

1. His Background in Brief
  2. Descriptions of Swami Vivekananda by Westerners Who Knew Him
  3. Evaluations of Swami Vivekananda as a Teacher by Westerners who Heard Him Speak
  4. Additional Personal Characteristics
  5. Swami Vivekananda and the Apostle Paul
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### III. Swami Vivekananda's Personal Characteristics

#### 1. His Background in Brief

"While Vivekananda [Narendra] was still in his mother's womb, she like many other pious Hindu mothers, had observed religious vows, fasted, and prayed so that she might be blessed with a son who would do honour to the family. She requested a relative who was living in Benares to offer special worship to the Vireswara Shiva of that holy place and seek His blessings; for Shiva, the great god<sup>[SEP]</sup> of renunciation, dominated her thought. One night she dreamt that this supreme Deity aroused Himself from His meditation and agreed to be born as her son. When she woke she was filled with joy." His mother Bhuvanewari Devi was respected by all because she possessed inner tranquility and resigned herself to Brahman (God). Vivekananda was prepared for his future mission by the contrasts of his parents. Conversely, his father Viswanath, an attorney-at-law of the High Court of Calcutta was under Western influence. He was an agnostic and a mocker of social conventions, with some attraction to Islam and Christianity. He possessed a large heart and was exceedingly generous in financially helping less fortunate people.<sup>1</sup>

Vivekananda belonged to the kshatriya (from kshatra meaning "ruling, one of the ruling order") caste.<sup>2</sup> Is this word a cognate of the Roman Caesar, Russian Czar, and German Kaiser?

Before coming to America, Vivekananda wrote in a letter to Swami

Saradananda, "I have had a vision in which the Master told me to go to the West. My mind is quite disturbed. Please tell Holy Mother everything and let me know her opinion.' Saradananda went to Holy Mother and read Vivekananda's letter to her. Holy Mother did not give her opinion immediately, but asked Saradananda to wait. After a couple of days, Holy Mother had a dream. She saw Ramakrishna walking over the ocean waves and asking Narendra to follow him. Then Holy Mother told Saradananda, 'Please write to Naren that he should go to the West.' Vivekananda was overjoyed when he received Holy Mother's approval and blessing."<sup>3</sup> At another time, Holy Mother said this about Vivekananda, "Naren is an instrument of Thakur (Master) who makes him write these words for inspiring his children and devotees for doing his work, for doing good to all the world. What Naren writes is true and must be fulfilled hereafter."<sup>4</sup> In a letter from America to Swami Ramakrishnananda in India in the first half of 1894, Vivekananda wrote concerning Ramakrishna, 'I am an instrument and He is the operator. Through this instrument He is rousing the religious instinct in thousands in this far-off country."<sup>5</sup>

It has always been the case that most of the great thinkers belonged to the mainline organizations. This is true in religion and other areas of study. For Vivekananda it was the Ramakrishna Order Vedanta Society.

## 2. Descriptions of Swami Vivekananda by Westerners Who Knew Him

In the West, Vivekananda was greatly admired by many of the people whom he associated with on multiple occasions. He definitely was like no one they had ever met before and his presence often came to them as a complete surprise. A few of the many tributes he received follow in chronological order based on the date the person first made his acquaintance:

He had a keen sense of humor and was very easy for all of us to get on with. And everybody in the house loved him.... It is a memory I've never forgotten. He had the most extraordinary and magnetic personality. I was 84 years old on Thursday and his picture in my mind is just as clear; I've never known anybody like him. I still think of him as somebody I loved and who I think loved me (Carolyn Conger (1887-1973) later President of the Illinois Branch of the American Institute of Interior Designers. Vivekananda lived in her family's house in Chicago for 17 to 36 days during September-October 1893).<sup>6</sup>

The great and glorious soul that came to the Parliament of Religions, so full of love of God, that his face shone with the Divine light, whose words were fire, whose very presence created an atmosphere of harmony and purity, thereby drawing all souls to himself (Mary Hale (1865-1933) of Chicago, who bequeathed a sizable sum of money to the Belur Math upon her passing. Vivekananda lived in the home of the Hale family in November 1893, May-June 1894, January 1895, November 1899, and June 1900 totaling approximately ten weeks, and they later exchanged many letters).<sup>7</sup>

The power that emanated from this mysterious being was so great that one all but shrank from it. It was overwhelming. It threatened to sweep everything before it. This one sensed even in those first unforgettable moments.... It was the mind that made the first great appeal, that amazing mind! What can one say that will give even a faint idea of its majesty, its glory, its splendor? It was a mind so far transcending other minds, even of those who rank as geniuses, that it seemed different in its very nature. Its ideas were so clear, so powerful, so transcendental that it seemed incredible that they could have emanated from the intellect of a limited

human being. Yet marvelous as the ideas were and wonderful as was that intangible something that flowed out from the mind, it was strangely familiar. I found myself saying. "I have known that mind before"....

