12) Conclusion: Hindu Theology as Theology

- o Completing the Test: Returning to Clooney's 'Clues' of Hindu Theology
- o Broadening the Test: Using Anselm's 'Faith Seeking Understanding'
- o A New Test: Suggesting and Demonstrating a Hindu Formulation of (Hindu) Theology
  - From 'Hearing' to 'Seeing': Śravaṇa, Manana, Nididhyāsana, Darśana
  - BG 4.34 and the Example of Arjuna

13) The Way Forward

- o Why is this Study Significant and to Whom
- o Opportunities for New Scholarship
  - On the Svāminārāyaṇa Tradition
    - Challenges to Svāminārāyaṇa Hindu Theology
  - In Hindu Theology and Other Disciplines
  - In Comparative Theology

12) CONCLUSION: Hindu Theology as Theology

In many ways, the extensive final chapter on Mukti has already served as a fitting conclusion to the exposition by recapitulating, converging and bringing to a finale the key theological points discussed so far. We continue that trajectory in this final part by travelling further back to the very beginning of the study and our opening, fundamental question: What is Hindu theology?

In our attempt to answer the question, we chose to draw upon a set of 'clues' presented by Francis X. Clooney, SJ in his chapter 'Restoring "Hindu Theology" as a Category in Indian Intellectual Discourse' in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*. Having systematically exposited the beliefs and doctrines of the Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya as an example of *a* Hindu tradition's beliefs and doctrines, we must now hold up the system to Clooney's clues and ascertain whether indeed it can be justifiably deemed "theological", thereby *a posteriori* affirming the viability and validity of Hindu theology more broadly.

But if Hindu traditions such as the Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya are to be genuinely accepted as 'theological' by a broader (academic) audience, surely they must also satisfy a more general (academic) definition of theology. Next, then, we shall move on to understanding Anselm's classical theological formula – 'faith seeking understanding' – in a Hindu light, before suggesting and demonstrating a similar Hindu expression as a formulation of Hindu theology (if not of theology as a whole).

Finally in the very concluding part of the thesis, we shall pause to reflect upon what this study has achieved and look ahead to propose what new avenues of exploration it has opened up.

12.1) Completing the Test: Returning to Clooney's 'Clues' of Hindu Theology

First, then, we must proceed to the necessary task of checking the exposition of the Svāminārāyaṇa Vedānta tradition against each of Clooney's clues to test for its 'theologicality'. In the interest of economy and avoiding tedious, copious duplication, I have chosen to present only very briefly the corresponding points in the exposition rather than repeat them whole with all their extensive source material, exegesis and argumentation. Chapter references have been provided for the reader interested in returning to the fuller discussion or the exact scriptural passages. Otherwise, the following mentions should suffice while keeping this section succinct and wieldy, even if it runs the risk of appearing sparse.

Theology as the study of God: The obvious, overarching characteristic of a theological system or text is of course its primary focus on the study of God, 'a supreme, personal intelligent being who is the world source and guarantor of the significance of human life'.

Our exposition on the 'Themes of Svāminārāyaṇa Hindu Theology' rightly begins with the extensive chapter on Parabrahman [Chapter 6] in which we discuss at

length the form, function and nature of God as conceived in the Svāmīnārāyaṇa tradition. Indicatively, this is the largest chapter in the thesis alluding to the prominent position of 'God-talk' within the system and, consequentially, in the Vacanāmrut and Svāmīnī Vāto, upon which we so extensively draw.

In the very opening of that discussion, we appreciated the primary importance and absolute indispensability of knowing God as understood within the tradition [Chapter 6.1]. We found that the knowledge of God, according to Svāminārāyaṇa, is foundational, central and apical to all else; that is, it is upon what all reflection and practice is grounded, around which it revolves, and into what it should ultimately culminate.

In further consolidating the God-centricity of the system, we learned from the Introduction to the Themes [Chapter 5] that the study of all other metaphysical realities discussed in Svāminārāyaṇa texts is justified insofar as they are in the service of knowing God. If inquiry into Parabrahman is the study of God's form, nature, function, significance, etc., the inquiry into Akṣarabrahman is the study of God's abode, and how to become eligible to experience God therein after death and also now; the inquiry into māyā is the study of God's creation and its function as ignorance which needs to be transcended to fully realise God; the inquiry into īśvara is the study of other divinities and their God-given role in his creation; and inquiry into jīva is the study of individual souls and their relationship with God. In fact, using Svāminārāyaṇa's definition of theological knowledge in Vac. Loyā.7, a correct and complete understanding of God

necessitates the study of all five metaphysical realities, thereby constituting the whole of Part 3 as a *theological* inquiry.

We enter more specifically into discussions about the nature of God – asking such audacious questions as 'What does God look like?' – in sections such as 6.3, explaining his human-like yet divine form and countering some associated arguments against such a claim.

If such a study of God is a legitimate starting point for identifying 'theology', Clooney moves on from this "adequate working criterion" to more specific indicators that can help define Hindu theology more carefully and thoroughly. He firstly suggests seven specific themes and then a few other considerations, all to which we shall now turn individually[471].

The nature of a sufficient world cause, world-maker: Of the four traditional aspects of Parabrahman conventionally used to describe his nature in the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition, 'Kartā' specifically deals with the agency of God. Chapter 6.3 is dedicated exclusively to this aspect, of God as sarvakartā and sarvakāraṇa, the all-doer and all-cause. More specifically, as we unpacked these terms, we realised his role as creator, sustainer and dissolver of the world, and as both its efficient and material cause.

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[471] I have rearranged the sequence of Clooney's themes to facilitate a more logical flow of the discussion.

Within the chapter on māyā, we again visited Parabrahman as creator and cause [10.2.1] when understanding māyā's manifestation as jagat, the created world visible around us.

The problem of evil: Closely associated with the function of God as world-maker and cause is the charge of why an omnipotent, omnibenevolent God would create a world vitiated by evil and suffering. In the section discussing the purpose of creation and the irreproachability of its creator [10.2.2], we see the scripturally grounded and reasonably argued attempt to reconcile the presence of inequality and suffering in a world created by a fair and compassionate God. The Hindu theodicy presented here based on the commentary of BS 2.1.34-6 and Vac. Var.6 not only attempts to defend the goodness of God and ensure justice for individual beings, it also seeks to preserve God's indispensability and intimate relationship with those beings.

