

Dear _____,

I have been wanting to write this letter to you for some time. A great deal of prayer and thought has gone into what I would like to say regarding our religious preferences. I am fully aware that we have points of disparity between us. However, I believe with all my heart that if we could begin discussing religion we will, at least, better understand one another as well as our religions and, at best, become closer aligned with each other as well as with the truth.

It is not my intention to merely highlight the differences between Christianity and Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF); I do believe there are some similarities we share. It will be helpful to note these commonalities for the purpose of keeping momentum in the dialogue. Nevertheless, there will be some areas in Christianity which are mutually exclusive and cannot be true of any other religion. All I ask is that you bear with me as I take this opportunity to share my heart.

I would like to begin by imposing a particular gridwork over this discussion in order to establish and maintain some structure. In essence I will ask, and attempt to answer, some essential life questions¹ from both the Christian perspective and from my understanding of SRF's perspective.² These questions are:

- What is the ultimate reality – the *really* real?
- What is the nature of the external world around us?
- What is the nature of humanity?
- What happens when an individual dies?
- What is the basis of morality – does moral evil really exist or is it an illusion?
- Is there any purpose to history – do our lives really matter in a larger scheme of things?

It is important to note at the outset that we are really discussing two different world views: SRF belongs to a *pantheistic* world view; Christianity fits into a *theistic* world view. *Pantheism* basically maintains there is only one substance in the universe and that substance is God. All else is mere appearance (*viz. maya*) and illusory. In pantheism there is no distinction between the one and the many. God is all and all is God. By way of contrast, *theism* says there are clear distinctions that can, and should, be made between God and the world. For one, *theism* says the universe was created *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), whereas *pantheism* says the universe was created *ex Deo* (out of God).

¹These questions are borrowed from James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 1988), 18.

²While it may be true that I am in no way an authority on either SRF or Christianity this does not preclude the possibility of discovering *some* truth about both. It is my desire and hope to be fair in the assessments. If I miss this goal I sincerely apologize for any offense.

In order to answer “what is the *really* real,” we need to look at the possibilities. As far as our scientific, naturalistic society goes, it would respond by saying that *matter* is the ultimate reality. Modern science has reduced reality down to a single atom composed of protons, neutrons and electrons. Between these substances exists a force or energy that holds them in perfect relationship to one another. When that relationship is disturbed, we get an explosion. Consequently, humankind is a product of chemicals and nerve endings that came about from some hypothetical explosion from some hypothetical number of years in the past. When all the natural elements are properly related – with our neuro-transmitters firing at the right time – they give rise to our thought process and emotion . My existence and yours is nothing more than a combination of the inner workings of biology and the experiences of life. *My whole existence is one big reaction to environmental and biological stuff!*

This naturalistic, materialistic explanation of ultimate reality is not very satisfying, and I am sure you would agree. One of the things that we both share in our religious preferences is that we believe ourselves to be spiritual beings. Behind all this material *stuff* lies something else.³ I believe we would both agree that that something else is God. I also believe most of Western society has become disenchanted with naturalism and the materialism it engenders. In our disillusionment we are all seeking answers beyond the *stuff* – rightfully so!

It appears that SRF’s teaching on ultimate reality is alluded to in the statement: “Man, one by one, escapes from creation’s prison of duality as he awakens to consciousness of his inseverable divine unity with the Creator.”⁴ Apparently, there is a unity with God that man is striving to attain or, at least, of which to become conscious. This aversion to dualism (viz., making distinctions in reality) is a major theme in most pantheistic world views.

If God is the ultimate reality and everything which is perceived is undifferentiated oneness with him, then how do we explain distinctions in the world between, say, my dog and myself; this letter to you and a coupon for orange juice; the car you drive and a Ferris wheel? Are our children the same as us or are they truly unique individuals? To have the same Creator does not necessarily make us all the same in essence. Granted, we are all created in the image of God and after his likeness (Gen. 1:26) but that does not make us the same as Him anymore than Jacob, being my offspring, is the same person as I am. While he (Jacob) may share similar traits and characteristics which are transmitted biologically or environmentally, he is still uniquely Jacob. Likewise, there must be some fundamental differences between myself and the Creator.

