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XII. Liberation-Salvation and Samadhi

1. Liberation and Salvation

Swami Vivekananda made the important point, “It is impossible for us to get out from this bondage [by ourselves]. It is only possible if there is someone more powerful than this law of causation, and He takes mercy on us and drags us out. And we declare that there is such a one--God. There is such a being, all merciful.... If there is a God, then it is possible for me to be saved. How can you be saved by your own will? Do you see the philosophy of the doctrine of salvation by grace?... How can you save yourself by work, if by salvation you mean that you will be taken out of all this nature?... [Liberation-salvation] is only possible if there is some being whom nature never caught, who is the Ruler of nature. He rules nature instead of being ruled by nature.... He exists and He is all merciful.”¹ “When the Avatara [Divine Incarnation] comes, then with him are born liberated persons as helpers in His world-play. Only Avatars have the power to dispel the darkness of a million souls and give them salvation in one life. This is known as grace. Do you understand?”²

According to the Apostle Paul, all people of the world are under the bondage of sin that separates them from God (Rom. 1:18-3:20). Sin concerns the whole person in bondage, guilt, estrangement, and death. Salvation offers redemption from bondage, forgiveness for guilt, reconciliation for estrangement, and the overcoming of death. It requires the liberation of people from sin, and the suffering due to the punishment of sin. Following the traditional Christian belief of salvation, it requires the grace of God, since human powers by themselves cannot bring it about. Only God can remove sin and deliver us from its penalty (2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:5). Salvation is made possible by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:10; Eph. 1:7).³

Vivekananda agrees with Paul that to be liberated-saved we must receive the grace of the all-merciful Brahman-God who is free and not bound. Divine Incarnation have this power. Where Vivekananda differs from Paul is that we are under the bondage of the law of causation and laws of nature, and not of sin. Liberation is to be released from the law of causation that binds us to this world. Internally our samskaras (mental impressions) that form our character and externally the law of karma based on our past actions both bind us and determine our future thoughts, actions, and environment. Through the grace of God, these mental patterns and external events can be altered preparing a devotee for liberation.

2. Jivanmukta: Reaching Partial or Full Perfection in this Life

Indian: “With sins destroyed ... the sages attain freedom in Brahman” (BG 5:25). “Men of virtuous deeds, whose sin is ended ... worship Me with firm resolve” (BG 7:28).

New Testament: “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect” (2 Cor. 7:1; cf. Mt. 5:48; Jam. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:16). “He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God” (1 Thes. 3:13). “No one born of God commits sin; for God’s nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God” (1 Jn. 3:9; cf. 3:6; 5:18).

The narrow way. Indian: “Like the sharp edge of a razor, the sages say, is the path. Narrow it is and difficult to tread” (Kat. Up.* 1:3.14, p. 30)! New Testament: “For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life” (Mt. 7:14; cf. Lk. 13:24).

Few people are willing to dedicate their lives to the task. Indian: “To many it is not given to hear of the Self (Atman). Many, though they hear of it, do not understand it. Wonderful is he who speaks of it. Intelligent is he who learns of it. Blessed is he who, taught by a good teacher, is able to understand it” (Kat. Up.* 1:2.7, p. 24). “Of those who strive and succeed, one, perchance, knows Me in truth” (BG 7:3). New Testament: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Mt. 9:37; Lk. 10:2). “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Mt. 22:14). “In a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize” (1 Cor. 9:24).

The Indian Nondualistic philosopher Shankara (c. 688/788-720/820), affirmed that, “A man is said to be free even in this life when he is established in illumination. His bliss is unending. He almost forgets this world of appearances. Even though his mind is dissolved in Brahman, he is fully awake, free from the ignorance of waking life. He is fully conscious, but free from any craving. Such a man is said to be free even in this life. For him, the sorrows of this world are over. Though he possesses a finite body, he remains united with the Infinite. His heart knows no anxiety. Such a man is said to be free even in this life. Though he lives in the body, it seems merely like a shadow following him. He is no longer troubled by the thoughts of ‘I’ and ‘mine.’ Such are the characteristics of a man who is free even in this life.”⁴ “He who knows the Atman is free from every kind of bondage. He is full of glory. He is the greatest of the great. The things perceived by the senses cause him neither grief nor pleasure. He is not attached to them. Neither does he shun them. Constantly delighting in the Atman he is always at play within himself. He tastes the sweet, unending bliss of the Atman and is satisfied.... He lives desireless amidst the objects of desire. The Atman is his eternal satisfaction. He sees the Atman present in all things.... the illumined soul lives always absorbed in the highest bliss.... The illumined soul lives eternally conscious of his oneness with Brahman. He tastes continually the joy of the Atman.”⁵ A knower of Brahman is liberated while living in a physical body (jivanmukti), enjoying the unending bliss of the Atman. Human life for the illumined sage continues after liberation due to the momentum of past actions, analogous to the potter’s wheel that continues to revolve after the pot has been completed. A liberated soul who has renounced all worldly attachments is free of sin and every other form of bondage, is not attached to the objects of the senses, and does not identify with the physical body. It is not possible for a realized soul to commit an evil act, for he has died to sin and is totally free of selfish attachment. Things perceived by the senses evoke neither grief nor pleasure in the sage, who is full of spiritual grandeur. He works for the liberation of others. After the residual prarabdha karmas are exhausted, the physical body of the liberated soul passes away and they attain the ultimate state never to return to this world.⁶

Vivekananda described the jivanmukti [liberated while living on earth] as, “The perfect man, the free man, the God-man, who has gone beyond the laws of nature, and transcended everything, who has no more to go through this process of evolution, through birth and death, that man called the ‘Christ-man’ by the

Christians, and the ‘Buddha-man’ by the Buddhists, and the ‘Free’ by the Yogis—that perfect man who is at one end of the chain of evolution was involved in the cell of the protoplasm, which is at the other end of the same chain.”⁷ In one lifetime the sage begins as an embryo and ends as an illumined soul, passing through the entire evolutionary process. In this way, the jivanmukti “lives the life of all past humanity, but also the future life of all humanity.” They are free from the control and domination of both external and internal nature.⁸ “When a man has reached that state, he is called Jivanmukta, “living-free,” free even while living. The aim and end in this life for the Jnana-Yogi is to become this Jivanmukta, ‘living-free.’ He is Jivanmukta who can live in this world without being attached. He is like the lotus leaves in water, which are never wetted by the water. He is the highest of human beings, nay the highest of all beings, for he has realised his identity with the Absolute, he has realised that he is one with God. So long as you think you have the least difference from God, fear will seize you, but when you have known that you are He, that there is no difference, entirely no difference, that you are He, all of Him, and the whole of Him, all fear ceases.” “The Jivanmukta (‘the living free’ or one who knows) alone is able to give real love, real charity, real truth, and it is truth alone that makes us free. Desire makes slaves of us, it is an insatiable tyrant and gives its victims no rest; but the Jivanmukta has conquered all desire by rising to the knowledge that he is the One and there is nothing left to wish for.” “Power to help mankind is with the silent ones who only live and love and withdraw their own personality entirely. They never say ‘me’ or ‘mine’, they are only blessed in being the instruments to help others. They are wholly identified with God, asking nothing and not consciously doing anything. They are the true Jivanmuktas--the absolutely selfless, their little personality thoroughly blown away, ambition non-existent. They are all principle, with no personality.”⁹ “Even if he lives in a body and works incessantly, he works only to do good; his lips speak only benediction to all; his hands do only good works; his mind can only think good thoughts; his presence is a blessing wherever he goes. He is himself a living blessing. Such a man will, by his very presence, change even the most wicked persons into saints. Even if he does not speak, his very presence will be a blessing to mankind.”¹⁰

Jivanmuktas temporarily forsake their own liberation in order to perform what the Catholics call “works of supererogation.” These acts of superabundant merit produce a “treasury of [spiritual] merit,” which to some degree aid other devotees in manifesting their spiritual nature. It would be very difficult for a spiritual aspirant to make progress without a pre-existing spiritual “treasury of merit” created by

others to draw upon. In addition, Swami Brahmananda tells us, “Many holy men, after leaving the physical body, live in subtle, spiritual bodies, and help earnest religious aspirants in different ways.”¹¹

To give an example, Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) was a modern jivanmukta whose body suffered from cancer for many years. He used no morphine but was able to completely detach his real self from the physical body. He remained serene, received visitors, and mediated for long hours as usual.¹² On his ashram there was a cow who showed him reverence. When the cow was dying Maharshi placed his hand on its head for a while so that it would be liberated.