Whether God is one or many: Another of the four aspects of Parabrahman that we addressed was his outright supremacy [6.2], starting with a clear elaboration of him being one without second, i.e. unique and unsurpassable [6.2.1]. This was confirmed further when we learned the distinction between the one supreme avatārin and his many avatāras, who in fact are ontologically īśvara [6.2.1.4]. When expositing this familiar-sounding yet perhaps novel metaphysical entity, we especially drew attention to the īśvaras' distinction from (and inferiority) to Parabrahman [9.3].

The doctrine of one, supreme God is challenged and corroborated again during our elaborate, technical examination of Akṣarabrahman using such Upaniṣadic passages as "akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ (MuU 2.1.2)". Even while establishing the eminent transcendence of Akṣarabrahman, he is confirmed as discrete from and infinitely subordinate to God [7.1; 7.3.9].

Divine embodiment: The fourth and arguably most soteriologically important aspect of Parabrahman is the manifestation of his divine transcendental self in an equally divine yet human form. This idea comes to its full concreteness and culmination in the person of Svāminārāyaṇa who lived on earth during the relatively recent period of 1781-1830 CE. In other words, for the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition, the divine embodiment of Parabrahman occurs in Svāminārāyaṇa, or to be clearer still, Svāminārāyaṇa *is* Parabrahman [6.5].

Related to this doctrine of Pragaṭa in the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition is the concept of Parabrahman's continued manifestation on earth through Akṣarabrahman. This we discussed at much length when understanding Akṣarabrahman as the Brahmasvarūpa Guru [7.4.4].

The nature and time of liberation: The final chapter in our exposition of Svāminārāyaṇa doctrines is dedicated to liberation [11]. There we described the two types of liberation – post-mortem, i.e. videha mukti [11.2.1], and pre-mortem, i.e. jivan-mukti [11.2.2] – clarifying also the ontological distinction of liberated souls from Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman [11.2.3] and, even in this

perfect elevated state of liberation, the abiding servant-master relationship they enjoy with Parabrahman [11.2.4].

"Ignorance" as a theological category: Before elaborating on the nature of liberation, we first understood the nature and cause of bondage, i.e. from what liberation was necessary and desirable [11.1]. Having established this as the soul's ajñāna or ignorance – better understood as 'anti-knowledge', that which opposes true knowledge, rather than simply the lack of knowledge – we could better appreciate our earlier exposition of māyā as ignorance [10.1.7]. Importantly, we understood this as the principal barrier to the full, blissful experience of God when we discussed the 'unveiling' of the soul as a form of revelation, especially when considering the Greek word *apokalypsis* [3.1.1].

The appeal to revelation: The means of valid and authoritative theological knowledge – which dispels ignorance and makes God known – was the focus of our discussion in Part 2. After acknowledging the limited scope of human cognition impaired by our māyā-corrupted senses and mind [2.1], we went on to argue for 'revelation' as the exclusive source of authentic theological knowledge in a Hindu tradition such as the Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya [3]. More specifically, we covered the three ways in which God is seen to be revealed within the tradition – as the self-manifestation of Parabrahman in the person of Svāminārāyaṇa [3.1], as Parabrahman being substantively present in and made known by the Brahmasvarūpa Guru [3.2], and through Scripture, i.e.

Svāminārāyaṇa's sermons documented in the Vacanāmrut and the Brahmasvarūpa Gurus' teachings, such as the Svāmīnī Vāto [3.3].

The authority and priority of Scripture, or verbal testimony, as the only knowledge-source to reliably cognise all matters divine was further reinforced in opposition to other epistemological means, especially inference [3.3.1]. Of all revelatory texts, we learned additionally, it is the Vacanāmrut which holds prime position among the faithful of the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition, based on their distinctive belief that Svāminārāyaṇa, as the self-manifestation of Parabrahman, is both the source and subject of revelatory knowledge comprised within it. For the Svāminārāyaṇa community, the Vacanāmrut is, quite literally, God talking about God – "theology" (if essentially 'God-talk') in its fullest sense.

Apart from this range of themes which Clooney suggests are indicative of theological content, he also points to a set of considerations related to style, context and community, which he refers to collectively as "contextual factors".

Language: Clooney proposes that Hindu theology is ordinarily Sanskrit-language discourse, either composed in Sanskrit or in languages and contexts deeply influenced by Sanskrit reasoning. This is indeed the case, we find, for the Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya. With the historical origins of the tradition in Gujarat, the western state of India, and Svāminārāyaṇa's strongly dialogical style of preaching, Gujarati is the language in which Svāminārāyaṇa delivered his sermons and in which they are recorded in the Vacanāmrut. Still,

Svāminārāyaṇa's own familiarity with Sanskrit-based Hindu texts meant that he freely quoted them in his sermons such that we find substantial Sanskrit-language content in the Vacanāmrut. In any case, Gujarati itself, having closely evolved from Sanskrit, shares many of the characteristics which Clooney prizes about the classical language, primarily that it allows for rigorous and systematic reasoning and intellectually sophisticated discourse on God.

Apart from the Vacanāmrut and Svāminī Vāto, the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition's expansive corpus of religious literature – written from the time of Svāminārāyaṇa to the present day – is replete with texts in Gujarati, Sanskrit[472] and Hindi (apart from other languages), a great deal of which would justifiably merit the title 'theological' on account of its focus on understanding and relating to God.

Importantly also, in recent years, the tradition's commentaries on the Brahmasūtras, Upaniṣads and Bhagavad-Gītā have all been composed in Sanskrit, in the classical commentarial style of the scholastic Vedānta tradition.

Commentary: This is in fact another feature that Clooney suggests might indicate theological content within a system or text – the presence of commentarial literature. As introduced when delineating the primary sources of this thesis at the outset [1.4], the Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya does indeed now

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[472] See a recent study of the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition's Sanskrit corpus by Sadhu Adarshjīvandas. *Svāminārāyaṇ Sampradāymā Saṃskrut Sāhitya: Ek Adhyayan* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, India, 2009).

have a voluminous set of classical commentaries in the form of the

Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya, on the Brahmasūtras, Bhagavad-Gītā and the ten

principal Upaniṣads. The fundamental doctrinal basis of the original texts, upon

which the Bhāṣyakāra explicates and elaborates, is sourced from the Vacanāmrut

and the Svāmīnī Vāto. Furthermore, as we noted in the Introduction, while the

Vacanāmrut itself is not commented on in a strict sense, the Svāmīnī Vāto does

serve within the tradition as a 'natural commentary' upon the former's most

important teachings by providing elucidation, elaboration and further reflection.

