

[Mr. Pat Robertson On Hinduism](#)

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Mr. Pat Robertson On Hinduism

A Reply to a Reply

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Hinduism Today's coverage of Mr. Pat Robertson [July, 1995] was comprehensive. While he deserved it for his importance in the public life of his country, it also helped the American Hindus to become better aware of the envioning ideological forces they would by habit have neglected.

Mr. Robertson invited many critical comments from the Hindus. To one such Hindu critic, Bharat J. Gajjar, Robertson replied. This reply is as important to the American Hindus as his earlier TV statement which Hinduism Today reported [July, 1995]. The reply is in some ways more than a fulmination. It is a credo, an ideological statement and deserves a different kind of notice. Moreover, Robertson's mental blocks are not his alone but widely shared. Therefore, to discuss them would be all the more useful. I shall therefore reply to his reply here.

In his letter to Mr. Gajjar, Robertson says that he had no intent "to offend anyone," and that he wants it to be understood that he believes in "religious freedom"--this is reassuring after his previous performance. But he also adds that while he respects the rights of others, he has "a responsibility to speak the truth." He tells us that "the truth is that the Hindu faith has absolutely nothing to do with God!" He adds in lively

Americanism that "there is only one way to hit the mark and that is to come to Jesus Christ. Those who believe they can come to God any other way, whether it be by New Age, Hinduism, Mohammed or through any other person or thinking--are being deceived." At the end, he modestly states, "I don't make the rules--God makes the rules."

The reply is brief but rich in traditional Christian theology. It reveals in a clear profile the unchanging face of Christianity, a Christianity which still lives in medieval times and refuses to change. It gives in a few sentences the most important elements of Christian theology: a single or exclusive God, an equally single and exclusive channel of reaching him and a conception of truth which requires no self-preparation, a truth which is ready-made and can be had by simply looking up a particular book. ^{Biblical God}

First, about Hindus having no God, though they have more often been accused of having too much of it, let us readily admit that Hindus do not have a God of the Biblical tradition, the God of Robertson's familiarity. Their God is not Jehovah, an exclusive God, a jealous God, a God that denies other Gods. In the Vedas, the oldest scripture of the Hindus, Gods are often invited to "come together." They are praised "conjointly" and it does not offend any one of them. Vedic Gods live in friendliness, they do not deny each other.

This approach was shared by the Chinese, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and most other advanced cultures and peoples. The Greeks had no difficulty in recognizing their Gods in the Gods of the Hindus. It is the Semitic tradition which sees their devils in the Gods of others.

This negative view derives from another basic Biblical concept--that their God is the only one, the only true God. True, this view implies that there are other Gods, but it is freely and repeatedly stated that they are "false," they are

"abominations," and they are to be dethroned.

Hindus have no God of this description. True, they too often describe their God as one, ekam, but they also call him many, aneka. Strictly speaking, Hindus do not believe in one God, they believe in one Reality, ekam sat. They do not say "there is only one God;" they say "God alone is." The unity of Hindu God is spiritual, not numerical. He pervades all. He is one in all and the same in all. He is also beyond all. Semitic religions have no such concept. Hindu spirituality is mystical and theological, not credal and ideological. Exclusive Intermediary

Now we turn from an exclusive God to an exclusive savior. The two stand together. In this too, Robertson is saying nothing new, but repeating the old Christian doctrine of "No salvation outside the Church," now modified in this ecumenical age to "No salvation without Jesus Christ." In his support, he quotes the Bible as his authority. This is a curious way of arguing. You assume what you have to prove, put it in your own book and then cite it as your authority. It would be considered dull-witted in a sophomore, but in a Christian preacher it makes a bright and clinching argument.

Revelatory religions work through mediators and intermediaries. In these ideologies, first there is a God of strong preferences and hatred. He chooses a people, but even to them He does not reveal himself directly. He makes His will known to them through a favored intermediary who in turn has His apostles to broadcast His message. The next link in the chain are evangelists--read "televangelists" in the modern conditions. The message is received by one but preached and relayed by others who had no share in the revelation. Their merit is greater if they do it with strong hands and in perfect faith and are troubled by no intellectual scruples or conscience.

In this too the Hindu tradition differs completely. In this

tradition, God resides in man's heart, and He is accessible to all who seek Him in sincerity, truth and faith. In this tradition, God is man's own innermost truth and the seeker finds Him in the cave of his heart. In this tradition, God reveals Himself directly to the seeker and needs no specially authorized savior, no go-betweens.

Here we may also make another point. Since Hindu spirituality recognizes God in man, it also recognizes great goodness in him. On the other hand, ideologies which deny man's sacred Godliness also deny his essential goodness. They find man basically sinful, and unfortunately also treat him so. Of course, no one need deny that there is much in man which is not Godly, but let us not make it into a dogma of the depravity of human nature. Let us also become aware of man's other dimension, his Godliness and goodness.^{Soul Searching} Hinduism teaches that as one goes deeper into oneself, one meets deeper Gods. An external and impure mind gives only external Gods. This leads us to Robertson's idea of truth and his responsibility to speak it. In Hindu conception, one's truth cannot be greater than one's seeking. In this conception, truth does not lie in some quotable passages of a book. It has to be known through a culture of the spirit, through great seeking, tapas, purity and self-inquiry. Let Robertson himself find whether he fulfills this condition.

Hindu spirituality is yogic. It is found everywhere, though not always equally developed. It is found among the wise men of Egypt, Greece, Mexico and China. Today, it is in its most preserved form in Hinduism. Hinduism preserves the ancient wisdom of many nations and cultures, their Gods and their insights which they lost under the onslaught of monolatrous creeds. Spiritual humanity needs nascent Hinduism for its self-revival.

Robertson wants to keep out Hindus from America. But would

he be able to keep out Hinduism from the seeking humanity? Hinduism resides in all seeking hearts and whenever man's seeking for Gods becomes spiritual, Hinduism, or the tradition of Sanatana Dharma, automatically comes in. In what way and how long could man's innermost truth be kept away from him?

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Thou art the Primal Being. Thou appearest as this universe of delusion and dream. Thou art beyond time. Indivisible, infinite, the Adorable One. Let a man meditate on Thee within his heart, let him consecrate himself to Thee, and Thou, infinite Lord, will make Thyself known to him. -- Svetasvatara Upanishad