

Jenny – Hinduism and Christianity: divine nature insights

Jenny's Theological Presentation

- Core thesis: Traditional Christian belief in immortal soul contradicts biblical anthropology
 - 95% of Christians worldwide believe soul survives bodily death (Pew Research)
 - This belief more aligned with Hinduism/Eastern religions than biblical teaching
 - Genesis creation account doesn't support soul-body dualism

Biblical Language Analysis

- Hebrew terminology examination:
 - Naphach = breath of life (not God's spirit)
 - Neshama = life-giving air
 - Nefesh = living, breathing being (not immortal soul)
- Nefesh usage examples:
 - Psalm 69: "waters up to my neck" (nefesh = throat/neck)
 - Deuteronomy: "kill everyone" context (nefesh = living beings)
 - Proverbs: describes appetite (physical, not spiritual)

Historical Development of Soul Doctrine

- Translation influence on doctrine:
 - Hebrew Pentateuch translated to Greek (280-150 BC)
 - Nefesh became psyche in Greek translation
 - Original Hebrew meaning lost under Hellenistic influence
 - Latin translations cemented dualistic interpretation
- Key figures in doctrinal development:
 - Plato formalized pre-existing pagan beliefs
 - Augustine, Thomism, Scholastics embedded soul doctrine
 - Reformers studied Hebrew but soul doctrine persisted

New Testament Reinterpretation

- Modern scholarship findings (James Dunn, E.P. Sanders, N.T. Wright):
 - NT writers thought in Hebrew, not Greek philosophical terms
 - Paul's anthropology based on Genesis, not Plato
 - Psychikos = animated by natural human desires (not spiritual essence)
 - Pneumatikos = animated by Holy Spirit

- Resurrection theology:
 - Paul teaches bodily resurrection, not disembodied spirits
 - Jesus rose with physical body (eating, being touched)
 - 2/3 of Americans believing in resurrection expect disembodied existence (“floaty bits”)

Theological and Practical Concerns

- Mystical practices critique:
 - Silent retreats, meditation, mindfulness similar to Hindu practices
 - Risk of bypassing Jesus as sole mediator
 - Research shows meditation can trigger anxiety, depression, psychosis
- Spiritual hierarchy dangers:
 - Soul doctrine creates caste-like spiritual rankings
 - Leads to abuse of authority in church contexts
- Core question: Does belief in immortal soul matter for Christian faith?