The British monk Pelagius (c. 360-420) and his followers stressed that perfect righteousness is attainable in this life on earth. In the *Bible* we find examples of many people who lived blameless lives. He said, “A man can if he will, observed God’s commandments without sinning.” “A Christian is he who is one not in word but in deed, who imitates and follows Christ in everything, who is holy, innocent, unsoiled, blameless, in whose heart there is no malice but only piety and goodness, who refuses to injure or hurt anyone, but brings succor to all.... He is a Christian who can justly say, ‘I have injured no one, I have lived righteously with all.’” Through a strenuous effort of the will over a period of time, this state can be attained.¹³

George Fox (1624-91) the English preacher who founded the Quakers sect expressed the idea of “Perfectionism,” “For all the sects of Christendom that I discoursed with I found none that could bear to be told that any should come to Adam’s perfection, into the Image of God, that righteousness and holiness that Adam was in before he fell; to be pure and clean without sin as he was. Therefore how shall they be able to bear being told that any shall grow up into the full measure of the stature of Christ, when they cannot bear to hear that any shall come, while on earth, into the same power and spirit that the prophets and apostles were in.” Concerning a spiritual experience he wrote, “I knew nothing but pureness and innocency and righteousness, being renewed in the image of Christ Jesus so that I say I was come up to the state of Adam, which he was in before he fell ... But immediately I was taken up in spirit to see another and more steadfast state than Adam’s innocency, even into the state of Christ Jesus that should never fall.”¹⁴

In modern times Paul Tillich (1886-1965) explains the perfection of Jesus Christ from the existential point of view: “There are, in spite of all tensions, no

traces of estrangement between him [Jesus Christ] and God and consequently between him and himself and between him and his world (in its essential nature). The paradoxical character of his being consists in the fact that, although he has only finite freedom under the conditions of time and space, he is not estranged from the ground of his being. There are no traces of unbelief, namely, the removal of his personal center from the Divine center which is the subject of his infinite concern. Even in the extreme situation of despair about his messianic work, he cries to God who has forsaken him. In the same way the Biblical picture shows no traces of hubris or self-evaluation in spite of his awareness of his messianic vocation.”¹⁵ “Man as he exists is not what he essentially is and ought to be. He is estranged from his true being.... one belongs essentially to that from which one is estranged.”¹⁶ Hence, humans also can strive to attain this state of perfection, and their unity with their essence which is Divine. When a person becomes one with their own essence they reach a point where God is present to him/her on the basis of objective certitude, salvific truth and the religious experience of this truth. A union with the Divine Ground brings about an end to sin.¹⁷

Limited Perfectionism

Ramanuja maintained that liberation on earth and the quest for perfection is only a partial state, given that complete emancipation requires total dissociation from the sense organs, the physical body, and the law of karma. Ultimate liberation (videhamukti) is attained in the afterlife state when the liberated soul becomes free from the limitations of the physical body and enjoys the perpetual bliss of communion with the Lord. “The text ascribes to him the quality of having risen above, i.e., being free from all evil and this can belong to the highest Self only, not to the individual soul. For to be free from all evil means to be free from all influence of karma, and this quality can belong to the highest Self only differing from all individual souls which, as is shown by their experience of pleasure and pain are in the bonds of Karma. Those essential qualities also which presuppose freedom from all evil such as mastery over all worlds and wishes, capability of realizing one’s purposes, being the inner Self of all, etc. belong to the highest Self alone.”¹⁸

Thomas Aquinas ascertained that, “God cannot be seen in His essence by one who is merely man, except he be separated from this mortal life.... our soul, as long as we live in this life, has its being in corporeal matter; hence it knows naturally

only that what has a form in matter, or what can be known by such form. Now it is evident that the Divine Essence cannot be known through the nature of material things. For it was shown above that the knowledge of God by means of any created likeness is not the vision of His essence. Hence it is impossible for the soul of man in this life to see the Essence of God.”¹⁹ “Consequently the highest degree of contemplation in the present life is that which Paul had in rapture, in which he was in a middle state between the present life and the life to come.”²⁰

When a great soul, saint or yogi enters into the state of samadhi they are without blemishes. But, when their mind descends back to the earthly plane and they identify somewhat with their physical body and ego, their humanness again manifests itself accompanied by some limitations.

The goal is to be liberated-saved in this life while on earth. Even if one falls short of being an illumined soul, it is most desirable to surrender oneself to the will of the Lord, and to realize their fate is totally in the hands of the Lord. They should remain eternally optimistic understanding they are under the Lord’s protection, Who will see them through any possible troubles.

3. Samadhi and Liberation-Salvation

Swami Vivekananda gives a detailed explanation of samadhi, “The mind can exist on a still higher plane, the superconscious. When the mind has attained to that state, which is called Samadhi--perfect concentration, superconsciousness--it goes beyond the limits of reason, and comes face to face with facts which no instinct or reason can ever know. All manipulations of the subtle forces of the body, the different manifestations of Prana, if trained, give a push to the mind, help it to go up higher, and become superconscious, from where it acts.” “All are parts of the same ocean of Prana, they differ only in their rate of vibration. If I can bring myself to the quick vibration, this plane will immediately change for me: I shall not see you any more; you vanish and they appear. Some of you, perhaps, know this to be true. All this bringing of the mind into a higher state of vibration is included in one word in Yoga--Samadhi. All these states of higher vibration, superconscious vibrations of the mind, are grouped in that one word, Samadhi, and the lower states of Samadhi give us visions of these beings. The highest grade of Samadhi is when we see the real thing, when we see the material out of which the whole of these

grades of beings are composed, and that one lump of clay being known, we know all the clay in the universe.”²¹

He continues, “There is a still higher plane upon which the mind can work. It can go beyond consciousness. Just as unconscious work is beneath consciousness, so there is another work which is above consciousness, and which also is not accompanied with the feeling of egoism. The feeling of egoism is only on the middle plane. When the mind is above or below that line, there is no feeling of ‘I’, and yet the mind works. When the mind goes beyond this line of self-consciousness, it is called Samadhi or superconsciousness. How, for instance, do we know that a man in Samadhi has not gone below consciousness, has not degenerated instead of going higher? In both cases the works are unaccompanied with egoism. The answer is, by the effects, by the results of the work, we know that which is below, and that which is above. When a man goes into deep sleep, he enters a plane beneath consciousness. He works the body all the time, he breathes, he moves the body, perhaps, in his sleep, without any accompanying feeling of ego; he is unconscious, and when he returns from his sleep, he is the same man who went into it. The sum total of the knowledge which he had before he went into the sleep remains the same; it does not increase at all. No enlightenment comes. But when a man goes into Samadhi, if he goes into it a fool, he comes out a sage. What makes the difference? From one state a man comes out the very same man that he went in, and from another state the man comes out enlightened, a sage, a prophet, a saint, his whole character changed, his life changed, illumined.”²²

From his spiritual experiences Swami Brahmananda (1863-1922) expounded, “The world vanishes in samadhi, but you feel you are experiencing a great joy.... Having reached this state, the world no longer holds any charm for the aspirant; he becomes absorbed in the consciousness of God. This absorption leads to samadhi, an experience which cannot be described. It is beyond is and is not. There, there is neither happiness nor misery, neither light nor darkness. All is infinite Being—inexpressible.... Ah, that is another realm, far beyond this universe! After this experience the universe appears as nothing; the mind is dissolved and you experience Savikalpa Samadhi. This leads gradually to the realization of the Nirvikalpa Samadhi—absolute union with God. This experience is beyond all thought and speech; there is nothing to be seen, nothing to be heard. All is infinite silence! It is 'beyond duality and nonduality'.... Meditation means a continuous flow of thought toward God. When meditation ripens, there comes absorption, and samadhi is experienced. The joy that is realized in samadhi remains forever.... The world

vanishes in Samadhi, but you feel that you are experiencing a great joy. The Rishis experienced that absolute joy. What exists in Samadhi cannot be explained. Then there is no longer 'I' or 'thou' but only Sachchidananda—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.... When meditation will be intense, when God will actually reveal Himself, you will have Samadhi. If you attain Samadhi, the joy of it will persist for a long time, some say for all times.”²³