³The epitome of naturalism is found in the theory of macro-evolution, still present in most of today’s public schools. The evidence for Darwinian evolution (viz. macro-evolution) has been soundly refuted by Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, Downers Grove: IVP. Also, see my paper *Creation and Evolution: Another Inquiry* for a philosophical defense of creation.

⁴Paramhansa Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, (New York: Philosophic Library, 1951), 175.

Perhaps we are emanations or objectivized thoughts in the mind of God. This is what Babaji, the Yogi-Christ of India, would have us believe.⁵ Before we came to being in this world, we existed in the mind of God. However, the very nature of existence for humankind includes occupying the realms of time and space. We may be in God's mind, insofar as God has a plan that includes our actuality. But prior to our objectivization (so to speak), we do not inhabit the realm of actuality and, therefore, cannot exist. At best, we *subsist potentially* in God's overall plan of creation.

This subsistence is true biblically (see esp. Jer. 1:5; Eph. 1:4; Ps. 139:13-16) and philosophically. God's knowledge (or database) includes what philosophers call *true future-tense statements* about reality. For example, it was a true future-tense statement in the year 1882 that I would be the father of two children in the year 1992 and God, having known this all along, had both me and my children in mind (every pun intended!). Simply being a part of God's eternal cognition (or idea) does not make us the same as God anymore than a blueprint is the same as the building it represents.⁶

There must be clear distinctions between God and myself. Some of these distinctions include: (1) my creaturely dependency upon God for my existence vis-à-vis God's self-sufficiency and independence; (2) the evil thoughts and actions that I experience vis-à-vis God's perfect nature;⁷ (3) my inability to create something out of nothing and God's creative power in his spoken word alone (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 14, etc.; see esp. Heb. 11:3).

In addition, Christianity clearly teaches that eternal destruction awaits those who reject the gospel (2 Thes. 1:8-9; 2 Pt. 3:7) and that Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Mt. 9:13). Now if, because of my faith in Jesus, I have been saved from eternal destruction and it is true, as in pantheism, that I am one with or a part of God, then it would follow that God literally saved a part of himself! It would also follow that God condemns a part of himself if (1) eternal destruction awaits and (2) we are all one with God.⁸

Important questions to ask are: Is there a distinction between the knower and the known – between subject and object? Does the external world really exist apart from my knowledge and experience of it? More importantly, if there really are distinctions in the universe between the one and the many, simplicity and complexity, unity and diversity, then how did these distinctions come into being? In other words, "If all reality used to be unified, then how did it ever become multiple. [*sic*] That is, how if One is all there ultimately is did it ever become Two (and many more)?"⁹

⁵Yogananda, *Autobiography*, 305-319.

⁶I am indebted to Dr. Gordon Lewis of Denver Seminary for this illustration.

⁷Evil desires and actions are defined as that which is less than perfect. In other words, evil is a deprivation of perfection. Therefore, God, who is perfect, is incapable of having less than perfect thoughts.

⁸William Hasker, *Metaphysics*, Downers Grove: IVP, 113.

⁹Sire, *Universe*, 195-196.

Answers to these questions can only be found in a theistic world view. Any other world view that blurs the lines between creation and Creator fails to be comprehensible and hence believable. This is not to say that everything in the Christian faith has to be understood before it can be believed. There must be some rational basis, however, for an assertion in a belief system or we could never know *what* we believe – much less if it were true or not. The pantheistic view of reality seems to leave us with the inability to distinguish the real from the unreal. To live in the chasm between these two realms is truly to go where no (schizophrenic?) man has gone before!

Having laid down some foundation for a theistic view of reality, the remaining questions will become easier to answer. If there really are distinctions between the Creator and the creation, then it would follow that God is *transcendent*, viz., separate from or beyond his creation. He is not one and the same as creation.

If God is distinct from the creation, then the nature of the universe would either be an open or closed system. In a closed system God would be either excluded from it, as in *deism*¹⁰ or a part of it, as in *pantheism*. So, in a pantheistic sense, the sum total of the universe is the sum total of God. It would follow that God would have no existence apart from the existence of the universe. Take creation away and you take God away! Or, at least, take a portion of creation away and you take a portion of God away.

