let out to play in this playground of the world! Isn't it?

Whom to praise, whom to blame, it is all His play. They want explanations, but how can you explain Him? He is brainless, nor has He any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason, but this time He won't find me napping.

I have learnt a thing or two: Beyond, beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the "Love," the "Beloved." Ay, sake," fill up the cup and we will be mad.

Yours ever is madness,
Vivekananda.