Swami Ramakrishnananda (1863-1911) clarified, “In order to realize God, you must worship Him with the whole heart; and the man who has realized God is perfectly happy. Even if he should go to hell, he would be in heaven; for he lives in God and where God is, that is heaven. He carries God with him wherever he goes, so he has heaven everywhere. Saints and sages make holy places holy because they carry holiness with them in their heart. Such men live in their own heaven.... The consciousness in the Universal Mind, however, is the same as that behind your individual mind. They are not separate, for the infinite Consciousness is one. So if you can make your individual mind merge into the Universal Mind, then you will no longer be able to distinguish your mind from the Universal Mind. When a devotee or Bhakta, therefore wants to go to God, he does the same thing as the Jnani, who seeks to go behind his own consciousness to God's consciousness.... So when the devotee goes to God and draws only inspiration from God, then God's thought flows naturally into his heart and there remains no difference between him and his Lord.... Sri Shankaracharya, the greatest monist, says, ‘It is always possible for man to, identify himself with Parabrahman [Supreme Brahman]; but it is never possible for man to identify himself with God.’ He can never become one with God the Creator, God the Preserver, God the Destroyer.”²⁴

Based on the logic of Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer the Thing-in-Itself is Nirguna Brahman discussed in Chapters I, II, and V. Yet from another standpoint the Thing-in-Itself is Saguna Brahman (Personal God), the Brahmaloaka (Kingdom of Heaven), and the Divine Archetypical (Platonic) ideas. In Savikalpa Samadhi one experiences and sees an aspect of the Divine world and things as they really are (Thing-in-Itself). Most of the time we experience the empirical world, which is an imperfect representation, reflection, or copy of the Divine world. In Nirvitarka Samadhi the mind operates independent of the normal reflective consciousness and things are perceived as they really are in themselves.²⁵ As Erigena stated, "Each one of us exists more truly in the Eternal Idea of man than in our own temporally spread out existence in this lower material world."²⁶

Concerning religious experience, in her classic work *Mysticism*, Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941) from England wrote, “What is the nature of this mysterious mystic illumination? Apart from the certitude it imparts, what is the form which it most usually assumes in the consciousness of the self? The illuminatives seem to assure us that its apparently symbolic name is really descriptive; that they do experience a kind of radiance, a flooding of the personality with new light. A new sun rises above the horizon, and transfigures their twilit world. Over and over again they return to light-imagery in this connection. Frequently, as in their first conversion, they report an actual and overpowering consciousness of radiant light, ineffable in its splendour, as an accompaniment of their inward adjustment.” “This ground of the soul, this strange inward sanctuary to which the normal man so seldom penetrates, is, says Eckhart ‘immediately receptive of the Divine Being’, and ‘no one can move it but God alone.’ There the finite self encounters the Infinite; and, by a close and loving communion with and feeding on the attributes of the Divine Substance, is remade in the interests of the Absolute Life. This encounter, the consummation of mystical culture, is what we mean by contemplation in its highest form. Here we are on the verge of that great self-merging act which is of the essence of pure love: which Reality has sought of us, and we have unknowingly desired of It. Here contemplation and union are one.” “Utter peace and wild delight, every pleasure-state known to man's normal consciousness, are inadequate to the description of her joy. She has participated for an instant in the Divine Life; knows all, and knows naught. She has learnt the world's secret, not by knowing, but by being: the only way of really knowing anything.” “Therefore, whilst on its physical side ecstasy is an entrancement, on its mental side a complete unification of consciousness, on its mystical side it is an exalted act of perception.”²⁷

Evelyn Underhill presented the following quotes from the great Western mystics, “We must be transported wholly out of ourselves and given unto God” (Dionysius the Areopagite, 5th-6th century). “I am plunged into an ineffable peace. My mind is full of gladness, all my past wretchedness and pain are forgotten. My soul exults: my intellect is illumined: my heart is a fire: my desires have become kindly and gentle: I know not where I am, because my love has embraced me.... My soul strives in gladness that she may not be separated from That which she desires to hold fast for ever: as if she had found in it the goal of all her desires. She exults in a sovereign and ineffable manner, seeking nought, desiring nought, but to rest in this. Is this, then, my Beloved? Tell me that I may know Him, and that if He come again I may entreat Him to leave me not, but to stay with me for ever” (Hugh of St.

Victor, 1096-1141). “The eyes of my soul were opened, and I beheld the plenitude of God, wherein I did comprehend the whole world, both here and beyond the sea, and the abyss and ocean and all things. In all these things I beheld naught save the Divine power, in a manner assuredly indescribable; so that through excess of marveling the soul cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘This whole world is full of God!’ Wherefore I now comprehended how small a thing is the whole world, that is to say both here and beyond the seas, the abyss, the ocean, and all things; and that the Power of God exceeds and fills all. Then He said unto me, ‘I have shown thee something of My Power.’” “These bring wisdom to the simple and ignorant, sudden calm to those who were tormented by doubts. They flood the personality with new light; accompany conversion, or the passage from one spiritual state to another; arrive at moments of indecision, bringing with them authoritative commands or counsels, opposed to the inclination of the self; confer a convinced knowledge of some department of the spiritual life before unknown. Such visions, it is clear, belong to another and higher plane of experience” (Angela of Foligno, 1248-1309).²⁸

Underhill’s quotes continue, “Nothing more profitable, nothing merrier than grace of contemplation that lifts us from this low and offers to God. What is grace of contemplation but beginning of joy? What is parfiteness of joy but grace confirmed?” (Richard Rolle, 1290-1349). “Thus do we grow and, carried above ourselves, above reason, into the very heart of love, there do we feed according to the spirit; and taking flight for the Godhead by naked love, we go to the encounter of the Bridegroom, to the encounter of His Spirit, which is His love; and thus we are brought forth by God, out of our selfhood, into the immersion of love, in which we possess blessedness and are one with God” (Jan Ruysbroeck, 1293/94-1381). “I made many mistakes, through allowing myself to be too much taken up by my interior joys.... I spent hours in this way without being able to open my eyes or to know what was happening to me: so simply, so peacefully, so gently that sometimes I said to myself, ‘Can heaven itself be more peaceful than I?’” (Madame Guyon, 1648-1717). “When contemplation appears, it produces a general condition of indifference, liberty, and peace, an elevation above the world, a sense of beatitude. The Subject ceases to perceive himself in the multiplicity and division of his general consciousness. He is raised above himself. A deeper and a purer soul substitutes itself for the normal self. In this state, in which consciousness of I-hood and consciousness of the world disappear, the mystic is conscious of being in immediate relation with God Himself; of participating in Divinity. Contemplation

installs a method of being and of knowing. Moreover, these two things tend at bottom to become one. The mystic has more and more the impression of being that which he knows, and of knowing that which he is” (Eugene Delacroix, 1798-1863). “That ever closer and deeper dependence on and appropriation of the fullness of the Divine Life; a conscious participation, and active union with the infinite and eternal” (Rudolph Eucken, 1846-1926).²⁹

4. Universal Liberation, Universal Salvation, and Restoration

Indian: “Whatever path men travel is my path: No matter where they walk it leads to me” (BG* 4:11, p. 61). “Even those who worship other deities, and sacrifice to them with faith in their hearts, are really worshipping me, though with a mistaken approach” (BG* 9:23, pp. 106-07).

Old Testament: “To me [the Lord] every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Is. 45:23). “All flesh shall come to worship before me, says the Lord” (Is. 66:23). New Testament: “This [Christ] is indeed the Savior of the world” (Jn. 4:42). “For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all” (Jn. 11:32). “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (Jn. 12:32). “One man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men” (Rom. 5:18). “In Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order” (1 Cor. 15:22-23). “That God may be everything to everyone” (1 Cor. 15:28). “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). “According to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things to him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:9-10). “God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3-4). “God, who is the savior of all men, especially of those who believe” (1 Tim. 4:10). “For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men” (Tit. 2:11). “Jesus ... by the grace of God he might taste death for every one” (Heb. 2:9). “The Lord ... not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). “He is the expiation ... for the sins of the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:2).