He had power of attraction so great, that those who came near him, men and women alike, even children, fell under the magic spell he cast... I had come to one in whom I had seen such spirituality as I had never even dreamed of. From his lips I had heard truths unthought of before. He knew the way to attainment. He would show me the way (The revered Sister Christine (1866-1930) for many years a teacher at Sister Nivedita's Girls School in India. Among other things she traveled from England to the United States by ship with Vivekananda, Turiyananda, and Mary Funke in August 1899).<sup>8</sup>

He was a man who would shine in any environment, by virtue of his splendid presence, his brilliant conversational powers, his magnetic eloquence and above all by his unworldly simplicity and purity of character... His many Western friends saw him no more, but his memory will never die in our hearts and our gratitude for his loving service to us can never fail. It is a priceless privilege to have known such a man. He was truly a *mahatman* (Sarah Waldo (1845-1926) who took notes of Vivekananda's classes while she resided at Thousand Island Park during June-August 1895, which appeared as *Inspired Talks* in the *Complete Works*, volume VII).<sup>9</sup>

His dark eyes hardly glanced up to notice his neighbours, but there was a sense of tranquillity and power about him that made an imperishable impression upon me. He seemed to personify the mystery and religious "aloofness" of all true teachers of Brahma, and combined with this a kindly and gentle attitude of simplicity towards his fellowmen (Malvina Hoffmann (1885-1966) a renowned

American sculptress who later created statues of Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Vivekananda).<sup>10</sup>

He had a magnetic personality, associated with great tranquility. Whether he was walking in the street or standing in a room, there was always the same dignity. He had a great sense of humour and as a natural correlative, much pathos and pity for affliction. He was a charming companion and entered with ease into any environment he found. And I found that all classes of educated persons that he was brought in contact with looked up to and admired the innate nobility that was in the man. One felt at all times that he was, to use a modern expression, "conscious of the presence of God." In walking, traveling, and leisure times, there constantly came from him some hardly formulated invocation or expression of devotion. As a teacher he had a great capacity for perceiving the difficulty of an inquirer, and would elucidate it with great simplicity and point to its solution. At the same time he could enter into great intricacies of thought (Edward T. Sturdy (1860-1957) whom Vivekananda lived with at Caversham, England for about eight weeks during September-October 1895 and April 1896).<sup>11</sup>

Everywhere he has made warm personal friends; and his expositions of Hindu philosophy have been listened to with delight. It is very pleasant to observe the eager interest with which his own people in India follow his course, and the joy that they take in his success. I have seen a pamphlet filled with speeches made at a large and influential meeting in Calcutta, which was called together to express enthusiastic approval of the manner in which he has fulfilled his mission ... Vivekananda has created a high degree of interest in himself and his work." (Charles Carroll Everett (1829-1900), Dean of the Harvard Divinity School).<sup>12</sup>

Vivekananda, the popular Hindu monk, whose physiognomy bore the most striking resemblance to the classic face of the Buddha ... This remarkable person appeared in England in the autumn of 1895, and although he led a very retired life, attracted numbers of people to his lodgings, and created everywhere a very deep impression. He seemed completely indifferent to money, and lived only for thought. He took quite simply anything that was given to him, and when nothing came he went without, yet he never seemed to lack anything; he lived by faith from day to day, and taught Yogi science to all who would listen, without money and without price (Reverend Hugh Haweis (1838-1901) a prominent Anglican leader of the St. James Church in London. They were good friends during the 1895-96 period when Vivekananda resided in London).<sup>13</sup>

In agreement with Reverend Hugh Haweis, it was written in the New York based *Leslie's Weekly* magazine of December 9, 1897, "Mr. Vivekananda came without money, and something which astonished Americans he refused to accept money from his numerous and enthusiastic admirers while here. He lived in the simplest manner."