Similarly, more recent texts, such as the five-volume *Vacanāmrut Rahasya*, offer

detailed analysis and elucidation of the Vacanāmrut and its teachings.

Community: Clooney rightly observes that theology does not occur in isolation

from the religious community of those who write it and read it. Both have certain

expectations of theological work; the latter hoping that the authors of theology

will intelligently explicate their beliefs if not also defend them against competing

systems, and, correspondingly, the former expecting an audience seeking to be

guided through deeper thinking about the meaning and understanding of their

faith. Historically, this certainly seems to have been the case for the

Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya. From its inception and early fledgling years, a

number of challenges to the tradition's beliefs, from other Hindu denominations,

meant that scholars had to respond by proving its authenticity. They did so by

appealing to authoritative texts (śruti) and employing scripturally-grounded

reasoning (yukti). Such acts which we can now identify as theological were

necessary for lay and ordained members of the community as well as the

scholars themselves. Equally, those of the tradition who have been trained in its textual heritage and who draw upon it to evince finer reflections, are enthused to speak to a community already eager to receive their writings and addresses so that they may advance, clarify and consolidate their own faithful understanding. This commonly occurs in the weekly and, in some places, daily temple assemblies, and more eruditely in published articles and books and sometimes large seminars, as well as in many other situations.

There is yet one more important indicator of theology that Clooney advances, and that is **manana as theological reasoning**; in other words, "argumentative possibility", even if that arguability is fully respectful of and guided by the authority of Scripture and Guru. This is a characteristic that hopefully should have been apparent throughout our exposition. As we traversed its various topics, we frequently encountered challenges along the way, for example, to Parabrahman's omnidoership and perfect nature [6.3.2.1.1] or his human-shaped form [6.4.3.1.1], or even his creatorship: How justifiable is it that God be called the creator when Prakṛti, the primordial substance from which the material world is composed, is co-eternal with God? If Prakṛti already exists, what exactly has God 'created'? [10.2.1] These and many other questions we addressed by sound reasoning grounded in scriptural exegesis. For example, this last doubt about *creatio ex materia* we were able to address rationally by drawing upon the analogy of a sculptor, painter and musician. Even the knottier issues, such as the 'problem of evil', as mentioned above, were tackled in a manner sensitive to scriptural authority even while calling upon robust, reasonable arguments.

In our exposition of Akṣarabrahman, we opened with a difficult set of questions

underpinned by the ontological distinction of Akṣarabrahman from

Parabrahman and why this discrete entity was necessary when other schools had

managed without it [7.1]. With a hermeneutically-anchored technical inquiry

into the meaning and implications of three Vedāntic passages, we were able to

grasp a more precise and coherent understanding of a key doctrine of the

tradition. Moreover, the study provided us with a useful insight into the deeply

exegetical, reasoned discussions that can ensue in Svāminārāyaṇa Hindu

theology when difficult questions are raised and answered from within the

tradition, often in defence of the tradition itself, and especially when engaged in a

classical debate with other theological systems.

Additionally, in surveying ways in which we can know more about God, we

established the role of reason as a useful tool of God-knowledge when that

reason is driven by faith and steered by scripture [4.1].

Finally, as Clooney too concludes, those with theological sensitivities will be the

ones to decide what is theological (and what not). Even while circular in its

argument, it is true that as scholars of the Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya –

including this one – open up further to the idea and methodology of theology,

we/they will be able to commit more vigorously to the theological project,

serving not only the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition but Hindu studies and the

discipline of theology more broadly. Characteristically, Clooney ends his chapter

by reiterating this as a call to Hindu theologians: "It must be the theologians of

the Hindu tradition who must take the lead in maintaining and fostering Hindu theology."[473]

Clooney accepts that of all these clues he has suggested, "each... has some merit on its own but none is independently sufficient". Then again, nor is it "necessary to accept all of them to justify the acceptance of the category, 'theology.'" "In significant combinations", however, he clarifies, "they can help us to make choices about texts (and systems of thought) that should be called theological." From the concise examination above, it is unsurprisingly evident that a theistic tradition such as the Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya does indeed satisfy, even if to varying degrees, all of Clooney's clues, thus allowing it to be justifiably regarded as a theological system. Inductively, it also helps confirm the possibility, at least accordingly to these criteria, of 'theology' as a useful and appropriate category to describe Hindu intellectual discourse. Therefore, it answers by analogy our initial, driving question: Svāminārāyaṇa Hindu theology is a good example of what Hindu theology is (or could be).

12.2) Broadening the Test: Using Anselm's 'Faith Seeking Understanding'

But of course, our intention was not simply to conduct an elementary tick-box exercise and be satisfied in proving the viability of *a* Hindu theological system and extrapolating that to Hindu theology as a whole. As necessary as the preceding exercise was in providing a succinct assessment of the Svāminārāyaṇa

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[473] Clooney, 'Restoring "Hindu Theology"', in *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, p. 463.

system's theologicality according to Clooney's criteria, Hindu traditions, to be

taken more seriously among the wider theologian guild, must pass a tougher test,

one which strikes at the very definition of theology in general.

One classical and widely accepted definition of theology comes to us in the form

of an expression delivered by one of Christian theology's most respected and

influential exponents – a definition which has been employed, expatiated and

examined for centuries ever since. It is Saint Anselm of Canterbury's apparently

simple yet richly profound statement: *fides quaerens intellectum*, "faith seeking

understanding".

It appears in Anselm's preface to his famous *Proslogion*, a prayerful,

argumentative meditation which he himself reveals was originally entitled 'Fides

Quaerens Intellectum'. In explaining why, he writes:

> I have written the following treatise, in the person of one who
> strives to lift his mind to the contemplation of God, and seeks to
> understand what he believes.

Drawing upon and paraphrasing Augustine's famous expression – *credu ut*

intellegam, "I believe, in order that I may understand" – Anselm goes on to

clarify:

> For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in
> order to understand. For this also I believe, that unless I believed, I
> should not understand (*Proslogion* 1).

This quintessentially Christian characterisation of theology is one that clearly

and loudly resonates with Hindu teachings about God, or rather, learning about

God. It is immediately notable, for example, that the route to understanding begins with faith, not doubt or suspension of belief. In the same vein, the Bhagavad-Gītā states:

> Śraddhāvān labhate jñānam |
>
> The person of faith attains knowledge (BG 4.39).