Universal Liberation and Salvation is the doctrine that at some time in the future, differing from one person to the next, everyone will be reconciled to Brahman-God and reach a state of perfection. This is the “Hidden Plan of Nature” that is leading all people unwittingly to eventual self-perfection.

Vivekananda signified that God is both the material and efficient cause of the universe. “All this universe was in Brahman, and it was, as it were, projected out of Him, and has been moving on to go back to the source from which it was projected.... The same is the case with the soul [Atman]. Projected from Brahman, it passed through all sorts of vegetable and animal forms, and at last it is in man, and man is the nearest approach to Brahman. To go back to Brahman from which we have been projected is the great struggle of life.”³⁰ When the world was created the entire universe came out of God, was involved in seed form and is now completing the circle by evolving back to God. “You and I must be part of the Cosmic Consciousness, Cosmic Life, Cosmic Mind, which got involved and we must complete the circle and go back to this Cosmic Intelligence which is God. This Cosmic Intelligence is what people call Lord, or God, or Christ, or Buddha, or Brahman.”³¹ “The last to come in the order of creation, according to the evolutionists, was intelligence. That being so, it must be the cause, the beginning of creation also. At the beginning that intelligence remains involved, and in the end it gets evolved. The sum total of the intelligence displayed in the universe must therefore be the involved universal intelligence unfolding itself, and this universal intelligence is what we call God, from whom we come and to whom we return, as the scriptures say. Call it by any other name, you cannot deny that in the beginning there is that infinite Cosmic Intelligence.”³²

The Swami continues, “Vedanta goes further and tells us that we not only have to live the life of all past humanity, but also the future life of all humanity. The man who does the first is the educated man, the second is the Jivanmukta, forever free (even while living).”³³ “Similarly, why shall not the soul, by intensifying its action, attain perfection in this very life? All beings will at last attain to that goal, we know. But who cares to wait all these millions of aeons?... The ideal of the Yogi, the whole science of Yoga, is directed to the end of teaching men how, by intensifying the power of assimilation, to shorten the time for reaching perfection, instead of slowly advancing from point to point and waiting until the whole human race has become perfect. All the great prophets, saints, and seers of the world—what did they do? In one span of life they lived the whole life of humanity, traversed the whole length of time that it takes ordinary humanity to come to perfection. In one life they perfect themselves; they have no thought for anything else, never live a moment for any other idea, and thus the way is shortened for them.”³⁴ The soul passes through plant, animal, and human forms, struggling for infinite freedom. All life is struggling consciously or unconsciously toward God and

consequently, each soul is following its own radii toward their Divinity that is at the center. Everyone is traveling toward the same goal by slowly unfolding their innate purity; only many people are doing it blindly. We are all “fellow travelers” on the path. Since it is their inalienable birthright, at some future point in history all people living on earth will be liberated souls and none will be lost. All humanity is motivated by a struggle for infinite power and pleasure, but many people are mistakenly trying to reach it through the senses. In the evolutionary process which takes place over a vast period of time, through the mechanism of reincarnation, the individual is slowly transformed from a fungus, to a plant, an animal, a human and finally to a perfected being.³⁵

To quote Swami Abhedananda (1866-1939), “By natural process of evolution each individual will become perfect after going through all the stages of the chain of evolution and gaining experience at each step.”³⁶ “Each individual mind is bound to attain to freedom or perfection through gradual experience (of course it takes ages) by going through the process of evolution. That process is undoubtedly slow, tiresome and most undesirable. Wise men do not want to go through that slow method.... Let us shorten the time by trying our best to attain to freedom and perfection in this life. The easiest way is by knowing the Truth in this life i.e., by realizing our true nature, which is the immortal, Divine and perfect Atman. The Atman or the Self is free from death, disease, and sorrow.... Because, if we know our own nature, we will know the nature of the universe and also that of God. Then we will see that each individual soul is perfect, Divine, and immortal.”³⁷ There is no eternal punishment due to the fact that all sinful human actions produce limited karmic effects, which in time are worked off.³⁸ We have the ability to realize our real nature, because the potentiality for Divinity is innately within us from birth.

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) expounded that evolution is a teleological process, an ascent from lower to higher grades of being, consciousness and power. Due to the directing force of the Supramental consciousness, there exists an inborn urge in every soul to perfect itself by the inner potency of the Spirit. Humans undergo a succession of rebirths until their spiritual task is completed, and the supreme goal is reached. There is “a progressive development of our consciousness being towards a supreme recovery of unity with God.”³⁹ Earth-life “is the scene of the evolutionary unfolding of the being which moves towards the revelation of a supreme spiritual light and power and joy and oneness.... If there is an evolution of consciousness in an evolutionary body and a soul inhabiting the body, a real and conscious individual, then it is evident that it is the progressive experience of that a

soul in Nature which takes the form of this evolution of consciousness: rebirth is self-evidently a necessary part, the sole possible machinery of such an evolution.”⁴⁰ The directing, guiding and creative force behind evolution is Supramental consciousness, manifesting through mind and matter. Self-development comes from within as an unfoldment of conscious, fulfilling a teleologically based spiritual evolution. Moreover, the process of evolution takes the soul to the heavenly plane, accompanied by a transformation of the lower self into the higher. Limited consciousness is eventually transformed into an omniscience of the Infinite. Humans are radically transformed into Divine Beings. An upward movement of their consciousness, life and body, culminates in the final goal which is the realization of God. “All evolution is in essence a heightening of the force of consciousness in the manifest being so that it may be raised into the greater intensity of what is still unmanifest, from matter into life, from life into mind, from the mind into the Spirit.”⁴¹

In the Christian world universal salvation has been advocated by many prominent thinkers over the last two millennia including the Alexandrian, Antioch, Caesarea, and Edessa Schools of Christianity (1st-5th century); the Valentinian, Carpocratian and Basilidian Gnostics (c. 100-60); Clement (b. 150/60), Origen (b. 185), and Didymus the Blind of Alexandria (b. 308); Gregory of Nazianzus (b. 328), Gregory of Nyssa (b. 332), Evagrius of Ponticus (b. 345), Diodorus of Tarsus (fl. 375), Theodore of Mopsuestia (b. 350), John Cassian (b. 360), Prosper of Aquitaine (b. 390), Stephen Bar Sudhaile (fl. c. 500) and by Maximus the Confessor (b. 580). Augustine (b. 354) accepted eternal punishment but noted in his day there were, “multitudes who did not believe in eternal punishment.”⁴² The Doctrine of Universal Salvation was condemned as being heretical by the Church Council at Constantinople in 543, and afterwards was suppressed for many centuries in the Christian world. It received support again during the Middle Ages from Johannes Scotus Erigena (b. 810), Amalric of Bena (d. 1204), Albert Magnus (b. 1206), Angela of Foligno (b. 1248), mystics like Jan Ruysbroeck (b. 1293), John Tauler (b. 1300) and Julian of Norwich (b. 1343), Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola (b. 1463), and the Anabaptists (16th century). With the dawn of a new era of religious freedom and the Age of the Enlightenment, the doctrine reemerged in modern times and was taught in Europe and America by William Law (b. 1686), Friedrich Oetinger (b. 1702), George de Benneville (b. 1703), Charles Chauncy (b. 1705), David Hartley (b. 1705), James Relly (b. 1722),

Immanuel Kant (b. 1724), Joseph Priestly (b. 1733), John Murray (b. 1741), Benjamin Rush (b. 1745), Friedrich Schleiermacher (b. 1768), Hosea Ballou (b. 1771), Friedrich Schelling (b. 1775), Clara Barton (b. 1821), C. H. Dodd (b. 1884), P. Chenchiah (b. 1886), Pitirim Sorokin (b. 1889), Nels Ferre (b. 1908), Jacques Ellul (b. 1912), John A. T. Robinson (b. 1919), John Hick (b. 1922), and many others. It is also supported by the Christian Scientists, Mormons, New Thought, Quakers, Universalist-Unitarians, and as well many people who belong to other denominations. In addition, the idea of eternal damnation was rejected by the philosopher John Locke (b. 1632), scientist Isaac Newton (b. 1642), military leader Ethan Allen (b. 1739) and theologians like Edward Beecher (b. 1803), Frederick Maurice (b. 1805), Albrecht Ritschl (b. 1822), Fred Farrar (b. 1831), Father Sergei Bulgakov (b. 1871), Nikolai Berdyaev (b. 1874), Paul Tillich (b. 1886), and many others.⁴³