In America I met Swami Vivekananda; then alone could I understand what love was. So, income or no income, I am caught! Never have I found such a noble being as Swami Vivekananda. One is drawn to him as if to one's very own (Josiah John Goodwin (1870-98), Vivekananda's stenographer primarily in 1896, who recorded about a thousand pages in the *Complete Works*, and traveled with him to India).<sup>14</sup>

Those of you who knew Swamiji, knew how charming was his personality, how full of fun and wit he was. To camp out with him was a constant delight to his disciples. What wealth of stories he would relate to them during moonlight evenings, around the campfire, under the beautiful pine-trees of California. During these stories India would live before the mental eye of the students.”

“When he was asked if he did not resent the false reports circulated about him, he said very gently, 'Not at all; this is also the voice of the Beloved. My Master would never recognize personal abuse or malice; 'Everything,' he said, 'comes from the Mother Divine.'”

“There, in his room, students came to him. They sat on the floor, in Indian fashion. As one of the students has expressed: 'How intensely interesting were these classes.' Those who were privileged to attend them can never forget it. We seemed to live in a different world, to be transplanted to a higher sphere. And when we went home we seemed to walk on air. Swami was so dignified, still so simple, so earnest, so eloquent (Swami Atulananda (1870-1966), formerly Brahmachari Gurudas) who was well acquainted with Vivekananda.<sup>15</sup>

He was a most impressive personality. You know, you have told me that it is not possible to get an impression of a personality from the individual's writings; but that I had sensed Vivekananda's personality from his books, and the impression was verified when I heard him speak. His voice I should say was baritone—certainly nearer to bass than tenor; and it was the most musical voice I have ever heard.... Once later on he apologized for quoting in Sanskrit, and explained that he still thought in that language and then had to translate his thoughts into English.... I can only describe myself as enchanted by him. As I mentioned, this was my feeling from his books before I ever saw him, and the feeling has stayed with me throughout my life (Mrs. Alice Shanti Hansbrough (1864-1955) who

was with Vivekananda in both Southern and Northern California for about four months in 1900).<sup>16</sup>

A man of gigantic intellect, indeed, one to whom our greatest university professors were as mere children (Rev. Benjamin Fay Mills (1857-1916) who invited Vivekananda to lecture publicly in Northern California and set up big crowds that attracted many future Vedantists).<sup>17</sup>

Many are the moments of sadness since the Vivekananda has gone away. It seems that all the gods had left us, for his Divine presence spread peace and tranquility wherever he went; the tumult of uncertainty departed from my soul at the sound of his magic voice. His very form and every mood were those of tender compassion and sympathy. None knew him but to love him; those of us who have had the royal good fortune to meet him in the flesh will some day realize that we have met the true Incarnation of the Divine One.... At first I attended him through a severe spell of sickness, then he sat with me partly through a paralytic stroke; he would charm me to sleep and enchant me awake. So passed the sublimest part of my life, and now that sweet memory lingers and sustains me ever and always (Dr. Milburn Logan (1855-1905) a prominent physician and surgeon who served as President of the Vedanta Society in San Francisco).<sup>18</sup>

To live close to the Swami is a perpetual source of inspiration; we live in an intense spiritual atmosphere. For him every occasion inspires parables, quotations, ranging from Hindu mythology to the profoundest philosophy. Sometimes he is gay, full of fun, ready with rapid repartee, joking and laughing like a child. He is inexhaustible in telling us interesting stories. He possesses a voice like a cello, with low vibration that one cannot forget, and which



fills both lecture halls and hearts (Madam Emma Calve (1858-1942) a world famous French-Spanish opera singer, who was part of a party that accompanied Vivekananda from France to Austria, Turkey, Greece, and Egypt during October-November 1900 before he returned to India for the final time).<sup>19</sup>

Shri Priya Nath Sinha asked Swami Vivekananda, "'Vivekananda, how many disciples have you in the West?' Vivekananda: A good many. Q. Two or three thousands? Vivekananda: Maybe more than that. Q. Are they all initiated by you with Mantras? Vivekananda: Yes. Q. Did you give them permission to utter Pranava (Om)? Vivekananda: Yes."<sup>20</sup> If this information is correct then Vivekananda initiated at least two or three thousand disciples in the West. Elsewhere in the *Complete Works* little if anything is said about their initiation.

