

1. All people Were Created in Image of God
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V. The Divinity of the Soul

1. All People Were Created in the Image of Brahman-God

Indian: The “resplendent Lord is hidden in all beings. All-pervading, the inmost Self of all creatures, the impeller to actions, abiding in all things, He is the Witness, the Animator” (Svet. Up. 6:11).

Old Testament: “Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God” (Gen. 5:1). “God made man in his own image” (Gen. 9:6; cf. Wisd. 2:23). “Thou hast made him [man] little less than God” (Ps. 8:5). “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you” (Ps. 82:6). New Testament: “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your law, I said, you are Gods’” (Jn. 10:34)? He [man] is the image and glory of God” (1 Cor. 11:7). “Men who are made in the likeness of God” (Jam. 3:9).

Future likeness to God. Indian: “Having realized Atman, the seer becomes satisfied with that Knowledge. Their souls are established in the Supreme Self, they are free from passions and they are tranquil in mind. Such calm souls, ever devoted to the Self, behold everywhere the omnipresent Brahman and in the end enter into It, which is all this. Having well ascertained the Self, the goal of the Vedantic knowledge, and having purified their minds through the practice of sannyasa, the seers, never relaxing their efforts, enjoy here supreme Immortality and at the time of the great end attain complete freedom in Brahman” (Mun. Up. 3:2.5-6). Old Testament: “You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:45; cf. 19:2; 20:7-8; 1 Pet. 1:16). New Testament: “We are all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18). “Be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24; cf. 1 Cor. 15:49; Col. 3:10; 2 Pet. 1:4). “When He appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is” (1 Jn. 3:2).

The great mystic Sri Ramakrishna once remarked, “God is in all beings; but all

beings are not in God.”¹ We could interpret this passage to mean that the image of Brahman-God is in all people, but they have not attained to the likeness of Brahman-God until they dwell in It. “God exists in every being as the All-pervading Spirit. He is in the ant as well as in me. But there are different manifestations of His Power in different beings.” “Brahman dwells in all beings as the All-pervasive Consciousness, though Its manifestation is greater in some places than in others.” We are attracted to a particular religious deity, because part of the characteristics of that deity dwells in us. “God is your own Mother.... If you are part of a thing, you feel its attraction. Because of the element of the Divine Mother in me I feel attracted to Her.” “He who truly realizes that all women are manifestations of the Divine Mother may lead a spiritual life in the world.”² In another context he discerned, “It is God Himself that has become the phenomenal universe and all the beings in it. The son is then perceived as the boy Krishna. Father and mother undergo metamorphosis as the Divinity. The wife is no more his mate; he sees the Cosmic Mother in her. Recognizing God in all, adoration to Him takes place through the worshipful service of all.”³

Drawing partially from the teachings of Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, Swami Abhedananda (1866-1939) explains the “image of God” differently than most Christians do. “The universal Logos included all the ideas and thoughts, or rather the perfect types of all created things that exist in the universe. Before a horse was created, there was a perfect idea or type of horse in the Divine Mind. We do not see this perfect type in the world; we may see a red or a black horse, a large or a small horse, but we cannot see the ideal horse. What we call a perfect horse is nothing but the nearest approach to the perfect ideal horse that exists eternally in the Divine Mind. So it is with every created species, thing or being. Before man came into existence there was an Ideal Man or a perfect type of man in the thought of God, and its projection or physical manifestation became something like that ideal type, because the gross manifestation, being limited by time, space, and causation, cannot be exactly the same as the ideal type which is perfect. This ideal, or the perfect type of man, which exists in the Divine Mind, is eternal and a part of the universal Logos. All human beings, therefore, are more or less imperfect expressions of that Ideal Man or Logos or the first begotten son of the Divine Mind. It does not refer to the human form alone, but also to the perfect character or the soul. The individual souls, however perfect or imperfect they may be in the actions of their daily life, are potentially the same as the Logos, or the universal Ideal Man that existed in God’s mind before creation. Every one of us is trying to express as

perfectly as possible that ideal type of man in whose cast we have been molded by the Divine hand. Each one of us, therefore, is one with that first begotten Son of God.”⁴

