

Comparing and Contrasting Sikhism with Christianity

Mystical Union with God

Sikhs believe that human salvation depends on mystical union with God. The experience of mystical union has never been the predominant current in Christianity, but it has always been present as a small but steady stream in people like Saint Teresa of Ávila and the Desert Fathers and Mothers. Such experience has not been deemed necessary for salvation among Christians. Christians, on the whole, have been more particular about maintaining a clear-cut distinction between God as Creator and human beings as one of God's creations, and have often placed less importance on the idea of mystical union for this reason.

The Human Condition

There are similarities between the Sikh and Christian understandings of the human condition. The Sikh term *haumai* is variously translated as self-reliance, pride, or egoism. Basically, it comes down to the human tendency to rely on self rather than on God. This understanding is very similar to that of Christianity. Both agree that we struggle between our human tendency toward self-centeredness and the call to live according to God's will rather than our own. However, Sikhs also believe that the human problem keeps us bound in *samsara*, the cycle of death and rebirth that is so much a part of the Hindu (and more generally Indian) understanding. Christians believe that we live only one lifetime on earth.

The Founder and the Revelation

For Christians, Jesus *is* God and the defining Revelation of God. Guru Nanak, on the other hand, received God's Revelation according to Sikhs but was not himself that revelation. A related contrast is that the Adi Granth became the Guru for Sikhs, and for this reason is called the *Guru* Adi Granth. Though Christians strongly affirm the importance and centrality of the Bible as the Word of God, it does not occupy the same place for Christians that the Guru Adi Granth does for Sikhs.