The Greek Christian philosopher of Alexandria, Egypt, Origen (c. 185-254) realized that all people will eventually attain to a state of celestial unity and perfection. As a consequence of their sins, souls have fallen from a higher world and have become human beings. Evil is a privation of the good and God is not its author. Sin resides in the human will and not in the deeper essential nature of the soul. "God who, by the unspeakable skill of his wisdom, transforms and restores all things, whatever their condition, to some useful purpose and the common advantage of all."⁴⁴ "For all things were created by the Word of God and by his wisdom, and were set in order through the operation of his righteousness; and in his gracious compassion he provides for all and exhorts all to be cured by whatever remedies they may, and incites them to salvation."⁴⁵ Some people "are not ready for instruction, their treatment and healing being undoubtedly reserved for a later time."⁴⁶ "For God deals with souls not in view of the short time of our life here, which is confined to some sixty or a few more years, but in view of the everlasting and eternal age, exercising His provincial care over souls that are immortal, just as He Himself is eternal and immortal. For He made our rational nature, which He created 'in his own image and likeness,' incorruptible, and therefore the soul, which is immortal, is not shut out by the shortness of our present life from the Divine healing and remedies."⁴⁷ "At some time the Logos will have overcome the entire rational nature, and will have remodeled every soul to his own perfection, when each individual simply by the exercise of his freedom will choose what the Logos wills and will be in that state which he has chosen.... the Logos and the healing power within him are more powerful than any evils in the soul."⁴⁸ In time all wicked

and demonic people will be purified and restored to communion with God and will partake of the Divine Essence. When the world comes to an end, God will be “all in all.” All souls will “become perfect ‘spiritual men’ and ‘judge all things’, because their mind is illumined in all holiness through the word and wisdom of God.”⁴⁹

Plotinus (c. 205-70) explains that since the soul is Divine and comes from above, “The individual soul longs for what corresponds to its own nature.” “The individual souls, certainly, have an intelligent desire consisting in the impulse to return to itself springing from the principle from which they came into being.... it turns to Intelligence [the Divine], to be free from its fetters and to ascend, when it is started on the contemplation of reality by recollection: for in spite of everything, it always possesses something transcendent in some way.”⁵⁰

Though Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) supported the notion of eternal punishment based on Matthew 25:46, he also wrote the following passages, which offer strong theological evidence for the doctrine of universal salvation-liberation. His system of thought is certainly far more cordial to universal salvation-liberation, than to the idea of eternal damnation. He writes, “It is not fitting that the supreme goodness of God should produce things without giving them their perfection. Now a thing’s ultimate perfection consists in the attainment of its end. Therefore it belongs to the Divine goodness, as it brought things into being, so to lead them to their end.”⁵¹ “All things are ordered to one good, as to their ultimate end.... That which is the highest good is, from the highest point of view, the end of all things.... So all things are ordered to one good, as their end, and this is God.... God is obviously the end of all things.... the supreme agent moves all secondary agents, so must all the ends of secondary agents be ordered to the end of the supreme agent ... all things are ordered to God as an end.”⁵² “All things are ordered to Divine goodness as an end.... God makes all things for an end which is Himself.”⁵³ “If then, all things tend toward God as an ultimate end, so that they may attain His goodness, it follows that the ultimate end of things is to become like God.... So, all things tend through their movements and actions toward the Divine likeness, as toward their ultimate end.”⁵⁴ “All creatures ... are ordered to God as their ultimate end, all achieve this end to the extent that they participate somewhat in His likeness.... So, each thing intends, as its ultimate end, to be united with God as closely as possible.”⁵⁵ “All things are subject to His providence ... The end towards which created things are directed by God is twofold: one which exceeds all proportion and ability of created nature; and this end is life eternal, that consisting in the vision of God.”⁵⁶ “All things desire God as their end in desiring any particular

good ... for nothing is good and desirable except inasmuch as it participates in the likeness to God.”⁵⁷ “Now the universe of creatures, to which man is related as part to a whole, is not the last end, but is ordered to God, as to its last end. Therefore the last end of man is not the good of the universe, but God Himself.”⁵⁸ “Every creature exists for the perfection of the entire universe. Further still, the entire universe, with all its parts, is ordained towards God as its end, inasmuch as it imitates, as it were, and shows forth the Divine goodness to the glory of God.... Thus it is plain that the Divine goodness is the end of all corporeal things.”⁵⁹ “The end of the Divine government is the Divine goodness, as we have shown. Therefore, as there can be nothing that is not ordered to the Divine goodness as its end.”⁶⁰ “All things, by desiring their own perfection, desire God Himself.”⁶¹ “The ultimate end of the intellect is the vision of the Divine substance.”⁶² “Nothing finite can fully satisfy intellectual desire. This is shown from the fact that, whenever a finite object is presented, the intellect extends its interest to something more.”⁶³ “God loves all existing things. For all existing things, in so far as they exist, are good, since the being of a thing is itself a good.... a thing has some being, or any kind of good, only inasmuch as it is willed by God.”⁶⁴

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) reached the following conclusion, “Usually one speaks of ‘eternal condemnation.’ But this is a theologically untenable combination of words. God alone is eternal.... one would ascribe endless condemnation to that which by its very nature has an end, namely finite man.... even in the state of separation God is creatively working in us—even if his creativity takes the way of destruction. Man is never cut off from the ground of being [Atman, inherent Divinity], not even in the state of condemnation.” God is “creatively directing everything toward its fulfillment.”⁶⁵ “Ontologically, eternal condemnation is a contradiction in terms. It establishes an eternal split within Being-Itself. The demonic, whose characteristic is exactly this split, has then reached coeternity with God.”⁶⁶ Ultimate concern is the most fundamental, highest and the end of existence. “The religious concern is ultimate; it excludes all other concerns from ultimate significance, it makes them preliminary. The ultimate concern is unconditional, independent of any conditions of character, desire, or circumstance. The ultimate concern is total; no part of ourselves or of the world is excluded from it; there is no ‘place’ to flee from it.... ultimate concern must transcend every preliminary finite and concrete concern. It must transcend the whole realm of finitude in order to be the answer to the question implied in finitude.”⁶⁷ Ultimate concern refers both to an attitude and state of mind, and to the object of this

state of mind. The idea being we have all kinds of temporary concerns and desires that come and go, but the ultimate concern is our final destiny. It is without end, the final goal of life.

In sum, Universal Liberation and Salvation occur because: the omnipotent and all-merciful Brahman-God transforms the person, all people return to their source which is Divine the end of all things, Brahman-God and the Atman are eternal while the imperfections of nature are not, the Atman is our true nature and we were created in the Image of God, good is stronger than evil which might be a privation, and it is the final goal of the evolutionary process. In one of his lectures Swami Prabhavananda (1893-1976) mentioned, “No one can escape the Hound of Heaven.” All people will be eventually liberated.

There are four views concerning the universal liberation-salvation process. First, the ultra-Universalists who believe live only in one life on earth conclude that all people no matter what kind of life they lived are saved at the moment of death. This idea is subject to the criticism that if this were so, there would be little need for religion or for living a moral or spiritual life. For that reason many Christians who believe that a person lives only one life on earth cannot accept the idea of universal salvation. Second, according to the Restorationists the wicked enter a purgatory of punishment at death, which purifies them and makes them virtuous. Critics might reply that in this world suffering often does not make a person virtuous. Suffering caused by others makes some people resentful. The third idea of Gradual Salvation is that at death all people proceed to a higher world where they undergo a long period of ongoing progressive purification leading to final liberation-salvation. Fourthly, Hindu and Buddhist Reincarnationists teach a long natural and positive progress of personal evolutionary development, through innumerable incarnations on earth and other worlds until the person attains an eternal Divine state of existence. All people will eventually discover their innate Divinity and attain to a state of perfection. If one accepts this view then the objections raised by the traditional Christians against the ultra-Universalists and Restorationists are nullified. A Reincarnationist acknowledges the transforming power of Brahman-God’s grace, Divine justice, justification by faith, the atonement of the Divine Incarnation, redemption, the responsibility of people to live a good moral life, and realizes the importance of religion in realizing these goals.⁶⁸ All people at different paces are gradually working toward eventual liberation-salvation, but an exemplary standard must first be reached. Brahman-God does not save all people in the universe at one

point in time, since the Lord desires to perpetuate the creation. If God's antecedent will is for all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4) and His consequent will is that some should be damned, then God is not immutable since there is a change in His will.