Abhedananda continues, “Now, that Logos was described by the Platonists [particularly Philo of Alexandria] as the only begotten Son of God. Because the Cosmic Mind is like the Father, and this Idea is like the Son. This is the pattern of the Perfect Man, because it is the product or result of the thinking principle of the Cosmic Mind, and therefore it is the Son.”⁵ “The Perfect Man is in the mind of the Cosmic Being. The Perfect Man is a pattern, a thought form, and that pattern will never come down to this plane, but we are approaching that pattern and trying to become perfect.... That Word was the Logos, and the Logos was the Perfect Man in the thought pattern in the Cosmic Mind. Jesus was the human man, and Christ was the Perfect Man. So Jesus became Christ afterwards.”⁶ “The evolution of nature is required to bring out these potential tendencies, powers and qualities into their actual or real manifestations.” “Passing through these various stages the individual ego studies its own powers, gains experience and realizes all the powers that are lying dormant within the soul.” “The very fact that creation, or projection, means the manifestation of the potential energy as kinetic or as actual reality, forces the soul to objectify and project the dormant activities on to the plane of consciousness; otherwise how can the soul learn its own powers when they are on the subconscious plane?... We can only know their existence when they are brought out on the conscious plane, when they are awakened. Is not this awakening of the dormant powers that lie buried on the subconscious plane, the same thing as the gaining of experience?... Each individual soul is bound to gain experience after experience in the process of this manifestation of its latent powers and potential energy. Having experienced the powers and actions of the animal nature with their results, the soul longs for higher manifestations, tries to rise above that plane, and after realizing the effects of the moral and spiritual nature, it reaches perfection [likeness of God].”⁷

Bishop A. J. Appasamy an Indian Christian stressed that, “God is very close to us. He is not an inaccessible, far-off being, dwelling in remote heavens. His presence is everywhere; as Spirit He pervades the whole universe.” “Because men have not understood Him, even though He is immanent in them, He has 'become flesh'. The Incarnation is a more effective means of showing God than mere immanence.” Quoting the *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishad* (III, 7:8-20), “He who, dwelling in the mind, yet is other than the mind, whom the mind does not know, whose body the mind is,

who controls the mind from within—He is your Soul, the Inner-Controller [Antaryamin], the Immortal.” Christ the Eternal Logos, is immanent yet hidden in the hearts of all people. The Divine Incarnation was born to make this known to humanity. In Christ the Logos fully dwelt. All people are children of God and all things were made by Him. The indwelling Logos is analogous to the Indian Antaryamin, which is the inner Divinity dwelling within all people.⁸

Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, Egypt (c. 20 B.C.-50 A.D.) explains, “God’s shadow is his Logos, which he used as an instrument and thus created the world. This shadow and representation, as it were, is in turn the archetype of other things.... ‘And God made man after the Image of God’ (Gen. 1:27); thus the Image had been modeled after God, but man after the Image, which had acquired the force of a pattern.” Genesis 1:27 refers to the establishment of the heavenly man [in the Intelligible world], who was created in the image or pattern of the Logos, the Divine archetype, which in turn is an image or pattern of God. Genesis 2:7 describes the creation of the earthly man. “There is an immense difference between the man now fashioned [Gen. 2:7] and the one created earlier after the image of God [Gen. 1:27]. For the molded man is sense-perceptible, partaking already of specific quality, framed of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal; whereas he that was after the image was an idea or genus or seal, intelligible, incorporeal, neither male nor female, imperishable by nature.” “Every man, in respect of his mind, is intimately related to the Divine Logos, being an imprint or fragment or effulgence of that blessed nature, but in the constitution of his body he is related to the entire world, for he is a blend of the same things, earth, water, air, and fire.”⁹

Two centuries later Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-254) a Greek Christian religious philosopher of Alexandria affirmed, “But it is our inner man, invisible, incorporeal, incorruptible, and immortal which is made ‘according to the image of God.’ For it is in such qualities as these that the image of God is more correctly understood. But if anyone supposes that this man who is made ‘according to the image and likeness of God’ is made of flesh, he will appear to represent God Himself as made of flesh and in human form. It is most clearly impious to think this about God.”¹⁰ The Son of God is an image of the invisible God, and we were created after the image of the Son, who is the indwelling Logos in the soul. “The highest good is to become as far as possible like God.... man received the honor of God’s image in his first creation, whereas the perfection of God’s likeness was reserved for him at

the consummation.... while the possibility of attaining perfection was given to him in the beginning through the honor of the 'image,' he should in the end through the accomplishment of these works obtain for himself the perfect 'likeness.'"¹¹

A Bishop from Asia Minor, Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-95) espoused the idea that, "The first formation of man bears witness that our nature was made after the image and likeness of God; surely because being made after the image he possessed in all things the likeness to the archetype [God]."¹²

Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) wrote, "Every creature is an image of the exemplary likeness it has in the Divine Mind." "This mirror, which is the human mind, reflects the likeness of God in a closer way than lower creatures do."¹⁵ Since the Father and Son are identical in nature, the image of God is perfect in the Son. "In man there is some likeness to God, copied from God as an exemplar; yet this likeness is not one of equality, for such an exemplar infinitely excels its copy. Therefore there is in man a likeness to God, not, indeed a perfect likeness, but imperfect.... Everything imperfect is a participation of what is perfect."¹⁶ "The perfect likeness to God cannot be except in an identical nature, the Image of God exists in His first-born Son as the image of the king is in his son, who is of the same nature as himself; whereas it exists in man as in an alien nature, as the image of the king is in a silver coin" or a reflection on glass. Humans are an image of the Trinity, expressing Its characteristics to varying degrees. "In rational creatures, wherein we find a procession of the word in the intellect, and a procession of love in the will, there exists an image of the uncreated Trinity."¹⁷ Life's goal is to assimilate oneself to God, to become as similar to God as possible, by participating in His intellect, goodness, and love. Jesus Christ took on the image of man, so that humans could become like God. Everything is good in so far as it discloses the image of God, by participating in the likeness of God which is its final end. The more we enhance the likeness of God in ourself, the more we participate in His being and the higher is our spiritual nature.¹⁸

Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1327) adds, "I already possess all that is granted to me in eternity. For God in the fullness of His Godhead dwells eternally in his image--the soul."¹⁹

Andrew Osiander (1498-1552) the German Protestant mystic and professor at Konigsberg ideas are summarized by Justo Gonzales, "Justification [made righteous in the sight of God] is not, as for Luther imputed by God out of His loving grace, but is rather something that God finds in us because Christ is in us. The righteousness of the believer is God himself.... The essence of Christ is present in

the believer, and that this essence is so joined with the human soul that is 'essentially justified.' What this then means is that righteousness is not 'imputed' as in Luther, but that God actually sees his own righteousness in us."²⁰ Osiander explains, "Man was created in the image of God. This image of God is in the Son; and in the Son, furthermore, as from eternity appointed to become incarnate. Accordingly, the appointed goal of human nature can be realized only by the indwelling of God in it. This was actualized in the case of Adam, as in him the Son of God already dwelt before the fall. Through this indwelling he became righteous.... As the humanity of Christ became righteous through its union with God as the essential righteousness, so we also become righteous by virtue of such a union with Christ [the Divine Incarnation, Avatar].... This indwelling of the Divine nature of Christ, with, which at the same time the Triune God dwells in us, is our righteousness before God."²¹

Spiritual transformation is brought on by mediation and prayer, imbibing scriptural knowledge, and ritualistic practices. Compassion and the desire to be moral are efficacious because of the Divine presence within the soul. When we pray and meditate we can think of Brahman-God by contemplating the Divinity within us, the Image of Brahman-God, rather than our fallible empirical self and character.

2. A New Body in Heaven

Indian: "Leave sin and evil, seek anew thy dwelling, and bright with glory wear another body" (RV 10:14.8). "Uniting with a body be thou welcome, dear to the Gods in their sublimest birthplace" (RV 10:56.1).²²

New Testament: "So it is with the resurrection of the dead.... It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body.... flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:42, 44, 50).

Sri Ramakrishna revealed that Sri "Chaitanya [1485/86-1533] experienced three states of mind. First, the conscious state, when the mind dwelt on the gross and the subtle. Second, the semi-conscious state, when his mind entered the causal [spiritual] body and was absorbed in the bliss of Divine intoxication. Third, the inmost state, when his mind was merged in the Great Cause." "The body consisting of the five gross elements is called the gross body. The subtle body is made up of the mind, the ego, the discriminating faculty, and the mind stuff. There is also a

causal [spiritual] body, by means of which one enjoys the Bliss of God and holds communion with Him.”²³ A realm exists beyond the spiritual body. “Last of all, the mind loses itself in the Great Cause. It disappears, it merges in the Great Cause. What one experiences after that cannot be described in words. In his inmost state of consciousness, Chaitanya enjoyed this experience.”²⁴