For a more detailed study concerning the Westerners who met Swami Vivekananda or wrote books, articles, or tributes about him see: Gopal Stavig, *Western Admirers of Ramakrishna and His Disciples, ed., Swami Shuddhidananda* pp. 237-657. This study includes Western devotees, supporters, religious leaders, professional writers, professors, educators, musicians, actresses, artists, social reformers, humanitarians, philanthropists, and professionals and business executives.

### 3. Evaluations of Swami Vivekananda as a Teacher by Westerners Who Heard Him Speak

To gain some understanding of Vivekananda's teaching ability, the best people to consult on this matter are the people who attended his lecture and classes, preferably on many occasions. A number of devotees mention that he often spoke while in a high spiritual state, and as they listened to him they felt their consciousness rise to a level where it had never been before. His spiritual charisma was evident when he

spoke in public to large or small groups, and in his personal one-on-one encounters. A few testimonials follow:

A striking figure, clad in yellow and orange, shining like the sun of India in the midst of the heavy atmosphere of Chicago, a lion head, piercing eyes, mobile lips, movements swift and abrupt—such was my first impression of Swami Vivekananda, as I met him in one of the rooms set apart for the use of the delegates to the Parliament of Religions. Monk, they called him, not unwarrantably, but warrior-monk was he ... Purposeful, virile, strong, he stood out, a man among men, able to hold his own.

On the platform another side came out. The dignity and inborn sense of worth and power still were there, but all was subdued to the exquisite beauty of the spiritual message which he had brought, to the sublimity of the matchless evangel of the East which is the heart, the life of India, the wondrous teaching of the Self. Enraptured, the huge multitudes hung upon his words; not a syllable must be lost, not a cadence missed (Annie Besant (1847-1933) the English leader of the Theosophy Movement who heard him speak at the Parliament of Religions in 1893)!<sup>21</sup>

His culture, his eloquence, and his fascinating personality have given us a new idea of Hindoo civilization. He is an interesting figure, his fine, intelligent, mobile face in its setting of yellows, and his deep, musical voice prepossessing one at once in his favour... He speaks without notes, presenting his facts and his conclusions with the greatest art, the most convincing sincerity; and rising at times to a rich, inspiring eloquence. As learned and cultivated, apparently, as the most accomplished Jesuit (Lucy Monroe (1865-1950) a professional writer who heard speak him at the Parliament of Religions in 1893).<sup>22</sup>

To those who were fortunate enough to be there with the Swami, those were weeks of ever-hallowed memory, so fraught were they with unusual opportunity for spiritual growth. No words can describe what that blissful period meant (and still means) to the devoted little band who followed the Swami from New York to the Island in the St. Lawrence [Thousand Island Park], who daily served him with joy and listened to him with heartfelt thankfulness. His whole heart was in his work, and he taught like one inspired.... for two and sometimes three hours he would steadily expound the teachings of his Master Sri Ramakrishna. These ideas were new and strange to us, and we were slow in assimilating them; but the Swami's patients never flagged, his enthusiasm never waned.... The Swami did not appear to address us directly, but rather seemed to be speaking to himself in words of fire, as it were, so intense were they, so eloquent and convincing, burning into the very hearts of his listeners never to be forgotten....<sup>23</sup>

None of us can ever forget the sense of uplift, the intense spiritual life of those hallowed hours. The Swami poured out all his heart at those times, his own struggles were enacted again before us; the very spirit of his Master seemed to speak through his lips, to satisfy all doubts, to answer all questioning, to sooth every fear. Many times the Swami seemed hardly conscious of our presence, and then we almost held our breath for fear of disturbing him and checking the flow of his thoughts. He would rise from his seat and pace up and down the narrow limits of the piazza, pouring forth a perfect torrent of eloquence.... It was a perpetual inspiration to live with a man like Swami Vivekananda. From morning till night it was ever the same, we lived in a constant atmosphere of intense spirituality (Sarah Waldo (1845-1926) who heard him speak in New York and daily for seven consecutive weeks at Thousand Island Park in 1895.).<sup>24</sup>