The Doctrine of Final Cause (*telos*) states that events are best explained in reference to some end, purpose, or goal to which they are moving toward. We can think of liberation-salvation as a final cause, which like a magnet naturally attracts or draws us to it. In the evolutionary development of humans there is a gradual unfolding of consciousness in successive stages. Eventually the last stage is reached when all humans have Brahman-God consciousness. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) mentioned that all things strive for their own perfection where all of the potentialities within their nature are realized. The Final Cause and ultimate object of desire is Brahman-God and our innate divinity. The weaker version of the Doctrine of Final Cause is a form of functional causality, where our present activity functions in the direction of our desired goals. In the stronger version, the future actually exerts a pull on our activity in that direction. The "Hidden Plan of Nature," a basic teleological principle is that all life is slowly developing and will eventually be liberated and reach a state of perfection.

Universal Restoration

According to the idea of Universal Restoration the earth or possibly the entire universe will be spiritualized and in the future all of its inhabitants will reach a state of perfection at the same time.

The Neoplatonic Irish religious philosopher Johannes Scotus Erigena (c. 810-77) the "light of the Dark Ages" in Western Europe supported the Doctrine Universal Restoration (*Apokatastasis*), that everyone will be purified and the entire world will become perfect. "In the life to come when they return into their former glory of the Divine Image to which they were created, raised above all things they shall see their God 'face to face,' in so far as it is given to the comprehensible and intelligible creature to behold the incomprehensible and unintelligible Cause of the Universe.... evil and death and unhappiness are contrary to the nature which has been created by God, and are not created in the Cause of all things nor participate in it ... human nature which the Word of God set free by taking it wholly upon Himself, although right reason shows that nothing contrary to the Divine Goodness and Life and Blessedness can be coeternal herewith. For the Divine goodness shall

consume evil, eternal life shall swallow up death, Blessedness shall absorb unhappiness.... But perhaps you still feel that the Lord Jesus, in taking human nature upon Him and saving it did not take upon Him or save the whole of it, but merely a small fragment? But such an opinion is refuted by reason already given.... when the world comes to an end, there will be neither corporeal nor sensible entities nor space nor time in which we could conceive those torments taking place. For all these things will come to an end with the world, since all bodies will be revolved into spirit, all place into a non-extended simplicity, all time into eternity.... supported by the Holy Scriptures which clearly state that all human bodies shall share the same glory and power in the same spiritual and immortal and eternal state. For this comes to all men generally without discrimination from nature and from grace.”⁶⁹

We learn from Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) that, “All individuals are destined to gain eternal life, for as a Hindu text says, we are the children of immortality.” “The destiny of the human soul is to realize its oneness with the supreme.”⁷⁰ “The end of human existence is perfection, which is not ascent to a heaven above but is ascent to the spirit within. The new birth for which humanity awaits is not a post-mortem salvation but is spiritualized humanity.” “When the incarnation of God is realized, not only in a few individuals but in the whole of humanity, we will have the new creation, the new race of men and women, mankind transformed, redeemed, and reborn, and a world created anew. This is the destiny of the world, the supreme spiritual ideal.”⁷¹ At the end of the world process humanity will be spiritualized and all people will attain to eternal life. To transform people into prophets and to establish a state of cosmic unity is the goal of evolutionary history. There will be a universal redemption where all people will realize their Divinity. Humanity will be liberated at the end of the cosmic process when the world drama has been played out. When the world process reaches its consummation point, the historical process will cease, and time will come to an end.⁷²

5. Body and Soul Dichotomy

Indian: “The body and the mind, the sense organs and the intellect are instruments only: he knows himself other than the instrument” (BG* 5:11, p. 71).

New Testament: “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” (Mt. 10:28). “While we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.... we

would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:6, 8).

Many people do not perceive the inner spirit. Indian: “The undisciplined and the thoughtless do not perceive him [the Atman]” (BG 15:11). New Testament: “Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him” (Jn. 14:17).

We hear but do not know the spirit’s movement. Indian: “The Deities’ vital spirit, this God [Vayu the wind Deity] moves ever as his will inclines him. His voice is heard, his shape is viewless” (RV 10:168.4). New Testament: “The wind [Spirit] blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes” (Jn. 3:8).

Vivekananda tells us, “Now that which we call matter and mind are one and the same substance. The only difference is in the degree of vibration. Mind at a very low rate of vibration is what is known as matter. Matter at a high rate of vibration is what is known as mind. Both are the same substance; and therefore, as matter is bound by time and space and causation, mind which is matter at a high rate of vibration is bound by the same law.”⁷³ This subject is covered in more detail in Chapter VIII, Section 5. Vivekananda’s Scientific Cosmology and Quantum Physics.

His brother disciple Swami Abhedananda remarked that the gross physical and subtle mental body differ not in kind, but in their degree of vibration. By analogy heat, sound and motion vary in degree, yet each is a different manifestation of electricity. A subtle mental body is composed of highly refined ethereal particles of matter that are transparent and vibrate at a tremendous speed. They vibrate at a range that is beyond the perceivable scope of the physical senses.⁷⁴ “The gross human body is closely related to its subtle body. Not only this, but every movement or change in the physical form is caused by the activity and change of the subtle body. If the subtle body be affected or changed a little, the gross body will also be affected similarly. The material body being the expression of the subtle body, its birth, growth, decay and death depend upon the changes of the subtle body. As long as the subtle body remains, it will continue to express itself in a corresponding gross form. Now let us understand clearly what we mean by a subtle body. It is nothing but a minute germ of living substance. It contains the invisible particles of matter which are held together by vital forces, and it also possesses mind or thought-force in a potential state, just as the seed of a plant contains in it

the life force and power of growth.”⁷⁵

The French Bishop of Riez in Southern Gaul, Faustus (d. 490) held to the idea (as expressed by Gerard Verbeke) that, “According to him the Soul [Subtle body] must be quantitative and corporeal, because it is closely linked to the body. It is located within the body and extends throughout the various parts of the bodily organism.... even when soul is concerned with an object that does not fall within our immediate vicinity, It does not leave the body to which it is united. It is only at the moment of death that the soul abandons the body. Since it resides within the limits of an extended body which it entirely permeates, soul should possess the same quantitative extension and be corporeal.... God is the only incorporeal being.”⁷⁶

Frederick Copleston, S.J. (1907-94) relates that for Bonaventure (1221-74), “the human soul is a spiritual substance, composed of spiritual form and spiritual matter. It is not enough to say that the soul can act and be acted upon, move and be moved, and this argues [gives evidence of] the presence of ‘matter,’ the principle of passivity and mutability, though this matter transcends extension and corruptibility, being spiritual and not corporeal matter.” The human soul is present in the whole body, not only in the heart for instance. Both the soul and the body are composed of matter and form (hylomorphism). Bonaventure discerned, “The rational soul is the act and entelechy of the human body; therefore since human bodies are distinct, the rational souls which perfect those bodies will also be distinct.... Because it is the form of the whole body, it is present in the whole body; because it is simple, it is not present partly here and partly there; because it is the sufficient moving principle of the body, it has no particular situation, is not present at one point or in a determinate part.” The soul unlike the body is simple in the absence of quantitative parts, but not in the absence of constitutive parts.⁷⁷

6. Body, Soul, and Spirit Trichotomy

Indian: “Different from the physical sheath is the vital sheath.... Different from the vital sheath is the mental sheath.... Different from the mental sheath is the intellectual sheath.... Different from the intellectual sheath is the sheath of the ego [bliss, Anandamaya-kosha]” (Tait. Up.* 2:2-5, pp. 83-84).