According to Hinduism there are three bodies or sheaths, the physical, subtle, and causal (Tait. Up. 2:1-5). Sthula-sharira is the gross physical body which is the sheath formed and sustained by food (Annamaya-kosha). Second is the Pranamaya-kosha, the life-principle, the vital life force, the biophysical sphere, equivalent to the ethereal body that is found in plants, animals, and humans. Finer than the physical sheath it enters the body after conception and leaves it at the time of dissolution, but it eventually perishes. It is the vital force that produces the subtle vibrations related to breath and the nervous system. Through this sheath the person experience hunger and thirst, and engages in various physical activities. As long as this vital principle exists in the organism, life continues. Linga-sharira or Suksma-sharira is the subtle body, which is active during the waking and dream state. It has two components though some sources consider the Pranamaya-kosha to be part of it. One is the Manamaya-kosha, the mental sheath made of the substance of subtle matter, equivalent to the astral body, characteristic of animals and humans. It produces thoughts and emotions and is endowed with the powers of sense perception. Through this sheath the person thinks, and feels desires and attachments. It experiences the pairs of opposites like pleasure and pain, birth and death. The last component of the subtle body is the Vijnanamaya-kosha the sheath of the intellect found primarily in humans. Finer and more inward than the mind it is identified with ego or I-consciousness. It is the sheath of knowing and the discriminative faculty (will) for deciding on a course of action, making moral judgments, and experiences the happiness and dissatisfaction of the different states of the mind. It is the storehouse of samskaras and memories, of all thoughts and desires.²⁵ The third body is the karana-sharira, the causal body, the sheath of bliss (Anandamaya-kosha).

Since all the forces of the physical body have been produced out of food, it requires healthy material food. 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 Brahman-God, meditation and prayer. At the macrocosmic or universal level, these three bodies are fragments of the gross Cosmic Body (Virat), subtle Cosmic Mind (Hiranyagarbha), and causal Cosmic Spirit (Ishvara) of Brahman-God.²⁶

Can we say that corresponding to the five sheaths are the philosophical schools of: materialism (Annamaya-kosha), vitalism (Pranamaya-kosha), empiricism and positivism (Manomaya-kosha), rationalism and idealism (Vijnanamaya-kosha), and mysticism (Anandamaya-kosha)? Since these theoretical systems are relative to a particular level of existence, they are limited conceptions of the world. Many intellectual conflicts arise when the exponents of these partial views, claim to represent the whole truth concerning the nature of reality.

As stated by Swami Brahmananda (1863-1922) a disciple of Ramakrishna, “Behind this mind of ours there is a subtle, spiritual mind, existing in seed-form. Through the practice of contemplation, prayer, and japam [repetition of a name of Brahman-God], this mind is developed, and with this development a new vision opens up and the aspirant realizes many spiritual truths.”²⁷

Swami Satprakashananda (1888-1979) commented that in the Biblical verses 1 Cor. 15:35-44, “It is evident from St. Paul’s words, he did not think that resurrection is actually this physical body rising from the dead. It is the spiritual body that rises.... St. Paul meant a body made of such fine, subtle elements that spiritual consciousness could manifest through it. That is the kind of spiritual body one gets in resurrection. According to Vedanta also, it is possible that a person can retain that subtle body if he is worthy of resurrection. It is not the same as the gross physical body which succumbs to death. That subtle body is a physical body, but composed of extremely fine material elements, which not everyone can see.”²⁸

The spiritual body is known as the causal body (karana-sharira), since it is the root cause of the subtle and gross body. It is the blissful sheath (Anandamaya-kosha; Tait. Up. 2:5.2) and the innermost of these three bodies. During the state of dreamless sleep (prajna) the causal body is veiled in ignorance, and the mind dwells in the unconscious state. According to the Hindus, the spiritual body can be experienced by a yogi on earth before one enters the heavenly realm.²⁹

Origen of Alexandria observed that some people think of afterlife in terms of “pleasure and bodily luxury. And chiefly on this account they desire after the resurrection to have flesh of such a sort that they will never lack the power to eat and drink and to do all things that pertain to flesh and blood.”³⁰ However, it is the spiritual and not the material body that rises at death. “The apostle Paul says, ‘It is sown a natural body, it will rise again a spiritual body’ [1 Cor. 15:44].... God refashions out of the earthly and natural body a spiritual body, which can dwell in the heavens.”³¹ The soul cannot exist without a body and it takes on different

bodies in accordance with the world it dwells in. “This same body having cast off the weakness of its present existence, will be transformed into a thing of glory and made spiritual ... shall itself be purified and become a vessel of honor and a habitation of blessedness.”³² In contrast to the terrestrial body that is solid, the soul “needs a better garment for the purer, ethereal, and heavenly regions.”³³ Antonia Tripolitis indicates, “Although Origen argues that the soul is in its own nature incorporeal, he claims that it cannot exist without a body. According to him, no being other than the Holy Trinity can live apart from a body.... The soul takes on various types of bodies, in accordance with the nature of its environment. When it resides on earth, it takes on an earthly body, which is visible and of a solid nature. However, when the soul ascends to the heavenly regions, its body takes on a purer, ethereal and invisible nature, appropriate to the heavenly environment.” Even in the heavenly domain, spiritual bodies vary in their degrees of subtlety and purity. In heaven the ethereal body will eventually disappear, and only incorporeal pure intelligence will remain, which is perceptible only to the mind.³⁴