As if to confirm faith as the only possible starting point on the quest for knowledge, the Bhagavad-Gītā immediately and emphatically adds:

> Aśraddadhānaśca sañśayātmā vinaśyati |
>
> The doubter, without faith, perishes (BG 4.40).

Furthermore, echoing Anselm's goal of 'understanding seeking joy' –

> I pray, 0 God, to know you, to love you, that I may rejoice in you
> (*Proslogium* 26)

– the Bhagavad-Gītā too adds that the person of faith, having realised God, experiences immediately the highest level of peace [BG 4.39]. Conversely, joy eludes the doubter in this world and beyond [BG 4.40].

On a similar note, Svāminārāyaṇa explains that if one has "intense faith and extremely firm trust in the words of God and the Sant [i.e. the Guru]", then one can be liberated from the darkest, most stubborn karmic bondage and realise the highest spiritual state of Godly experience "in this very lifetime" [Vac. Sār.9].

That faith is the essential beginning of understanding is something we have already covered in considerable detail when delineating the sources and tools of

Svāmīnārāyaṇa Hindu theology at the very outset of this project [Part 2]. It was determined that God is not knowable as an object of sensorial perception, empirical investigation or intellectual speculation. It is by revelation alone – the gracious, loving act of God revealing himself in person and through Scripture and Guru (the 'living Scripture') – that God can be known. Since Scripture is "paramapramāṇa" (the principal knowledge-source)[474], and God is "śāstraikagamya" (understandable by Scripture alone)[475], it is faith in the intrinsically certified ("svataḥpramāṇa"), divinely spoken or divinely inspired words constituting Scripture which we must rely upon to lead us to a valid understanding of God. This we established from, among other sources, the commentary on BS 1.1.3, "Śāstrayonitvāt" [Chapter 6.3.1].

But nor does faith in Scripture or Guru demand a blanket rejection of thought, inquiry, reasoning. As we learned further along in that same comment, reason, when properly grounded in and guided by faith, is a valuable tool in the search for understanding. Even while not *devising* new theological ideas independently – the roots of authentic understandings of God can always be traced to revelation – reason helps in excavating deeper layers of meaning from Scripture and shedding new light to *discover* or clarify hitherto hidden and obscure truths [Chapter 4.1].

Thus, if we are to establish the priority of faith over reason, we have just as much to assert the reasonableness of faith. In fact, the basic insight of the Anselmian

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[474] KaU-SB 6.12, p. 165.
[475] BS-SB 1.1.3, p. 22.

formula is that while faith precedes understanding, the content of that faith is still amenable to reasoned inquiry. It is certainly not opposed to it. Indeed, faith is the essential foundation upon which it grows. Equally, reasoning succeeds faith, rising from it. Faith and reason remain delicately poised in wholesome tension with each other, feeding off one another, gradually resulting in greater understanding. Karl Barth, one of the twentieth century's most prolific and influential theologians, confirms this as a distinctive, if not *the* definitive, feature of theology. "What distinguishes theology from blind assent is just its special character as 'faith seeking understanding'."[476]

If, then, like their Christian brethren, committed Hindu seekers wish to know more about the God they love and already believe, they should not be afraid to reflect, inquire, wonder. Sound faith calls into question unexamined assumptions about God and ideas not firmly grounded in Scripture even if they are attractively cogent.

Historically, the practice of sincere inquiry has long been embedded in Hindu intellectual discourse. Inquiry is the very beginning and basis of the ancient Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and Uttara Mīmāṃsā schools – commonly translated as 'Former *Inquiry*' and 'Latter *Inquiry*' – to seek to know Dharma [Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā-Sūtras 1.1.1] (that by which everything is upheld in order) and Brahman [BS 1.1.1] (that by which all this is created, sustained and dissolved [BS 1.1.2]). But again, this

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[476] Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, trans. by Grover Foley (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 36.

'jijñāsā', literally 'desire to know', is initiated by and anchored in the knowledge-source that is śāstra [BS 1.1.3].

The very project of the Brahmasūtras testifies to a fine balance between reason and scriptural authority; it teaches us that one need not abandon the former to defer to the latter. As Clooney observes elsewhere, "What is revealed is not inimical to reason. If a revealed truth does not seem reasonable at first glance, one must keep studying the sacred text until one sees how it shapes a reasonable way of viewing the world."[477] The Sūtrakāra himself employs reasoned argumentation to harmonise meanings, clarify ambiguous content, refute contradictory interpretations, and rebut objections. Reason thus serves to consolidate and clarify that which has already been established by Scripture, to protect and embolden faith. The Bhāṣyakāra too defends his interpretations in the Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya as being "śrutiyuktisammata", that is, in agreement with both revelation and reasoning.[478] Reason or rational argumentation, therefore, is not in contradistinction to *sola scriptura* but exegetically fruitful when functioning in consonance with and submission to Scripture. Moreover, reason often works in the service of revelation, bolstering its authority and justifying its priority. To be clear, it is only when reason is recklessly left to its own devices, unbridled by revelatory sources, that attempting to understand God becomes a futile if not perilous venture. Brunner too warns: "The God who is

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[477] Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, p. 130.
[478] BS-SB 1.1.1, p. 8.

discovered through thought is always different from the God who reveals himself."[479]

Moving to the Upaniṣads, we again find a rich tradition of faith-based inquiry. The ancient seers and students have not been afraid to ask deep questions in search of higher truths. In fact, the distinctive feature of the Upaniṣadic genre is its question-answer dialogues between teachers and their students or, in some cases, between fellow scholars, with discussants freely engaging the other with knotty queries and incisive counter-arguments. Questions, for example, are the starting point of a quest of knowledge by the students in the Kena Upaniṣad. They ask:

> Willed and directed by whom does the mind cognise? Commanded by whom does the principal breath move? Willed by whom do [people] utter this speech? Prompted by what God do the eyes and ears perceive? [1.1]

Similarly, the seekers of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad begin by asking:

> What is the cause? Is it Brahman? From where are we born? By what do we live? And on what are we established? Governed by whom, O you who know Brahman, do we live in pleasure and pain, each in our respective situation? [1.1]

Questions lend the Praśna Upaniṣad its very name and divisions. Each of its six parts is an answer from sage Pippalāda to a question posed by six committed seekers.

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[479] Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, trans. by Olive Wyon (London: SCM Press, 1947), p. 43.