We went out of curiosity (the Man whose name I bear and I) and before we had been ten minutes in the audience, we felt ourselves lifted up into an atmosphere so rarefied, so vital, so wonderful, that we sat spellbound and almost breathless, to the end of the lecture. When it was over we went out with new courage, new hope, new strength, new faith, to meet life's daily vicissitudes. "This is the philosophy, this is the idea of God, the religion which I have been seeking," said the Man [her husband]. And for months afterwards he went with me to hear Swami Vivekananda explain the old religion and to gather from his wonderful mind jewels of truth and thoughts of helpfulness and strength. [Her husband told her] "This man makes me rise above every business worry; he makes me feel how trivial is the whole material view of life and how limitless is the life beyond. I can go back to my troubles at the office now with new strength."<sup>25</sup>

The passing of Vivekananda was like the flashing of a mighty star upon our wondering eyes, for, in truth, no greater, wiser, truer, holier soul ever dwelt among us than this marvellous man who has gone into the spirit life (Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850-1919) a famous American poetess who with her husband in 1895 attended a series of classes given by Vivekananda in New York City and later travelled to India).<sup>26</sup>

Swami Vivekananda passed in stately erectness up the aisle to the platform. He began to speak; and memory, time, place, people, all melted away. Nothing was left but a voice ringing through the void. It was as if a gate had swung open and I had passed out on a road leading to a limitless attainment. The end of it was not visible; but the promise of what it would be shone through the thought and flashed through the personality of the one who gave it. He stood there—prophet of infinitude.... Our real loyalty belonged to the Swami. We recognized in him a power that no other teacher

possessed. It was he alone who was shaping our thought and conviction.<sup>27</sup> Every word he uttered he had first lived in silence, in meditation, and in action; and it was because thus weighted with experience that his word so carried. We must learn to be disciples, to understand the truths we hear, to live them, and then we will never have to speak them. It is after all Swami Vivekananda's life which speaks strongest for him (Sister Devamata (1867-1942)) a friend of Holy Mother, and Swamis Brahmananda and Ramakrishnananda in India, who later served under Swami Paramananda.)<sup>28</sup>

A majestic personage clad in saffron gown and wearing a red-waist band, sat there on the floor, cross-legged. As he spoke to the company he recited Sanskrit verses in his deep, sonorous voice. His serene face, his dignified bearing and his Divine voice cast a spell upon the listeners, who felt electrified by his frequent utterances of the name of "Shiva, Shiva" (Sister Nivedita (1867-1911) author of two verbatim books of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda).<sup>29</sup>

He walked about the room, sat on the floor, laughed, joked, chatted—nothing formal. Of course, I had noticed his magnificent, brilliant eyes, his beautiful features and majestic bearing, for these were parts of him that no circumstances could hide. But when I saw him for a few minutes standing on a platform surrounded by others, it flashed into my mind: "What a giant, what strength, what manliness, what a personality! Every one near him looks so insignificant in comparison." It came to me almost as a shock and seemed to startle me. What was it that gave Vivekananda this distinction?... It seemed to be more in the expression of the face than anything else. Was it his purity? What was it? I could not analyze it. I remembered what had been said of Lord Buddha—"a lion among men." I felt that Vivekananda had unlimited power, that

he could move heaven and earth if he willed it. This was my strongest and lasting impression of him (Dutch born Cornelius Heijblom the future saintly Swami Atulananda (1870-1966)).<sup>30</sup>

There were a few who would have resisted if they could, but whose power of resistance were neutralized by the irresistible logic, acumen, and childlike simplicity of the Great Teacher. Indeed, there were a few who arose to demur, but who resumed their seats either in smiling acquiescence or in bewildered impotency. The Swami's personality impressed itself on the mind with visual intensity. The speaking eyes, the wealth of facial expression, and gesticulation; the wondrous Sanskrit chanting, sonorous, melodious, impressing one with the sense of mystic potency; the translations following in smiling confidence—all these, set off by the spectacular apparel of the Hindu sannyasin—who can forget them?... "Ask all the questions you like—the more the better," was the Swami's good-natured reply. "That is what I am here for, and I won't leave you till you understand" (Frank Rhodehamel whose notes on some of Vivekananda's Northern California lectures are in the *Complete Works*).<sup>31</sup>

He began to speak, and there was a transformation. The soul-force of the great man became visible. I felt the tremendous force of his speech—words that were felt more than they were heard. I was drawn into a sea of being, of feelings of a higher existence, from which it seemed almost like pain to emerge when the lecture was finished. And then those eyes, how wonderful! They were like shooting stars—lights shooting forth from them in constant flashes (A. Christina Albers (1866-1948) of Northern California who later for many years taught and wrote books in India and was a leader of Baba Bharati's religious organization in the United States).<sup>32</sup>