Theism claims the universe *contains* God but is not, in essence, the same as God.¹¹ The idea of *omnipresence* maintains that all of God is everywhere. While he is not limited to the time-space continuum, God is related to time (Is. 57:15; Rev. 1:8). God can, and indeed does, experience temporal personal relationships with us as his creation. In this way, God is *immanent* or ever-present and active in creation (see Acts 17:27-28 and Mt. 5:45 respectively). However, to exist within the sphere of God's presence does not make me out to be the same as God any more than to stand within the boundaries of a garage makes me a car!

If, as SRF and *pantheism* assert, God is not distinct from anything or anyone in the universe, then it would follow that I not only can but *should* worship myself since I am part of God.¹² Only, I find it difficult to place such confidence and adoration in one (viz. myself) who makes so many mistakes in life!

In a fascinating chapter of *Autobiography of A Yogi*, Yogananda describes his acceptance into the Swami Order. He asserts that the goal of every swami is “absolute unity with Spirit. Imbuing his waking and sleeping consciousness with the thought, ‘I am He,’ he roams contentedly, in the world but not of it. Thus, only may he

¹⁰Deism is the belief that God created the universe but left it to operate entirely on its own. The natural laws built into the cosmos are there to merely “keep it afloat.” Hence, no miracles are possible.

¹¹This is not to say that the universe *exhaustively* contains God (see esp. Acts 17:24). This only serves to illustrate God's presence in his creation.

¹²Yogananda, *Autobiography*, 242.

justify his title of swami – one who seeks to achieve union with the *Swa* [italics his] or Self.”¹³ What I find fascinating is the fact that the swami must attain union with anything! According to the verses from the Sanskrit chant of Lord Shankara,¹⁴ sung by Yogananda upon his acceptance into the Swami Order, he already is one with God. How does one seek to achieve union with something of which they are already a part?

Furthermore, if we begin with the assumption that the universe has a definite beginning and there was nothing compelling God to create anything (see Acts 17:25), then we can begin to understand our own existence as a gracious choice of God. We are separate from the existence of a self-sufficient and perfect God who, himself, is total and complete without us!

Part of this understanding must include identifying our limitations as creaturely and dependent beings. One serious limitation to my humanness is the fact that I do not know all things past, present or future. I experience what some philosophers have called a temporal succession of events and mental states. I may have imagination and fantasies about the unreal, but I can never know for sure if my thoughts will ever actualize in the world. Hence, decisions I make are based upon this limited knowledge regarding the future. Not having the vantage point of God, I am reduced to probability rather than absolute certainty as the criteria for deciding what is best in the choices I must make.

The process in decision making is always the same: (1) I look at the available information which pertains to the decision, (2) try and answer as many “if this – then that” kinds of questions and then (3) take my best shot at one of the options available. Nevertheless, I cannot know for sure if the choice I make is the best one until I have some time to see the result(s) of my decision. Even then my ability to assimilate the details, after the fact, is skewed with bias and lack of absolute certainty.

By way of contrast, if God is one who knows all things, then I can turn to him and ask for his wise guidance, trusting him because he knows what is best. Also, it brings great comfort and relief to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Pr. 3:5). He has a “bird’s-eye view” of creation from beginning to end. It is truly awesome to know that a personal God could

“apprehend the whole content of the temporal series in a single eternal intuition, just as I analogously apprehend all the parts of a circle in a single sensory intuition. God could know the content of all knowledge – past, present, and future – in a simultaneous and eternal intuition.”¹⁵

Now, if our existence is not necessary but contingent upon God’s creative choice, then we have an adequate framework from which to evaluate human life and values. However, if we are part of God, then our actions are really God’s actions. Our activity is God’s activity. How then do we explain the existence of evil in

¹³ibid., 231.

¹⁴ibid., 230.

¹⁵William Lane Craig, “God, Time, and Eternity,” Religious Studies 14 (1978): 501.

the world? Is God some kind of schizophrenic whose acts are simultaneously good and evil? Yogananda would have us believe “The man of Self-realization knows that God is the Doer – all power to perform actions flows into us from Him.”¹⁶ I suppose the horrors of Auschwitz under Hitler were either an illusion (*maya*) or the activity of God! I would be hard pressed to offer either of these explanations to a surviving member of the Holocaust.