New Testament: “You are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you” (Rom. 8:9). “May your spirit and soul and body be kept

sound” (1 Thes. 5:23). “The division of soul and spirit” (Heb. 4:12).

We learn from Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) that, “The gross body is the instrument made out of Akasha [cosmic material substance], for the manifestation of Prana [cosmic energy, force] in gross forms, as muscular motion, or walking, sitting, talking, and so forth. That fine body is also made of Akasha, a very fine form of Akasha, for the manifestation of the same Prana in the finer form of thought. So, first there is this gross body. Beyond that is this fine body, and beyond that is the Jiva [comparable to the Spirit], the real man. Just as the nails can be pared off many times and yet are still part of our bodies, not different, so is our gross body related to the fine. It is not that a man has a fine and also a gross body; it is the one body only, the part which endures longer is the fine body, and that which dissolves sooner is the gross. Just as I can cut this nail any number of times, so, millions of times I can shed this gross body, but the fine body will remain.... According to the dualists, this Jiva [comparable to the Spirit] or the real man is very fine, minute. So far we see that man is a being, who has first a gross body which dissolves very quickly, then a fine body [the soul in this context] which remains through aeons, and then a Jiva. This Jiva, according to the Vedanta philosophy, is eternal, just as God is eternal.”⁷⁸

Swami Prabhavananda (1893-1976) founder of the Vedanta Society of Southern California specified that because the forces of the physical body are produced out of food, it requires healthy material food to function correctly. Similarly, the subtle body needs the mental food of ideas, culture and morality; and the causal body thrives on the food of spiritual life, devotion to God, meditation, and prayer. If any of these three bodies are not properly nourished, they become feeble, and the person suffers physically, psychologically, and/or spiritually. The experience of physical, mental, and spiritual happiness differs considerably.⁷⁹

According to traditional Hinduism, there are three bodies or sheaths compared to body, soul, and spirit. The soul or mental body has three aspects. There are five sheaths that relate respectively to the five levels of evolutionary development: the insentient, plant, animal, human, and Divine. 1) Body-Sthula-sharira is the gross physical body, which is the sheath, formed and sustained by food (Annamaya-kosha). The Pranamaya-kosha is associated by some with the physical body and by others with the subtle body. It is the vital sheath, the life-principle, and nervous system, equivalent to the ethereal body that is found in plants, animals, and humans. 2) Mind-Linga-sharira or Suksma-sharira is the subtle body, which is active

during the waking and dream state. It is composed of finer materials than the physical body. Manomaya-kosha is the mental sheath, equivalent to the astral body, endowed with will power and the faculty of sense perception, which is characteristic of animals and humans. Vijnanamaya-kosha is the intellectual sheath dealing with reason and is found only in humans, unless it is defined more broadly. If it functions as the determinate faculty for deciding on a course of action, then it is also a property of animals. 3) Spirit-The highest body is the Karana-sharira, the spiritual causal body, which is the root cause of the subtle and gross body. It the blissful sheath (Anandamaya-kosha), the inner most of the five sheaths.⁸⁰

At the macrocosmic or universal level, these three bodies relate to the gross Cosmic Body (Virat or Vaishvanara), the subtle Cosmic Soul or Mind (Mahat, Hiranyagarbha, or Brahma), and the causal Cosmic Spirit (Ishvara, Saguna Brahman). Virat is the totality of all things, the physical world as a whole. From the panentheistic perspective, the Cosmic or Universal Body, Soul-Mind and Spirit contain the sum total of all physical, mental, and spiritual bodies and objects respectively, which are their parts. Mahat the Cosmic Soul-Mind is interconnected with the gross physical universe (the Cosmic Body), in a way similar to the relationship between an individual mind and its physical body.⁸¹

Corresponding to the five sheaths are the philosophical schools of: materialism (physical body-Annamaya-kosha), vitalism (vital body-Pranamaya-kosha); empiricism, positivism, and realism (five senses-Manomaya-kosha); idealism and rationalism (intellect-Vijnanamaya-kosha), and mysticism and theism (spirit-Anandamaya-kosha). Since these theoretical systems pertain to a particular level of existence, it is important to realize that each provides a limited conception of the nature of the universe. Many misguided intellectual conflicts arise, when the exponents of these partial views of existence, claim to represent the whole truth concerning the nature of reality.⁸²

Vegetable life embodies only the nutritive-vital soul involved in assimilation and reproduction (Pranamaya-kosha of the Hindus); animal life the nutritive-vital and sensitive soul concerned with sense-perception, desire, local motion, imagination, and memory (Manomaya-kosha); and human life the nutritive-vital, sensitive, and human soul expressing the power of rational deliberation (Vijnanamaya-kosha). The nutritive-vital soul can exist by itself as it does in plants.⁸³ These ideas fit well into modern evolutionary thinking.

The physical power of an athlete is the grossest and therefore, the easiest to perceive. Mental power of a genius is more subtle and potent, and therefore is

influential for a much longer period of time. Spiritual power and energy of a great soul like Jesus Christ are the most difficult to perceive by their contemporaries, but have far more powerful effects profoundly influencing a large number of people many centuries in the future. For the majority of people physical force is the first to develop, followed by mental talents, while their spiritual capacities may not be realized until a later age after decades of personal effort and struggle.

Philo of Alexandria denoted that there are three classes of people those of the body, mind and spirit. "The earth-born are those who chase after the pleasures of the body, who are preoccupied with their enjoyment and indulgence and provide the things that contribute to each. The heaven born are those who are artists, men of skill, and lovers of learning. For the heavenly element in us, the mind (indeed every heavenly being also constitutes a mind) pursues school studies and the other arts one and all, whetting and sharpening itself, exercising and training in the realm of the intelligible. But the men of God are priests and prophets, who have not deigned too obtain rights in the universal commonwealth and become world citizens but have entirely transcended the sensible sphere and have migrated to the intelligible world and dwell there enrolled as citizens of the Commonwealth of Ideas, which are imperishable and incorporeal."⁸⁴

Church Fathers like Clement and Origen of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nyssa, held to the tripartite conception of human nature as composed of body (soma), soul (psyche) and spirit (pneuma, nous). In Greek philosophy it was held by some that the body and spirit could enter into a mutual relationship only by means of an intermediate element, the soul. The soul was regarded as immaterial yet adapted to the body. In relation to the spirit the soul was considered to be immortal, adapted to the body it was regarded as carnal and mortal. The soul which is an intermediate entity has a choice of following the lower principle of the flesh or the higher principle of the spirit.⁸⁵

Bonaventure distinguished among three modes of acquiring knowledge (as Ken Wilber states), "The eye of flesh, by which we perceive the external world of space, time, and objects; the eye of reason, by which we attain a knowledge of philosophy, logic, and the mind itself; and the eye of contemplation, by which we rise to a knowledge of transcendent realities.... There is exterior and inferior illumination (*lumen exterius* and *lumen inferius*), which lights the eye of flesh and gives us knowledge of sense objects. There is *lumen interius*, which lights the eye of reason and gives us knowledge of philosophical truths. And there is *lumen*

superius, the light of transcendent Being which illumines the eye of contemplation and reveals salutary truth, ‘truth which is unto liberation.’ In the external world, said St. Bonaventure, we find a *vestigium* or ‘vestige of God’—and the eye of flesh perceives this vestige (which appears as separate objects in space and time). In ourselves, in our psyches—especially in the ‘threefold activity of the soul’ (memory, reason, and will)—we find an imago of God, revealed by the mental eye. And ultimately, through the eye of contemplation, lighted by the *lumen superius*, we find the whole transcendent realm itself, beyond sense and reason—the Divine Ultimate itself.”⁸⁶

A few German and English nineteenth century Protestant theologians accepted the idea of the tripartite view of human nature as described by L. Berkhof. “Man consists of three parts, — body, soul, and spirit. It is generally assumed, though there are variations on this point, that sin has its seat only in the soul, and not in the spirit (pneuma). If it had penetrated to the spirit, man would have been irretrievably lost ... The spirit is the higher, Divine life in man, destined to control the lower life. By the entrance of sin into the world the influence of the spirit on the lower life is weakened very much; but by regeneration it is strengthened again and harmony is restored in the life of man.”⁸⁷

Irish born Reverend John Bickford Heard (b. 1828) brought out the fact that, “Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Didymus of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil of Caesarea [each before 395 A.D.], all note the distinction of soul [psyche] and spirit [pneuma], and designate the spirit as that which bears the truest image of God. The *New Testament* also supports this distinction (Heb. 4:12; 1 Thess. 5:23).” “The true presence-chamber of God is the pneuma: there He meets with man. We pass through the outer court of the senses, and even through the inner court of reason, to reach this sanctuary where God makes Himself known in silence and in stillness. Hence it is that those who fail to grasp the distinction between pneuma and psyche fail also to grasp the deep meaning of the personal indwelling of God the Holy Spirit in the breast of the regenerated believer.... the pneuma, or Diviner part in man, is occupied and possessed by the Holy Spirit of God.”⁸⁸

Endnotes

¹ CW, I:497-98.