He was phenomenally prolific. How he could speak so often and yet always with such originality is something no one has no one has ever been able to explain.... Everything Swamiji said had tremendous power. These lectures have slept in my old stenographer's notebook for more than fifty years. Now as they emerge, one feels that the power is still there (Ida Ansell (Ujjvala) (1876/77-1955) who put about 220 pages of Swamiji's lectures into the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*).<sup>33</sup>

As a man Vivekananda was very attractive, both in figure and deportment. His wonderful eyes were sometimes terrible, and again mild, gentle and loving. When sympathy moved him, his eyes became the expressers of his great soul: when he spoke in real earnest they were like blazing fires in which one saw evil being consumed. His voice was gentle, round and full; and whether in conversation, or as teacher, or upon the platform, the mellowness with which he spoke brought forth an unusual amount of magnetism, so much so that he at once captivated all who heard him.... In conversation he spoke slowly and with great forethought; he moderated his voice in a manner which gave indisputable proof of soul-refinement. He could be very jolly and would laugh heartily when he told of some amusing experience which he had had.... his voice, which he knew how to moderate and increase like an artist, electrified his audience. No matter how long he spoke, he was fresh after two hours of speaking as he was at the commencement of his lecture. To lose sight of the self and let God have the vocalicity at His merciful disposal is another secret which none knows but he who had experience and has been taught by the Lord Himself. Vivekananda showed such superior knowledge. He spoke with such magnetism that it was impossible not to give your whole attention to him (Sister Avabamia who set up Vedanta Centres in Australia, New Zealand, and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) between 1908 and 1912).<sup>34</sup>

Vivekananda was also very much appreciated by the newspaper writers. For example, when he lectured in Memphis, Tennessee the correspondent for the *Appeal-Avalanche* newspaper (January 16, 1894) described the Hindu monk in glowing terms as "one of the most eloquent men who has ever appeared on the religious or lecture platform in this country. His matchless oratory, deep penetration.... In conversation he is a most pleasant gentleman; his choice of words are the gems of the English language, and his general bearing ranks him with the most cultured people of Western etiquette and custom. As a companion he is a most charming man, and as a conversationalist he is, perhaps, not surpassed in the drawing-rooms of any city in the Western World. He speaks English not only distinctly, but fluently, and his ideas, as new as sparkling, drop from his tongue in a perfectly bewildering overflow of ornamental language."<sup>35</sup>

At the end of the year on December 31, 1894, the *Brooklyn Standard Union* describes his speech before 800 of the city's elites, "It was the voice of the ancient Rishis of the Vedas speaking sweet words of love and toleration through the Hindoo monk Paramahansa Swami Vivekananda, that held spellbound last evening every one of those many hundreds who had accepted the invitation of the Brooklyn Ethical Society.... they had heard of his culture and his learning, of his wit and his eloquence, of his purity and sincerity and holiness, and hence they expected great things. And they were not disappointed, 'Swami' i.e., Master or Rabbi or Teacher Vivekananda is even greater than his fame.... his swarthy face reflecting the brilliancy of his thoughts, his large, expressive eyes, bright with the enthusiasm of a prophet and his mobile mouth uttering, in deep melodious tones and in almost perfect English, only words of love and sympathy and toleration, he was a



splendid type of the famous sages of Himalayas, a prophet of a new religion."<sup>36</sup>

In the first half of the twentieth century the majority of the Western tributes paid to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda came from professional writers like Leo Tolstoy and Romain Rolland and later from Aldous Huxley, Christopher Isherwood, and J. D. Salinger, who tended to concentrate on his personal characteristics. In the second half of the century the primary source became University professors who with their analytical minds and interest in history made intellectually penetrating discoveries, while in some cases being more critical than the writers.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. Additional Personal Characteristics