Also, this pantheistic explanation for evil is a complete denial of the sense perceptions. It erroneously and unrealistically asserts that our sense perceptions are not trustworthy, that they are a complete deception. If this is true then I cannot know whether I’m writing a letter to right now or enjoying a Mai Tai at the Hale Koa hotel in Hawaii. Neither can I know a good act from an evil one. Judgments in the moral arena become impossible under *pantheism*.

Theism, on the other hand, not only affirms the reality of evil but offers a coherent answer to the problem of evil.¹⁷ First, moral evil is a manifestation of something else – it does not exist in and of itself. So where does moral evil come from? The Bible clearly teaches that God created us with the freedom to make choices (note Gen. 2:16-17 says “you are free to eat . . . but you must not eat . . .”). How we use this God-given freedom¹⁸ determines whether or not our choices are evil or good. When we make wrong choices, we commit evil. This explains the existence of moral evil.

Furthermore, *theism* offers hope in a world where the evil acts of men seem to go unpunished and the sacrifices of good men go unrewarded. A universe where good and evil are indistinguishable and where there is no moral accountability is, without question, the worst existence one could imagine. Yet, in Christianity the end of history has already been told. God is holy, just and loving. His purposes will finally and completely prevail (Rev. 11:17-18). “He [the Lord Jesus] will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thes. 1:8-9). Given the fact that history is not cyclical or destined to endless repetition, but that it is linear, viz. history is moving toward a final destiny or end, then we have hope that God’s perfect justice and mercy will be meted out to all of creation and “universal justice, peace, and love will follow.”¹⁹ For “he [God] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man [Jesus] he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31; also see Rom. 2:16).

¹⁶Paramhansa Yogananda, *The Science of Religion*, (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1953), 54-55.

¹⁷Coherence is taken to be that which adequately accounts for (1) the **empirical** data of experience, (2) the **psychological** impressions of experience and (3) **logical** consistency of experience, viz. any given experience cannot become its opposite.

¹⁸It should be noted that God is not responsible for evil simply because he gave us freedom any more than a car manufacturer is responsible for automobile accidents of its customers.

¹⁹Bruce Demarest and Gordon Lewis, *Integrative Theology*, vol. 1, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 317.

I understand that in *pantheism* and SRF the quickest road to salvation is through Kriya Yoga. This is defined as “union (yoga) with the Infinite through a certain action or rite.”²⁰ The great moral equalizer is the impersonal law of karma (the universal chain of causation) which pulls the soul back into existence until it realizes its “Infinite Goal.” Without Kriya Yoga, one “requires about a million years of incarnation masquerades to know final emancipation”²¹ (this emancipation is disengagement from physical and mental constraints). When the proper amount of time or Kriya Yoga is attained, then “. . . man is pure of dross. His bones stripped of all desirous flesh, his karmic skeleton bleached in the antiseptic suns of wisdom, he is clean at last, inoffensive before man and Maker.” The yogi is “safe in the final haven of inexhaustibly blissful Spirit.”²²

This design for salvation gives every impression that we must live with the consequences of our choices. There is no room for mercy or grace because I must repay my (karmic?) debt to some impersonal being called God – which is actually the same as the universe in essence. So, to whom or what am I accountable? God? The universe? The experience of an all-loving and gracious God who forgives (or cancels) my indebtedness is nowhere to be found within this scheme. While it is true that we must “own up” to our responsibilities as free moral creatures, it would be impossible for us to repay a holy and transcendent God the debt we have incurred because of our sin. This is where Christianity is significantly different from all other religions.

The record of history illustrates that a million years is simply not enough to reach perfection. In spite of our technological progress, the world remains significantly unimproved in the moral realm. Just a cursory glance at this century alone would indicate the moral degradation of humankind. Of course, if all reality is ultimately indistinguishable (all is God and God is all) and his activity is my activity, then there can be no real qualitative difference between Hitler’s attempt at genocide and my decision to take my wife out to dinner for our anniversary!

The Bible clearly teaches that “. . . man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Heb. 9:27). There is but one opportunity to receive God’s forgiveness and it is in this lifetime. Jesus himself spoke of eternal judgment (see Mt. 25:31-46). However, God is “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Pt. 3:9), and he has provided all that is necessary for salvation and forgiveness in the gospel message.

There is good news in the message that Jesus came to offer. Basically, there are four major points of the gospel I would like to share with you. My hope and prayer is that you consider the viability of the four points against your own experience and understanding. If you find any or all of them inadequate for explaining your

²⁰Yogananda, *Autobiography*, 243.