Other Upaniṣads are also essentially a string of dialogues and debates, between Śaunaka and Aṅgiras (Muṇḍaka), Nachiketas and Yama (Kaṭha), Bhṛgu and Varuṇa (Taittirīya), Śvetaketu and Uddālaka (Chāndogya), Nārada and Sanatkumāra (Chāndogya), Indra, Virocana and Prajāpati (Chāndogya), and Yājñavalkya and, individually, Maitreyi, Gārgī, Janaka, Uddālaka, and Vidagadha, among several others (Bṛhadāraṇyaka). The same is true for Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad-Gītā, an Upaniṣad in its own right[480] (which we shall turn to in more detail shortly). And again, the expansive, multi-generation commentarial literature that has developed over the centuries upon these texts is rich in ratiocination while religiously protecting the revelatory status of its sources, foreseeing and forestalling contestations by offering prima facie views before consummately dismantling them and advancing the one, exegetically sound interpretation of the commentator's own school.

Standing in this ancient Upaniṣadic tradition of faithful inquiry, as has been evident throughout our exposition of the Svāminārāyaṇa system, is the Vacanāmrut, a contemporaneous compilation of Svāminārāyaṇa's public discourses. In his assemblies, if someone had not proactively asked a question first, he would freely solicit questions [e.g. Vac. Gaḍh. I.30, Gaḍh. I.34, Gaḍh. I.35, Gaḍh. I.49, Gaḍh. I.51, Gaḍh. I.53, Gaḍh. I.55, Gaḍh. I.56, Gaḍh. I.57, Gaḍh. I.58, Loyā.2, Pan.3, Pan.4, Var.2, Var.5, Var.6] – sometimes engaging members among

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[480] As previously mentioned, the colophon at the end of each chapter of the Bhagavad-Gītā (Iti śrīmad-bhagavad-gītāsūpaniṣatsu...) explicitly states that the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna (śrī-kṛṣṇārjuna-saṃvāda) is indeed an upaniṣad. Hence also the feminine-inflected proper noun 'Gītā' (rather than the masculine 'Gītaḥ' or neuter 'Gītam'), since it follows 'upaniṣad', a feminine noun.

themselves [e.g. Vac. Gaḍh. I.49, Gaḍh. I.65, Gaḍh. I.70, Gaḍh. I.71, Gaḍh. I.77,

Sār.2, Kār.1, Kār.4, Kār.12] – or pose one to them himself [e.g. Vac. Gaḍh. I.43,

Gaḍh. I.44, Gaḍh. I.50, Gaḍh. I.64, Kār.2, Kār.5, Kār.9, Kār.11, Var.3, Gaḍh. III.11],

often forcing them to reflect upon their own beliefs and practices [e.g. Vac. Gaḍh.

I.32, Gaḍh. I.37, Loyā.2, Pan.1]. Sometimes he would question his own

explanation to confirm whether or not his audience had understood him

correctly or to proleptically counter opposing views [e.g. Vac. Gaḍh. I.14, Gaḍh.

I.78, Var.11]. More often though, his learned and aspiring seeker-followers would

be braced with questions from their current readings of Hindu texts or their own

personal application of those teachings [e.g. Vac. Gaḍh. I.14, Gaḍh. I.41, Gaḍh.

I.45, Gaḍh. I.49, Gaḍh. I.54, Kār.1, Var.6]. As Svāminārāyaṇa would answer,

sometimes a series of follow-up questions or counter-questions would ensue

[e.g. Vac. Gaḍh. I.59, Gaḍh. I.71, Sār.14, Kār.1, Loyā.7], showing that even while

Svāminārāyaṇa's devotees were highly reverent of him, they were not disinclined

to probe for further clarity or refinement in their understanding of his teachings.

What all these Hindu texts teach us is that questions are not injurious to or

incompatible with faith. One *can* be faithful and inquisitive, faithful and

reflective, faithful and seeking.

If, then, 'faith seeking understanding' is indeed the defining, operative principle

of theology, it seems quite reasonable to pronounce certain strands of Hindu

thought as incontrovertibly theological.

Nonetheless, much more can be said on Anselm's formula from a Hindu

perspective and many more insights from Hindu texts can be added. However, to

continue this preliminary Hindu 'bhāṣya' on this celebrated Christian 'sūtra', we

might be better placed to engage with it by encountering a similar Hindu

expression. It confirms the search of understanding on the basis of faith, even

while developing it with an added dimension.

12.3) A New Test: Suggesting and Demonstrating a Hindu Formulation of

(Hindu) Theology

Some traditionalistic Hindu scholars might baulk at the idea of Hindu systems

having to confer to an essentially Christian definition of theology. Here though I

attempt to illustrate that, with closer inspection, the concept of 'faith seeking

understanding' is not new or alien to Hindu ways of framing a discourse on God;

in fact, it is remarkably integral and ancient. This we establish with the help of a

particular verse from the Bhagavad-Gītā and its application as seen through the

example of Arjuna himself. First, though, we acknowledge its basis in another

Upaniṣadic expression suggested by Clooney.

12.3.1) From 'Hearing' to 'Seeing': Śravaṇa, Manana, Nididhyāsana, Darśana

In defending his appellation of 'theology' for an essentially non-theistic school of

thought such as Advaita Vedānta, Clooney writes in his earlier work,

Theology After Vedanta: "I refer to Advaita as 'theology', as faith seeking

understanding, a salvation-centered explication of the world generated out of an

exegesis of sacred texts which seeks to commit the listening (reading) community to specific ritual and ethical practices."[481]

He expands on this a little further in the *Blackwell Companion* chapter by invoking BU 2.4.5, which he translates as:

> One's self must be seen, must be heard, must be reasoned about, must be meditated on.

Clooney explains that this injunction provides a useful "understanding of the ordering and organization of knowledge as theological". Specifically, "hearing properly (*śravaṇa*), reasoning properly (*manana*), meditating properly (*nididhyāsana*), together climax in vision (*darśana*)." He further explains: "As attention to scripture, hearing (*śravaṇa*) is the necessary beginning of the project of learning; it must be followed by reasoning (*manana*) which inquires into the meaning and implications of what has been understood. But neither is reason theologically conclusive, since one must also go farther and engage in meditation, *nididhyāsana*."[482]

Clooney's focus in this passage of the chapter is to locate theological reasoning in 'manana', to provide another clue to Hindu intellectual discourse as *theological* discourse (rather than philosophical). He writes: "The intermediate stage, *manana*, is the reasoning which interests us here as properly theological reasoning." Nevertheless, he goes on to correctly explain that manana "opens in

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[481] Clooney, *Theology After Vedanta*, p. 26.

