

Hindu and Christian ideas of God

Hindu Pantheism

Pantheism is the belief that the whole universe is God, or that every part of the universe is a manifestation of God.

1. Pantheistic monism is the belief that there is only **one ultimate substance**. It denies dualism in the universe. In other words there is no distinction between matter and mind, soul and body, God and the world, Infinite and Finite. There is only substance, only one real Being.

2. The **Universal Being** has the attributes of mind and matter, thought and extension, but has no existence either before or apart from the world. The world is co-eternal with God. Creation as such does not exist, except as an eternal and necessary process. God is the substance of which the universe is the phenomenon.

3. The **Absolute Being** (God) in itself has no intelligence, consciousness or will. The Infinite (God) comes into existence in the Finite (that which can be determined, counted or measured). The whole life, consciousness, intelligence and knowledge of the Infinite Being (God) is the life, consciousness, intelligence and knowledge of the world. God eternally produces his other self, nature, in order to come to self-consciousness. The universe is God and God is the universe.

4. Pantheism denies the **personality of God**. Personality and consciousness imply a distinction between the Self (God) and the Not Self (creation), and such a distinction is a limitation inconsistent with the nature of the Infinite. God therefore, is not a person who can say "I", and be addressed as "You". He is a person only so far as he comprehends all personalities, and the consciousness of the sum of finite creatures constitutes the consciousness of God.

Christian Monotheism

Monotheism is the belief that there is but one God.

1. The Bible does not teach a radical duality of nature, being or operation, but teaches that **God is supreme**. It teaches that there is God and Satan, truth and error, light and darkness, right and wrong, material and spiritual, body and soul.

2. **God** is spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. His attributes are wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. He knows everything, exists everywhere and is all powerful. God is the most perfect being, and is the cause of all other beings. He existed before the world and exists independently from his creation, but reveals himself through his creation and through revelation.

3. **God** has all life, glory, goodness, blessedness in and of himself. He is all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he has made, nor deriving any glory from them. He has intelligence, consciousness and will. He is most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving sin and the rewarder of them that seek him, and yet most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and will by no means clear the guilty.

4. The component parts of **personality** are intellect, sensibility and will. Each of these is present in God to an infinite degree. God's infinite intelligence is called omniscience. Our finite minds cannot grasp the complete truth concerning omniscience, but we know that God comprehends all things, past, present and future. The emotions of love and patience, and the attributes of holiness, justice, goodness, mercy and faithfulness indicate the true quality of God as in contrast to pantheism.

5 **Man** is not an individual subsistence (real being). He is but a moment (point in time) in the life of God. When the body, which makes the distinction of persons among men, dies, personality ceases with it. There is no conscious existence for man after death. The absorption of the soul in God, of the Finite in the Infinite, is the highest destiny that Pantheism can acknowledge for man.

6. As man is only a form of God's existence, his acts are the acts of God, and as the acts of God are necessary, it follows that there can be **no freedom** of the will of man. As Pantheism makes creation an eternal, necessary, and continuous evolution of the Infinite Being, all liberty of second causes is of necessity excluded.

7. By making man a form of God's existence, and in denying all freedom of the will, and in teaching that all activity is a manifestation of the activity of God, precludes the possibility of **sin**. If God be at once God, nature and humanity, there is nothing in us which is not in God. Evil is only a limitation or undeveloped good. One tree is larger and finer than another, one mind is more vigorous than another, one action more pleasurable than another, but all alike are forms of God's activity. Water is water whether a puddle or the ocean, and God is God in Nero or Jesus.

8. **Might is right**. The victor is always right, the defeated is always wrong. This is one manifestation of God, suppressing a less perfect manifestation. It is the duty of every man to seek his own gratification, to satisfy the impulses of his nature. The only limit to such gratification is our power. Men have the right to live according to the laws of appetite. There is no such thing as moral obligation, **no such thing as right and wrong**.

5. When **man** was created, his body came from the dust, while his soul came from God. At death the body returns to dust, while the soul returns to God who gave it. God made man in his own image and will judge man after death. The righteous are united to the God-man Jesus Christ and will live with God in spiritual bodies and worship him forever. The wicked will be punished eternally in hell.

6. Man does not act from necessity or fatalism, which teaches that all events are determined by blind necessity. **Man is a free agent**. A man is free so long as his volitions are the conscious expressions of his own mind, or so long as his activity is determined and controlled by his reason and feelings. He is responsible for his character and acts.

7. Genesis chapter 3 teaches that the first man, Adam, who was created perfect, was tempted by Satan and "fell" from this state of perfection to that of a **sinner**. Since that time all men have been born sinners, that is, human nature has a bias towards sin. Sin is an evil, specifically it is rebellion against the law of God which results in guilt and moral pollution. Man knows intuitively the difference between sin and limitation of being. If there is no sin, there is no moral obligation, which leads to unrestrained liberty to all evil passions.

8. Jesus said: If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does, comes not from the Father but from the world. **Sin** here is defined as lust, covetousness and pride. Sin results from turning one's back on God and manifests itself in, sensuality, greed and violence. By rejecting God's wisdom and law, man takes the road of self-destruction.

9. Pantheism is **self-deification**. If God comes to existence in the world, and if everything that is, is a manifestation of God, it follows that the soul of man is the highest form of the existence of God. **The greater the man, the more divine he is.** The highest step of development is reached only by those who come to the consciousness of their identity with God. When a man can say "I am Brahma," the moment of his absorption into the infinite being has arrived. Therefore the preeminence of Christ who could say "I and the Father are one."

10. The final step is **the deification of evil**. So far as evil exists, it is as truly a manifestation of God as good. The wicked are only one form of the self-manifestation of God, sin is only one form of the activity of God. This dreadful doctrine is openly declared. If God be everything and everything be God, and if there be Satan, **God must be Satan.**

Pantheism becomes all things to all men. To the pure it gives scope for a sentimental religious feeling which sees God in everything and everything in God. To the proud it is the source of intolerable arrogance and self-conceit. To the sensual it gives the authority for every form of indulgence.

Pantheism therefore merges everything into God. The universe is the existence-form of God. All reason is his reason, all activity is his activity. The consciousness of creatures is all the consciousness God has of himself. Good and evil, pain and pleasure, are phenomena of God. **He is not therefore, a person whom we can worship and in whom we can trust.** He is only the substance of which the universe and all that it contains are the ever changing manifestation.

Pantheism admits of no freedom, no responsibility, no conscious life after death.

9. **God is God and man is man.** God is infinite and man is finite. God in his amazing grace and love forgives man of his sin and rebellion and makes him righteous through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God gives men his Spirit and unites them to Christ to become one body with him, so that they might live forever in a state of glory. Although united spiritually in the one body, this does not make man God. God ensures the best for those who believe in Christ. They are saved from their sins, they will receive new resurrection bodies which can never die or be corrupted. They will be glorified and rule with Christ and spend their days in the presence of the eternal, loving God. They will see his face, and he will wipe all tears from their eyes.

10. At the end of the world the **devil** is caught and thrown into the "lake of burning sulfur" where he will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. At judgment day all men will be judged according to what they have done. If any one's name is not found in Jesus' book of life, he will be thrown into the fire. Death is also destroyed. A new heaven and a new earth appear where the saved will live with God. No more night, or death or pain. No sinner will be there and there will no longer be sin. **Paradise** is a place of eternal happiness and peace.

When **God revealed himself** in the burning bush to Moses he said: "I am who I am." And on Mt Sinai God said to him: "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the wicked unpunished."

The apostle John says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. He later explains it in this way: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, **that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**