²¹*Ibid.*, 250.

²²*Ibid.*, 252.

own life experiences, then I would like to know. As I mentioned at the outset, our quest is to get at truth, and if more discussion is necessary, then – by all means – write me, call me or whatever.

First, the gospel of Christianity says that *God loves us and created us to have a personal relationship with him*. We are not the accidental product of nature nor the eternal objectivization of some impersonal cosmic-consciousness. God created us to have a personal loving relationship with him. Eternal life with God means to know him personally. Jesus says in John 17:3 “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” This first proposition, if genuinely thought upon, is the basis for the meaning of life. I (nor you) do not exist for the purpose of attaining unity with Spirit nor for achieving unending Bliss or pleasure. Our sole reason for living is to have a personal relationship with the Creator through his Son Jesus Christ.

Second, *our own sin and evil has removed the possibility of having that relationship with God*. As I said before, God created us with the ability to make choices and holds us responsible for those choices. When God created us he knew that we would sin by choosing to reject him and go our own way. God could have made us like a puppet and just pulled the strings when he wanted our love. But in order for love to be meaningful, it must be given freely. So to have a meaningful and loving relationship with us, God thought it best to create us with the ability to love or reject him. If we choose to reject God, there are at least three consequences that result from this bad choice.

First, we stand morally guilty before God. The Bible says “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). If God did not punish evil, then he would not be all-good for his justice would be flawed. Second, the potential for having this personal relationship with God is forever removed. In our sinful state we could never have a personal relationship with a holy God. Isaiah 59:1-2 says “Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” We try to get back to God on our own through different religions, philosophies, drugs or whatever, yet this separation from God – brought about as a result of our own evil – destroys the possibility of the personal relationship with him for which we were created.

The third consequence for rejecting God is that we are spiritually dead. Our soul is unable to respond, because it is inoperative or dead from the evil and sin within us. Ephesians 2:1-4 says “. . . you were [spiritually] dead in your transgressions and sins . . . gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts . . . we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive . . .” God’s mercy and kindness provide the possibility of forgiveness for our sins **once and for all!** No other religion offers such a gift – such a hope!

The third major point of the gospel of Christianity is that *through Jesus a personal relationship with God can be established*. There is a sense in which God has put himself in a fix. His holy perfection and justice demand that we are punished for our evil, yet God's love and mercy demand restoration between humankind and himself. God's justice demands punishment and his love demands forgiveness. The solution to this fix is provided by God. He himself became a man, lived a sinless life and died in our place paying the penalty for our sins. Because Jesus lived a sinless life he was not morally guilty before God and could totally satisfy God's demand for justice. On the cross Jesus took upon himself the penalty for all our sins. While on the cross the Father turned his back, so to speak, on his Son and he (Jesus) went through hell for us!

At the cross we see the perfect display of God's justice and his love. His justice is satisfied in that the punishment for our sin has been paid by his Son.²³ The debt for sin has been paid in full. His gracious love is demonstrated in that he does not punish us as we deserve. Romans 5:8 says "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." On the basis of Jesus' death God can now freely forgive us for the penalty has been paid by God himself.

Although Jesus died for our sins, he did not stay dead. His resurrection broke the power of sin, death and hell over humankind. It is the bodily resurrection of Jesus which brings us hope that we too will someday be raised immortal. Rather than losing all sense of identity, individuality and personhood through absorption into the divine Self, the resurrection of Jesus Christ assures the believer that he/she will be raised with an immortal body (see Phil. 2:21; 1 Jn. 3:3). These passages clearly teach the truth that we do not become disembodied souls but will someday share in a new supernatural body.

Furthermore, if we are simply fused together with God and lose our individuality, then there can be no basis for any kind of relationship with God inasmuch as the very nature of a relationship necessitates a subject and object. Simply because we become immortal does not mean that all distinctions between Creator and creature are removed. To be *like* someone is not the same as *being* that someone.

To participate in and become identical with the very essence of God would be to miss out on experiencing God's love. Essentially, there would be no difference between the Lover and the loved. That kind of existence brings little hope, indeed. We all have the innate desire to love and be loved and this desire could never ultimately be fulfilled in a pantheistic design.