[482] Clooney, 'Restoring "Hindu Theology"', in *Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*, p. 457.

both directions – toward sacred word and toward meditation, constrained by scriptural boundaries and oriented to a completion in religious practice."[483]

As a complete rubric, then, Śravaṇa-Manana-Nididhyāsana-Darśana (henceforth abbreviated to SMND) affirms and provides further insight on 'faith seeking understanding', and, in effect, offers itself as the beginning of a Hindu model of (Hindu) theology.

Like the Anselmian slogan, the basic insight here is the same: our point of departure to learn about God is always faith. In the Hindu context of its historically aural (śruti) tradition[484], this faith is framed as 'listening', the receiving of revealed texts from an authoritative source such as the Guru. But this faith is not a blind or passive faith, nor is it purely emotional. It elicits – indeed, it demands – intellectual application; thoughtful reflection, careful analysis, genuine inquiry. However, nor is this merely an exercise in armchair excogitation. For faithful inquiry to fully mature, its ideas require practical application, to be lived out so that those beliefs may blossom into a direct and personal experience of them. It is here that the Hindu formulation expands upon Anselm's formula by including the added dimension of nididhyāsana, which I extend beyond its conventional sense – 'meditation', 'undisturbed mental

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[483] Ibid. p. 458.

[484] See Thomas B. Coburn, '"Scripture" in India: Towards a Typology of the Word in Hindu Life', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 52.3 (1984), 435-59.

application, like that of a stream of oil'[485] – to its etymological meaning to represent religious 'practice' more widely, not just meditative.[486] We shall be defending and elaborating upon this shortly, using the Bhagavad-Gītā, but it is worth noting first the interplay of faith, reflection and practice. No faith can come to fruition without intelligent and practical application, nor can either of these be properly realised apart from the necessary foundation of faith. If faith and reflection without practice are lame, practice without thoughtful faith is blind. The able seeker applies all three, not in a strict linear form of progression, but feeding off each other, driving one another cyclically. Deeper reflection on revealed teachings leads to an acuter application of those truths in daily living. This practical implementation of the theory results in a finer understanding of the original teachings, a stronger faith. In turn, this can inspire more and firmer practice, which further clarifies reflection, giving rise to an even better understanding, and hence stronger faith... and so on. One progresses, always on the basis of faith, towards understanding, through reflection and practice, practice and reflection... until faith is eventually consummated into joyful realisation, a full an understanding as humanly possible of God's limitless, ineffable nature.

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[485] Nididhyāsanam = dhyānam, tailadhārāvadavachinnasmṛtisantatirūpam. *Viśiṣṭādvaitakośa*, vol. 6 (Melkote: Academy of Sanskrit Research; 1997); pp. 482-85. See also Dinanath Shukla, *Bhāratīya Darśana Paribhāṣā Kośa* (Delhi: Pratibha Prakashan, 1993), pp. 125-26 which cites similar definitions from several Advaita scholars.

[486] See also Radhakrishnan's note at BU 2.4.5: "Contemplation is not mere philosophic thought. It is a higher state of spiritual consciousness. It secures the direct conviction of the reality. While a teacher can help, personal effort alone can take us to the goal of realisation." *The Principal Upaniṣads*, pp. 197-98.

The Bhāṣyakāra confirms this as the essential way of knowing God when

commenting on the following verse from the Kaṭha Upaniṣad describing the

unfathomable nature of God:

> Not by speech, not by mind, nor by the eyes is it possible to reach
> him. How besides saying 'He is!' can he be known? (KaU 6.12)

The import of Yama's rhetorical question, the Bhāṣyakāra explains, is that there

are no means to knowing Parabrahman except by his own revelation in the

words of Scripture as received from the Brahmasvarūpa Guru. When those

revelatory words are faithfully heard ('śrutvā'), and "refined [sanskṛtya] by

manana and nididhyāsana", by a firm regime of practice, one receives, by the

grace of the Brahmasvarūpa Guru, an unshakeable realisation of

Parabrahman.[487]

This more developed version of the SMND rubric can be found at play in a single

verse of the Bhagavad-Gītā, which I propose as a suitable formulation of (Hindu)

theology. This becomes especially clear when we see it in practice through the

example of Arjuna himself using the Bhagavad-Gītā as a whole.

12.3.2) Bhagavad-Gītā 4.34 and the Example of Arjuna

Following his exposition of Buddhi Yoga or Sāṃkhya Yoga (the way of

knowledge) in BG 2, and about Karma Yoga (the way of action) in BG 3, Kṛṣṇa

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[487] KaU-SB 6.12, p. 165.

picks up from both and shows their essential integrity in BG 4, entitled

Jñānakarmasannyāsa Yoga. Verse 4.34 reads:

> Tad-viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā |
> Upadekṣyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattvadarśinaḥ ||

Drawing from the context of BG 4, this becomes in translation:

> Learn that [knowledge] by obeisance, inquiry, and service. Those
> enlightened [Gurus] who 'see' the truth will teach you that
> knowledge [within which all actions culminate].

It does not require much imagination to appreciate that the key terms in this

verse map neatly onto SMND and thereby also 'faith seeking understanding'.

BG 4.34		BU 2.4.5		ANSELM
Praṇipāta	Obeisance	Śravaṇa	Hearing	Faith
Paripraśna	Questioning	Manana	Reasoning	Seeking
Seva	Service	Nididhyāsana	Practice	
Jñāna	Knowledge	Darśana	Seeing	Understanding

When thus presented, it becomes clear that, while the terminology may differ,

structurally, the model is similar. As a proposed formula for (Hindu) theology,

then, the key terms deserve closer examination.

