

Karma is strongly insisted on in Hinduism and Buddhism. These teach that every deed, good or bad, must have its result. Neither Indian faith explains how sin can be forgiven, evil be overruled for good, nor how, by trampling under foot their vices, men may rise higher. They know of no atonement, though modern Hinduism endeavors to propitiate the deities by sacrifices, as indeed done in Vedic times. Buddhism proclaims an immanent but not transcendent being, who is the “ultimate reality that underlies all particular phenomena.”

Vedantism and Sufism proclaim that ultimate absorption in the impersonal “It” is the summum bonum, “There is just one thing, without a second.” Of this one thing everything is, so to speak, a part: there being no ultimate difference between the human and the Divine. Thus sin is denied and unreality proclaimed.

Heathenism seeks to give some idea of the Invisible by means of idols; Vaishnavism has its doctrine of *avatara*s [the incarnation of Hindu deities]. Hinduism offers *mukti*, “deliverance” from a miserable existence.”

Krishnaism teaches unreasoning “devotion” of “mind, body, property” to certain supposed incarnations of Krishna (Vishtu), quite regardless of their immoral conduct.

In all religions we find, though in many various forms, certain common beliefs, such as: (1) the existence of some spiritual power or powers, good or bad, superior to man and able to affect his present and future life; (2) that there is a difference between right and wrong, even though not clearly defined; (3) that there is an after-life of some sort, with happiness or misery often regarded as in some measure dependent upon conduct or upon the observance of certain rites here.²

17. Also contributing to the “fullness of time” is the environment provided by SPQR’s *Pax Romana*: Roman Peace.

A state of comparative tranquility throughout the Mediterranean world from the reign of Augustus (27 BC–AD 14) to that of Marcus Aurelius (AD 161–180). Augustus laid the foundation for this period of concord, which also extended to North Africa and Persia. The empire protected and governed individual provinces, permitting each to make and administer its own laws while accepting Roman taxation and military control.³

² W. St. Clair Tisdall, “Comparative Religion,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, gen. ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), 2:692–93.

³ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia* (2010), 9:218.

18. In addition, the structure of the Roman culture provided a number of assets to facilitate the broad dissemination of doctrine that would emerge from the Incarnation.
19. SPQR functioned under a bilingual system of communication: Latin for official legal documents and official communications and Koine Greek⁴ which functioned as the colloquial or conversational language throughout the Empire.
20. In addition, what amounted to a first-century system of interstate highways allowed easy movement through much of Roman holdings which not only expanded commerce but also travel.
21. Health issues in Palestine had their contribution to the development of the “fullness of time” because of illnesses, congenital disabilities, and disease. These conditions enabled the Lord to perform miracles as a way of demonstrating His messiahship.
22. Fulfillment of Micah’s prophecy of Messiah’s birth in Bethlehem Ephrathah occurred historically due to the decree of Augustus that a census be held in every citizen’s “own city” (Luke 2:1-5).
23. Finally, the omniscience of God coordinated with the divine decree to foresee the confluence of events that provided the perfect environment to introduce the Messiah into human history.
24. That mechanics by which Jesus was “delivered” to his human captors is described by Peter as the “predetermined plan.”
25. The “predetermined plan” is indicated by the verb **ὀρίζω (horizō)** which we have determined is the divine decree.

⁴ “The fairly uniform spoken Greek that gradually replaced the local dialects after the breakdown of old political barriers and the establishment of Alexander’s empire in the 4th century BC is known as the Koine (*hē koinē diálektos* ‘the common language’). The Koine may be dated very crudely from the period of Alexander’s conquests in the 4th century BC to approximately the reign of Justinian in the 6th century AD” (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Macropaedia* [2010], 22:615, 616).

26. In addition to the divine decree it is necessary to also observe the next term in the verse which is the noun **πρόγνωσις (prōgnōsis)**: “foreknowledge.”
27. This word is transliterated into the English language and is primarily associated with medical terminology defined as, “the prospect of the recovery as anticipated from the usual course of disease or peculiarities of the case.”⁵
28. The preceding phrase in verse 23 is the “predetermined plan” which we translate the “divine decree” in association with omniscience.
29. *Prōgnōsis* refers to foreknowledge. To understand how all these terms come together we need to review some important principles:

Omniscience, the Divine Decree, Foreknowledge, & Human Volition

- (1) The divine decree is the eternal plan by which God has rendered certain all of the events of the universe, including both angelic and human history.
- (2) God’s decree rendered all things as certain to occur; He decided that they *would* exist. In doing so, He did not interfere with angelic or human free will.
- (3) Being omniscient, He knew ahead of time precisely what we would decide.
- (4) The decree of God is the sovereign choice of the divine will (sovereignty) and mentality (omniscience) by which all things are brought into being and controlled.
- (5) The omniscience of God is the key to understanding the decree. God knows simultaneously all things outside Himself. He knows all things about believers and unbelievers, both actual and possible.

⁵ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. “prognosis.”

- (6) Foreknowledge, a subcategory of God's cognizance, acknowledges only what is decreed, but foreknowledge does not make the decree certain.
- (7) Foreknowledge is a printout of the decree which contains the actual facts, not mere possibilities, regarding the volition of the believer.
- (8) With regard to human history, omniscience knows every thought, decision, and action and how they relate to each other.
- (9) Foreknowledge makes nothing certain but merely acknowledges what is certain.
- (10) Foreknowledge means that nothing can be certain until it is first decreed; only then can what *will* happen be foreknown.
- (11) God knows all actual events as certainly future because He has decreed them to be certainly future.
- (12) The decree relates equally to all future events of every kind – to the free actions of moral agents as well as to the actions of necessary agents; to the sinful, human-good, and evil as well as to the morally correct, divine-good, and honorable.
- (13) The system by which all these divine categories of knowledge come together can be structured in a logical order and illustrated as if they were part of programming a giant computer.
- (14) The omniscience of God feeds the facts into the computer of the divine decree. Foreknowledge reads what the computer prints out. This establishes the sequence of events.
- (15) The omniscience of God knows all that is knowable including the facts as well as potentialities and alternatives.
- (16) From this all-inclusive knowledge, God only fed the facts of angelic and human history into the decree's computer.