Finally, the fourth major point of the gospel is that *we may come to know God personally by receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord*. John 1:12-13 says, ". . .to all who received him, to those who believed in

²³Some might assert there is no justice in God punishing his Son (an innocent man) for our sin (the guilty ones). However, Jesus assumed our guilt vicariously thus becoming guilty for us and, in doing so, took upon himself the punishment we deserved (see 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pt. 2:24).

his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent. . .but born of God.” Believing, in the true biblical sense, goes far beyond mere cognition.

What determines whether a person is a Christian is not simply a confession of faith in Jesus but the presence of the Spirit of God in our lives (Rom. 8:9-14). When we believe in Jesus for salvation and the Spirit of God enters into our lives there are three results. First, *we are forgiven of all our sin* (Eph. 1:7). Second, *our personal relationship with God becomes a reality* (Rom. 8:15-16). Third, *we are born again into a new spiritual life* (Jn. 3:3,5) that gives us everything we need to live a fulfilled life here on earth and into eternity. These results are immediate and the believer begins experiencing the blessings of this new relationship upon faith in Jesus.

Rather than go through endless incarnations or the techniques of Kriya Yoga, the gospel sets forth only two conditions for becoming a Christian. These are **repentance** and **faith**. Repentance means a genuine sorrow for our evil acts and thoughts and a firm resolve to turn away from them and turn to the living God of the Bible. Repentance is not like making a deal with God. There is nothing we can do to bargain for God’s forgiveness. Rather, repentance is an attitude of the heart, a disgust with our sin and a determination to leave it behind.

The second condition for becoming a Christian is faith in Jesus – the incarnate God-Man. However, this faith is not simply acknowledging as true certain facts. It is wholehearted trust. We can sincerely believe that Jesus is God’s Son, that he died on the cross for our sins, that he rose from the dead and still not be a Christian. The Bible teaches that faith is a commitment, a giving over or a trusting of one’s whole self to Jesus (see Mt. 19:16-22; Jm. 2:14-26 on saving faith in action). Repentance and faith are not things we do to earn salvation. They are our response to God’s gracious offer of eternal life through his Son Jesus Christ.

While there is a great deal more I would like to tell you, I think it best to stop at this point. Someday I would like to share with you my personal experience of how I became a Christian, why it was necessary for Jesus to die, and the historical evidence for his resurrection. No doubt this letter has begged a tremendous amount of questions as well as some emotion. But in spite of the thoughts and feelings you may have had during your initial reading of this letter, I urge you to consider these propositions against your own plight in life. The balance of eternity depends on the accuracy of the convictions we hold in regard to our faith.

I have tried to be fair with SRF’s pantheistic world view as I observed it through a particular gridwork. The question of what it is that constitutes ultimate reality has run throughout this letter. It has been shown that if God is the ultimate reality and there are no distinctions in the universe between him and creation, then immediate difficulties arise. Inability to differentiate between the real and unreal, my behavior and God’s behavior and explaining my creaturely limitations are among a few of those difficulties.

We have also discussed the nature and existence of moral evil in the world. For *pantheism*, judgments in the moral arena become impossible since all is God and God is all. There are no real qualitative differences for

any decision or behavior within a pantheistic world view and, in the end, there is little hope for victory over the problem of evil. I have offered a Christian alternative for the existence and nature of moral evil which admits the reality of it without leaving us hopeless.

Salvation in Christianity has been presented versus salvation in SRF. The justice and love of God displayed at the cross of Christ as opposed to karma, reincarnation or Kriya Yoga has been proposed as the only alternative for a fulfilling life now as well as the basis for a loving relationship with God into eternity. How to become a Christian was plainly spelled out showing that our response to God's gracious offer in Jesus Christ is one of repentance and faith.

Please examine your life and the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible and see if these things of which the Bible teaches aren't true. If you are correct in what you believe right now you have nothing to lose. If you are incorrect, you have everything to lose! I would like to close with a quote from one of my favorite people, Blaise Pascal, a seventeenth century Christian French philosopher and mathematician.

“Man is not worthy of God but he is not incapable of being made worthy. It is unworthy of God to unite himself to wretched man, but it is not unworthy of God to raise him out of his wretchedness.”²⁴

May God be with your every thought.

²⁴Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (New York: Penquin, 1966), 102-103.