Praṇipāta: Kṛṣṇa is continuing to instruct Arjuna to cast aside his false

understanding, the cause of his dilemma and despair, and acquire the correct

worldview revealing the true nature of himself, the array of people and things around him, and the highest reality, so that even while living in this world, fulfilling his righteous duties, he can remain unaffected by those actions and rise to an elevated state of enlightenment. In this verse, Kṛṣṇa decisively and succinctly shows the way to such an enlightened state of theological knowledge (jñāna) begins with praṇipāta – obeisance or humble bowing. More than a formal nicety or a token gesture of decorum, such bowing is an outer act of a much deeper inner surrendering, of complete and utter faith in the instructor, recognising in him the ability and graciousness to provide the understanding one so earnestly seeks. In other words, it is taking refuge (śaraṇāgati or prapatti) at the feet of God or the Guru he works through. This is especially made clear by the latter half of the verse where Kṛṣṇa explicitly qualifies who shall impart this knowledge and thus to whom one should obeisantly bow. It is the jñāninaḥ, the knowers of truth, and, even more clearly, the tattvadarśinaḥ, those who can '*see the realities*', i.e. who have an intimate realisation of all truths in all their intricacies, complexities, nuances, mysteries, and, equally importantly, can proficiently convey them to the seeker. This crucial qualification of the authentic provider of knowledge cannot be overstated.[488]

Arjuna, however, has already made a clear declaration of his readiness and willingness to receive this knowledge from Kṛṣṇa, that is, of his faith in Kṛṣṇa, at the very outset of the Bhagavad-Gītā. He states:

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[488] See also chapter 7.4.4 where I include the qualification of a bona fide guru provided by the Bhāṣyakāra when explicating "śrotriyam brahma niṣṭham" from MuU 1.2.12. MuU-SB 1.2.12, pp. 253-56.

Śiṣyas te'haṃ śādhi māṃ tvāṃ prapannam |

I am your disciple. Please instruct me, who has taken refuge in you
(BG 2.7).

This verse signals the beginning of an important and perhaps new dimension to

the Arjuna-Kṛṣṇa relationship. They are no longer just a warrior and charioteer

conversing about the strategies of warfare or indulging in casual chatter as

nephew and uncle. Now it is a master instructing his student on the highest

truths of life, death, and life beyond death. From this point on, it has become a

guru-śiṣya dialogue.

More specifically now to obeisance, Arjuna is depicted throughout the Bhagavad-

Gītā as being subservient to Kṛṣṇa. Nowhere is this more graphically presented

than in the eleventh canto when Kṛṣṇa reveals his cosmic form to him. Arjuna

prays:

I bow to you from the front, from behind, and all sides.... I bow to
you again and again, a thousand times, and yet again; I make my
obeisance to you profusely (BG 11.39-40).

Arjuna continues for several verses delivering a heartfelt and elaborate paean. It

is in such "invocation", Daniel Migliore explains, that "serious theological inquiry

begins, continues, and ends."[489] He also quotes Barth in saying: "Theological

work must really and truly take place in the form of a liturgical act, as invocation

of God, and as prayer."[490]

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[489] Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, p. 15.

[490] Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 145.

Despite such profuse and persistent physical bowing from Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa's

teachings seem to imply that he expects a deeper, more spiritual form of

obeisance. "Namana", meaning obeisance in Sanskrit, can be phonetically

construed to also mean 'no-mind' ("na-mana"). It is this that Kṛṣṇa demands

from Arjuna twice in the Bhagavad-Gītā, his state of 'no-mind' or, more correctly,

'Kṛṣṇa-mind'. He instructs Arjuna:

> Man-manā bhava |
>
> Fix your mind on me,

or, literally,

> Be of my-mind (BG 9.34 & 18.65).

A deeper study of the Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna dialogue reveals this form of 'bowing' as

Kṛṣṇa's very concept of śaraṇāgati. As we saw early in the second chapter, Arjuna

had already accepted he had taken refuge in Kṛṣṇa –

> Please instruct me, who has taken refuge in you (BG 2.7)

– yet Kṛṣṇa still asks him at the end of the final chapter to

> Take refuge in me alone (BG 18.66).

The apparent redundancy of Kṛṣṇa's request can be explained by considering the

discrepancy between Arjuna's *self-professed* śaraṇāgati and Kṛṣṇa's *expected*

śaraṇāgati. This is highlighted by the appeal to singularity in 18.66 – "in me

alone"[491] – and in the immediately preceding verse when Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna:

> Man-manā bhava mad-bhakto mad-yājī māṃ namaskuru |

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[491] See also BG 7.14, 8.14, 8.22, 9.13, 9.22, 11.54, 12.6-7, 13.10 and 14.26 for more calls for
singularity (or 'ananyatā', literally 'non-otherness') in faith.

Be of my-mind, be my devotee, worship me, and make obeisance unto me (BG 18.65).

Arguably according to the Bhagavad-Gītā, then, faith is singular faith in the living God, the one manifest before the eyes ('pratyakṣa').

Pariprasna: Even as Arjuna falls silent[492] at the feet of Kṛṣṇa to faithfully and ardently listen to his instruction, he remains a thinking person like any other rational human being. And so as Kṛṣṇa begins to impart his teachings, Arjuna's yearning to understand prompts him to reflect upon those revelatory words and inquire further. Genuine faith, as we have said, causes us to think. It inspires reflection, but does not suppress it.

Arjuna's persistent inquiry is evident from the questions he asks. Of the Bhagavad-Gītā's 701 verses,[493] 87 are attributed to Arjuna. Discounting the 33 laudatory verses of the eleventh chapter, Arjuna's remaining 54 verses are replete with questions. In all, Arjuna asks 43 questions. His subjects of inquiry include the equipoised seer, karma, sin, yoga, sannyāsa, Brahman, adhyātman, adhibhūta, adhideva, Prakṛti, Puruṣa, kṣetra, kṣetrajña, knowledge, the knowable, and renunciation, among others.

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[492] Tūṣnīm babhūva ha ||

Then he fell silent (BG 2.9).

[493] Some editions, including the *Śāṃkāra-Bhāṣyam*, do not mention the first verse at the beginning of Chapter 13, making for them a total of 700 verses.

It could be debated, however, whether an ideal disciple should pose any questions at all. To question could in effect be registering opposition. So was Arjuna opposing Kṛṣṇa in asking so many questions? Indeed, was Arjuna a sceptic?

There is of course a clear distinction between scepticism and sincere inquiry. Genuine inquiry stems from a positive desire to know. Scepticism, on the other hand, is asking with intent to disbelieve, disprove, or simply reject more strongly. Nowhere does Arjuna denounce or refute Kṛṣṇa. On the contrary, he shows the utmost respect for Kṛṣṇa, as evidenced by his glowing addresses to him.[494] Moreover, Arjuna's polite requests for guidance, such as at BG 18.1 –

> I wish to know the explicit nature of...

– seem to be rooted in his unflinching faith in Kṛṣṇa. In the tenth chapter he says:

> All that you have said to me, O Keśava, I believe it to be true (BG 10.14).

This adds to what he had said earlier, in the sixth chapter:

> O Kṛṣṇa! You are worthy of completely dispelling this doubt of mine. Indeed, no one besides you can be the dispeller of this doubt (BG 6.39).