In John Plott’s description of Bonaventure (1217/21-74) the Italian Franciscan Catholic saint’s depiction of the glorified body we read, “United already to an intellect clarified by the Divine light, it will find itself transmuted by the clarity of that Divine light; in order to adapt itself to a soul rendered totally spiritual by the love of God, it will (also) be spiritualized and made subtle; because the beatified will have become impassible, e.g., capable of penetrating and being penetrated.... Bonaventura's characterization of the glorified body is amazingly specific ... [with] the following qualities: Impassibility, e.g. incorruptibility; indissolubility; of unmixed nature; indivisibility ... clarity, e.g., of the nature of light ... being able to penetrate non-glorified bodies without itself being penetrated by them; subtlety, e.g., non-porousness, so that, as E. Gilson points out, it can go obediently wherever the mind may go ... being able to touch and handle without being touched and handled; agility, whereby, again, it may be the perfect instrument of the mind, being capable of movement in the sense that the mind moves from one thought to another; being the instrument of liberty, not of change or mutation of form ... ‘this body is stabilized in every place through the soul, and the soul through God, and thus it needs no other inclination.’”³⁵

Endnotes

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- ¹ Chidbhavananda, p. 477.
- ² GSR, pp. 625g, 550h, 613c, 965f; cf. pp. 287f, 822g.
- ³ Chidbhavananda, p. 204.
- ⁴ Abhedananda (1903, 1947), pp. 181-83.
- ⁵ Swami Abhedananda, *Yoga Psychology* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1960), p. 370.
- ⁶ Swami Abhedananda, *True Psychology* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1965), p. 20.
- ⁷ Swami Abhedananda, *Divine Heritage of Man* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1947), pp. 208-11.
- ⁸ Robin Boyd, *An Introduction To Indian Christian Theology* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1994), pp. 124-27.
- ⁹ Philo, *Philo of Alexandria*, tr. David Winston New York: Paulist Press, 1981), pp. 101,103, 143-44; (1991), I, p. 107; Richard Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 21-35.
- ¹⁰ Origen, *Homilies On Genesis and Exodus*, tr. Ronald Heine (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1981), p. 63.
- ¹¹ FP, III, 6:1.
- ¹² J. T. Muckle, C.S.B., "The Doctrine of St. Gregory of Nyssa on Man as the Image of God," *Mediaeval Studies* 7 (1945), pp. 60, 63.
- ¹⁶ ST, I, 93.1-2.
- ¹⁷ ST, I, 93.1, 6.
- ¹⁸ ST, I, 93.
- ¹⁹ Huxley, p. 212.
- ²⁰ Justo Gonzales, *A History of Christian Thought* (3 vols.; New York: Abingdon Press, 1975), III, pp. 104, 140-41.
- ²¹ R. Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1958), pp. 370-71; Gonzales (1975), III, pp. 103, 140-41.
- ²² While the Judeo-Christian *Old Testament* is translated to some extent using modern grammar, Ralph Griffith's prefers to translate the *Rig Veda* using a more archaic grammatical style.
- ²³ GSR, pp. 330b, 902b.
- ²⁴ GSR, p. 604e.
- ²⁵ Swami Adiswarananda, *The Vedanta Way to Peace and Happiness*, pp. 14-15; Web: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosha>
- ²⁶ Radhakrishnan, I, pp. 171-72.
- ²⁷ Prabhavanandas3, p. 184.

²⁸ Satprakashananda, pp. 186-89.

²⁹ John Grimes, *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), pp. 27, 168, 257-58, 321.

³⁰ FP, II, 11:2.

³¹ FP, II, 10:1, 3.

³² FP, III, 6:6.

³³ CC, VII, 32.

³⁴ FP, II, 2:2; 11:2; Antonia Tripolitis, *The Doctrine of the Soul in the Thought of Plotinus and Origen* (Roslyn Heights. NY: Libra Publishers, 1978), pp. 106-07, 146.

³⁵ John Plott, *A Philosophy of Devotion* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1974), pp. 554, 562.