1. Explain the Concept of God according to Christianity.

Ans: In Christian theology the name of God has always had much deeper meaning and significance than being just a label or designator. Christian belief states that the name of God is not a human invention, but has divine origin and is based on divine revelation. Respect for the name of God is one of the Ten Commandments, which some Christian teachings interpret to be, not only a command to avoid the improper use of God’s name, but a directive to exalt it through both pious deeds and praise. This is reflected in the first petition in the Lord’s Prayer addressed to God the Father: “Hallowed be Thy Name”.

God in Christianity is the eternal being who created and preserves all things. Christians believe God to be both transcendent (wholly independent of, and removed from, the material universe) and immanent (involved in the world). Christian teachings of the immanence and involvement of God and his love for humanity exclude the belief that God is of the same substance as the created universe but accept that God’s divine Nature was hypostatically united to human nature in the person of Jesus Christ, in an event known as the Incarnation.

Early Christian views of God were expressed in the Pauline Epistles and the early creeds, which proclaimed one God and the divinity of Jesus, almost in the same breath as in 1 Corinthians (8:5-6): “For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.” “Although the Judeo-Christian sect of the Ebionites protested against this apotheosis of Jesus, the great mass of Gentile Christians accepted it.” This began to differentiate the Gentile Christian views of God from traditional Jewish teachings of the time.

The theology of the attributes and nature of God has been discussed since the earliest days of Christianity, with Irenaeus writing in the 2nd century: “His greatness lacks nothing, but contains all things”. In the 8th century, John of Damascus listed eighteen attributes which remain widely accepted. As time passed, theologians developed systematic lists of these attributes, some based on statements in the Bible (e.g., the Lord’s Prayer, stating that the Father is in Heaven), others based on theological reasoning. The Kingdom of God is a prominent phrase in the Synoptic Gospels and while there is near unanimous agreement among scholars that it represents a key element of the teachings of Jesus, there is little scholarly agreement on its exact interpretation.

Although the New Testament does not have a formal doctrine of the Trinity as such, “it does repeatedly speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit... in such a way as to compel a Trinitarian understanding of God.” This never becomes a tritheism, i.e. this does not imply three Gods. Around the year 200, Tertullian formulated a version of the doctrine of the Trinity which clearly affirmed the divinity of Jesus and came close to the later definitive form produced by the Ecumenical Council of 381. The doctrine of the Trinity can be summed up as: “The One God exists in Three Persons and One Substance, as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.” Trinitarians, who form the large majority of Christians, hold it as a core tenet of their faith. Nontrinitarian denominations define the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in a number of different ways.

Or

How far is the Indian ashram system helpful in attaining the purusharthas or the goals of one’s life?

Ans: The Ashramas system is one facet of the complex Dharma concept in Hinduism. It is integrated with the concept of Purushartha, or four proper aims of life in Hindu philosophy, namely, Dharma (piety, morality, duties), Artha (wealth, health, means of life), Kama (love, relationships, emotions) and Moksha (liberation, freedom, self-realization). Each of the Four Ashramas of life are a form of personal and social environment, each stage with ethical guidelines, duties and responsibilities, for the individual and for the society. Each Ashrama stage places different levels of emphasis on the four proper goals of life, with different stages viewed as steps to the attainment of the ideal in Hindu philosophy, namely Moksha.

Neither ancient nor medieval texts of India state that any of the first three Ashramas must devote itself solely to a specific goal of life (Purushartha). The fourth stage of Sannyasa is different, and the overwhelming consensus in ancient and medieval texts is that Sannyasa stage of life must entirely be devoted to Moksha aided by Dharma.

Dharma is held primary for all stages. Moksha is the ultimate noble goal, recommended for everyone to be sought at any stage of life. On the other two, the texts are unclear. With the exception of Kamasutra, most texts make no recommendation on the relative preference on Artha or Kama, that an individual must emphasise in what stage of life. The Kamasutra states:

The life span of a man is one hundred years. Dividing that time, he should attend to three aims of life in such a way that they support, rather than hinder each other. In his youth he should attend to profitable aims (artha) such as learning, in his prime to pleasure (kama), and in his old age to dharma and moksha.

The Purusharthas serve as pointers in the life of a human being. They are based on the vision of God which is evident in the creation He manifested and which can be followed by man to be part of that vision and in harmony with His aims. His worlds are established on the principles of dharma. They are filled with the abundance of material and spiritual beings and energies, who seek fulfillment by achieving their desires and liberation. Since man is God in his microcosmic aspect, he too should emulate God and manifest the same reality in his own little world. He should pursue the same aims, experience life in its fullness and be an instrument of God by serving the purpose for which he has been created. The four chief aims or Purusharthas are:

1. Dharma (righteousness),
2. Artha (wealth),
3. Kama (desire) and
4. Moksha (salvation or liberation).

The rationale behind these Purusharthas becomes clear when we consider the basic tenets of Hinduism. Man is an aspect of God. He is God's objective reality in creation. He exists in relationship with God like a reflection in the mirror that is somewhat different yet inseparable and somewhat similar. Veiled in him is the true self by the influence and involvement of Prakriti or primordial nature. The purpose of his life upon earth is to follow the law (dharma) of God and achieve salvation (moksha) or freedom from his false self (ahamkara) by leading a balanced life in which both material comforts and human passions have their own place and legitimacy. The four aims are essential for the continuity of life upon earth and for the order and regularity of the world. They provide structure and meaning to human life and give us a reason to live with a sense of duty, moral obligation and responsibility.

Man cannot simply take birth on earth and start working for his salvation right away by means of just dharma alone. If that is so man would never realize why he would have to seek liberation in the first place. As he passes through the rigors of life and experiences the problem of