Furthermore, Arjuna reveals his motive for inquiring at the very beginning of their dialogue. He pleads, repeatedly:

> I ask you [Kṛṣṇa] to tell me for certain wherein lies my beatitude (BG 2.7).

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[494] For example, BG 10.15: "O Supreme Person! O Creator of all beings! O Lord of all beings! O Deity of all deities! O Lord of the world!"

> Tell me decisively that one way by which I may attain beatitude
> (BG 3.2).

Arjuna's questions thus originate from his yearning to attain the blessed truth rather than any corrosive scepticism or an arrogant attempt to test Kṛṣṇa and his views.

The Bhāṣyakāra likens this deep yearning for liberative knowledge to an ailing patient's pining for medication or the languishing for food by one famished by starvation.[495] Arjuna is so 'hungry' it seems that he begs Kṛṣṇa in the tenth chapter:

> Tell me more, for I am never satiated by hearing your nectarine
> [words] (BG 10.18).

This is the 390th verse of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Even after having heard so much already, Arjuna is imploring Kṛṣṇa to instruct him still further. Even with such faith – in fact, *because* of it – true inquiry and reflection continue unabated. Because God is limitless and unfathomable, the seeker's understanding of him is never quite complete. As Svāminārāyaṇa too explained, the more one begins to know him, the more one realises the feeble deficiency of one's partial knowledge. To know God at all is to know him as beyond full comprehension (Vac. Sār.17; Vac. Gaḍh. II.67). And yet the relentless pursuit to know him still more persists for those occupied with the search of greater understanding.

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[495] BG-SB 4.34, p. 109.

Sevā: The Bhāṣyakāra notes in this verse that

> only such an inquiry is herein advocated which is doubly bound and refined by being preceded by surrender and succeeded by praxis. Otherwise, any questioning divorced of a faithful obeisance to begin with and not followed by a subsequent commitment to practice is not conducive to theological understanding; it is verily averse to it.[496]

Inquiry must thus be disciplined by both revelation and application. So after several rounds of inquiry and clarification, Arjuna eventually accedes to Kṛṣṇa's wisdom in the 73rd verse of the final chapter. He pledges:

> Kariṣye vacanaṃ tava |
>
> I will do as you say!

And thus Arjuna is mobilised once more to observe his righteous duty of defending the collective good.

Arjuna's example shows us that faith inspires seekers to do more than think. Faith propels reflection and inquiry, when sincere, into action – prayerful and thoughtful, selfless and godly. This also serves as a counter to the charge that theology is a mere intellectualisation of faith or that it paralyses the believer. On the contrary, the example of Arjuna demonstrates that real faith, when properly reflected upon, is dynamic and actuating (even if the call to action is sometimes to be patient, silent and still).

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[496] BG-SB 4.34, p. 110.

Like Arjuna's faith, faith which is operative inevitably expresses itself in obedience to God's command, because it is in the daily observance of his word – the 'living out' of faith – that we grow in what we truly believe, in our understanding *of* him and relationship *with* him. Such full-blooded faith – in effect, understanding-in-progress – becomes inseparable from life, informing and illumining, shaping and guiding everything that one does, thinks and believes, because, as Calvin famously expressed in his *Institutes*, the gospel is not "a doctrine of the tongue but of life."[497] Luther, too, emphatically admonished: "It is by living... that one becomes a theologian, not by knowing, reading, or speculating."[498]

Arjuna's example also teaches us that obedience is the surest validation of a living, thoughtful faith.[499] As Jesus proclaimed to Philip and Judas:

> If you love me, you will keep my commands (John 14:15).

> They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me (John 14:21).

> Those who love me will keep my word.... Whoever does not love me does not keep my words (John 14:23-24).

With much the same tenor, Svāminārāyaṇa states:

> He who loves God would never disobey his commands. He would act only according to God's wishes (Vac. Kār.12).

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[497] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.2.1 and 3.6.4.

[498] *Luthers Werke* (Weimar), 5.16.28, quoted by Jurgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology*, pp. 23-24.

[499] I am also drawing upon Galatians 5.6: 'Faith works through love.'

Arjuna's simple but solemn commitment to obey Kṛṣṇa's commands represents

the very last of the warrior-prince's words in the Bhagavad-Gītā, and in fact of

the entire dialogue. Apparently, neither Arjuna nor Kṛṣṇa needed to say anything

further. Here ends, effectively, Kṛṣṇa's and Arjuna's 'duet' of the Holy Song (as

the title of the Bhagavad-Gītā is sometimes rendered into English).

The climax of Arjuna's experience in the Bhagavad-Gītā is difficult to determine.

But in the same breathe as pledging his obedience to Kṛṣṇa, he admits that his

delusion has cleared and his doubts have been dispelled; he has regained his

composure. He gratefully accepts:

> By your grace, O stable-minded [Kṛṣṇa], I am of stable mind (BG
> 18.73).

So, by the end, Arjuna has become a little more like Kṛṣṇa himself, surely a fitting

testimony to a fruitful guru-disciple relationship. Thus, what began with Arjuna's

viṣāda (despair) progresses with Kṛṣṇa's prasāda (grace).

Like Arjuna, seekers of understanding must also progress with faithful

surrender, humble inquiry and sincere practice – from revelation to realisation,

from 'hearing' (śravana) to 'seeing' (darśana). Indeed, if faith, as the common

adage goes, is *believing* what one cannot (yet) see, realisation is *seeing* what one

has up till now believed. This typically Hindu characterisation of theology as the

journey to 'seeing', or insight, neatly corresponds with 'Darśana'[500], the

traditional title given to classical schools of Hindu thought.[501]

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[500] Wilhelm Halbfass defines 'Darśana' as "theoretically oriented, systematized 'worldviews'" or "a certain spectrum of firmly established, fully developed doctrinal structures" dealing with "something given by tradition". After surveying a number of Indian doxographies, he draws his conclusion of aligning 'darśana' to 'philosophy'. However, it is not unreasonable to suggest that when God is the central underpinning of that worldview and those doctrines, it can quite well be called 'theology'. Wilhelm Halbfass, "Darśana, Anvikṣikī, Philosophy", in *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (Albany: State University of New York, 1988), pp. 263-86.

[501] In compressing such an important discussion into one part of the conclusion, I am deliberately making clear that this is unfinished work deserving much more attention and care that can be afforded here. It would also be fruitful and necessary in subsequent work to check for SMND at play in the Bible while drawing more thoroughly from the likes of Anselm, Aquinas, Augustine, Barth, etc.