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- ² CW, VII:242.
- ³ Web: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvation#Christianity; www.gotquestions.org/Christian-doctrine-salvation.html
- ⁴ VC, p. 122.
- ⁵ VC, pp. 141-42, 145.
- ⁶ Radhakrishnan, II, pp. 620, 645-46; BSB, IV.1.15.
- ⁷ CW, II:209.
- ⁸ CW, VII:97.
- ⁹ CW, III:10-11; VIII:7, 31.
- ¹⁰ CW, II:284.
- ¹¹ Prabhavananda (1970), p. 47.
- ¹² Mircea Eliade, "Yoga and Modern Philosophy," *Jr. of General Education* (1963), pp. 136-37.
- ¹³ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 360-61.
- ¹⁴ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), pp. 170-71.
- ¹⁵ Tillich, II, p. 126.
- ¹⁶ Tillich, II, p. 45.
- ¹⁷ John Dourley, *Paul Tillich and Bonaventure* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), p. 55.
- ¹⁸ VS, I:1.21, p. 239; I:1.4, pp. 186-87; Radhakrishnan, II, p. 710.
- ¹⁹ ST, I, 12.11.
- ²⁰ ST, II-II, 180.5.
- ²¹ CW, I:150, 159.
- ²² CW, I:180-81.
- ²³ Tipple, pp. 486-88; Prabhavananda³, pp. 184, 202, 262.
- ²⁴ Swami Ramakrishnananda, *God and Divine Incarnations* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1947), pp. 33-34, 38, 40, 151.
- ²⁵ Trevor Leggett, *Sankara on the Yoga Sutras* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), I, pp. 155-58.
- ²⁶ Dominic O'Meara, *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought* (Norfolk, VI: International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, 1982), p. 116.
- ²⁷ Underhill, pp. 249, 312, 342, 367.
- ²⁸ Underhill, pp. 333, 245, 252, 269.
- ²⁹ Underhill, pp. 342, 312, 246-47, 330, 34.
- ³⁰ CW, II:258-59.
- ³¹ CW, II:231.
- ³² CW, V:256.
- ³³ CW, VII:97.
- ³⁴ CW, I:157.
- ³⁵ CW, I:156-57, 420-22; II:188, 208-09, 384-85; VII:137.
- ³⁶ Swami Abhedananda, *Attitude of Vedanta Towards Religion* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna

Vedanta Math, 1947, 1990), p. 29.

³⁷ Swami Abhedananda, *Religion Revelation and God* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1968), pp. 55-56.

³⁸ Swami Abhedananda *Life Beyond Death* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1944, 1984), p. 109.

³⁹ Aurobindo, p. 674.

⁴⁰ Lal, pp. 179, 184.

⁴¹ Rama S. Srivastava, *Sri Aurobindo and The Theories of Evolution* (Varanasi: Chowkhamba, 1968), pp. 307, 305-06, 326-27.

⁴² Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1910, 1980), p. 612.

⁴³ Samuel Jackson, ed., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), I, pp. 210-12; XII, pp. 96-97; James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909, 1930), XII, pp. 529-35; NCE, I, p. 665; XIV, p. 452.

⁴⁴ FP, II, 1:2.

⁴⁵ FP, II, 9:7.

⁴⁶ FP, III, 1:12.

⁴⁷ FP, III, 1:13.

⁴⁸ CC, VIII, 72.

⁴⁹ FP, I, 8:4; 6:3; III, 1:12-13, 17, 24; 6:3; G. Stavig, "Origen and Indian Thought," BRMIC (March 2003), pp.133-40.

⁵⁰ Enneads, III, 5.4; IV, 8.4.

⁵¹ ST, I, 103.1.

⁵² CG, III, 17; cf. ST, I, 44.4; 65.2.

⁵³ CG, III, 64.

⁵⁴ CG, III, 19.

⁵⁵ CG, III, 25.

⁵⁶ ST, I, 23.1.

⁵⁷ ST, I, 44.4.

⁵⁸ ST I-II, 2.8

⁵⁹ ST, I, 65.2.

⁶⁰ ST, I, 103.5.

⁶¹ ST, I, 6.1.

⁶² CG, III, 60.

⁶³ CG, III, 50.

⁶⁴ ST, I, 20.2; R. V. De Smet, "Sankara and Aquinas on Liberation," *Indian Philosophical Annual* 5 (1969), pp. 239-47; Gopal Stavig, "Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Indian Vedantists on Mysticism,

Salvation and Heavenly Existence," *Journal of Dharma* 27 (April-June 2002), pp. 149-68.

⁶⁵ Tillich, II, p. 78; I, pp. 266-67, 284-85.

⁶⁶ Tillich, I, p. 285.

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- ⁶⁷ Tillich, I, pp. 11-12, 211.
- ⁶⁸ Joseph Bettis, "Is Karl Barth a Universalists?," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 20 (1967), pp. 425-428, 436, discusses arguments used against universal salvation.
- ⁶⁹ Erigena, V, pp. 602, 615, 673 (926C-27A, 938D, 988A-B).
- ⁷⁰ Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (New York: Barnes & Noble (1932, 1964), p. 244; Lal, p. 283.
- ⁷¹ Troy Organ, *Radhakrishnan and the Ways of Oneness of East and West* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989), pp. 115-17.
- ⁷² Lal, pp. 285-86.
- ⁷³ CW, VI:34.
- ⁷⁴ Swami Abhedananda, *Yoga Psychology* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1960), p. 96; Swami Abhedananda, *Reincarnation* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1899, 1964), pp. 2-4. A good portion of this section appeared in an article by G. Stavig in the VK (Oct-Nov. 2017), pp. 16-20, 27-29.
- ⁷⁵ Abhedananda (1964), pp. 2-3.
- ⁷⁶ Gerard Verbeke, *The Presence of Stoicism in Medieval Thought* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1983), pp. 33-34; Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 95.
- ⁷⁷ Copleston, II, pp. 278-79.
- ⁷⁸ CW, I:396.
- ⁷⁹ Swami Prabhavananda lecture notes.
- ⁸⁰ CHI, III, pp. 589-90; Benjamin Walker, *Hindu World* (2 vols.; Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983), I, pp. 162-64; Swami Mukhyananda, *Human Personality and the Cosmic-Energy-Cycle* (Calcutta: Shri S. M. Nandar, 1986), pp. XXXI-II; John Grimes, *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), pp. 27, 168, 187, 199, 264, 321, 342, 344-45, 392.
- ⁸¹ Radhakrishnan, I, pp. 170-72, II, p. 552.
- ⁸² S. C. Chatterjee, "On Philosophical Synthesis," *Philosophy East and West* 10 (1961), pp. 100-02.
- ⁸³ Copleston, I, pp. 328-29; B. A. G. Fuller, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955, I, p. 391.
- ⁸⁴ Philo, *Philo of Alexandria*, tr. David Winston New York: Paulist Press, 1981), pp. 69-70.
- ⁸⁵ Berkhof (1984), p. 191.
- ⁸⁶ Ken Wilber, *Eye to Eye* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 2-3.
- ⁸⁷ Berkhof, pp. 192, 478.
- ⁸⁸ J. B. Heard, *Tripartite Nature of Man* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882), pp. 37, 88, 98, 131-33, 210, 237.