1) Concerning Vivekananda, Abhedananda revealed, "I lived and traveled with this great spiritual brother of mine, saw him day after day and night after night and watched his character for nearly twenty years, and I stand here to assure you that I have not found another like him in these three continents, and that no one can take the place of this wonderful personage. As a man, his character was pure and spotless; as a philosopher, he was the greatest of all Eastern and Western philosophers. In him I found the ideal of Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga; he was like the living example of Vedanta in all its different branches."<sup>38</sup> Consequently, Abhedananda thoroughly accepted the religious teachings of Vivekananda and devoted his life to expanding upon these themes. India's three most outstanding religious philosophers after 1902 are Abhedananda (1866-1939), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975). A major reason for this is that each of them taught a philosophy highly compatible with the ideas previously given by Vivekananda. For example, they discussed subjects alike the Avatara, evolutionary development of humanity, a

hierarchy of religions with Advaita Vedanta at the pinnacle, involution, the oneness of existence, support for reincarnation, religious experience, religious pluralism, universal liberation-salvation, etc. as did Vivekananda.

Vivekananda's monastic disciple Swami Paramananda (1884-1940) the leader of the Boston and La Crescenta Centres informs us, "I cannot begin to convey merely through words what my experience was with Swami Vivekananda. We imagine a great man as someone whom we cannot approach. Swami Vivekananda, however, was the simplest of people. It would have amazed you! His interior was like a child, gentle and mellow, and that was the real Swami Vivekananda. A great, loving heart! Sometimes reading from his books, you do not get quite the picture. I have seen him weeping. I have seen this great soul weeping, when he thought no one saw him, for the suffering poor of India. His heart was heavy with sadness because there was so much suffering in humanity. It is this, not intellectuality that makes people great."<sup>39</sup>

In researching the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, one is overwhelmed by the vast scope of his writings. His devotee Josephine MacLeod (1858-1949) revealed to her friends, "The thing that held me in Vivekananda was his unlimitedness. I never could touch the bottom-or top-or sides. The amazing size of him!"<sup>40</sup> It is truly amazing that in only nine years (1893-1902) he covered so many aspects of religious philosophy, theology, and other subjects. At the same time he was traveling around the United States, Western Europe, and India delivering lectures; he set up religious organizations in India and the United States that involved directing and motivating other people such as his brother monastic disciples; and he devoted a great deal of time to meditating. Most modern geniuses make a name for themselves by specializing in a far more limited area of activity.

2) Part of his mind was always on the thought of Brahman (God). Ramakrishna would say, "He is perfect in meditation."<sup>41</sup> One of the reasons for Vivekananda's great originality is that with his yogic powers,

he could make contact with the higher spiritual world and receive inspired messages. After Vivekananda's second visit to Detroit in March of 1896, Sister Christine (1866-1930) recorded in her memoirs, "He told us that usually before a lecture he heard a voice saying it all. The next day he repeated what he had heard. He did not say whose voice he heard. Whatever it was, it came as the expression of some great spiritual power, greater than his own normal power, released by the intensity of his concentration.... The spiritual force generated at such times was so great that some in the audience were lifted above the normal state of consciousness, so that it was possible to remember only the beginning of a lecture. After a certain point, there seemed a blank. The normal mind was no longer functioning; a higher state of consciousness, beyond reason and memory, had taken its place. Long after, perhaps, it would be found that during that period when the mind seemed blank, a specially deep impression had been made."<sup>42</sup>

As Ida Ansell (Ujjvala, 1877-1955) mentions, "He was phenomenally prolific. How he could speak so often and yet always with such originality is something no one has ever been able to explain. He himself confessed that time after time on his lecture tours he felt exhausted intellectually and incapable of appearing the next day. Then, as his authorized *Life* explains, he would be aided in various ways: 'For instance, at dead of night he would hear a voice shouting at him the very thoughts he was to speak on the morrow.... Or again it would be like someone delivering a lecture alongside of him, as he lay on his bed listening. At other times two voices would argue before him, discussing at great length subjects that he would find himself repeating on the following day upon the platform or in the pulpit. Sometimes these discussions involved ideas that he had never heard or thought of previously.... To his disciples he would explain that these incidents betrayed the powers and potentialities of the Self [Atman].'"<sup>43</sup>

Since his childhood, sometimes when he saw an object, place, or person, he thought he had seen it or him before. Often someone would

say something and he would remember discussing the subject with that person in the same house before. To explain these unusual occurrences, Vivekananda concluded that before he was born, as on a motion picture screen he saw people and things whom he would come in contact during his lifetime, and later a memory of this arose in his mind from time to time while the event was occurring.<sup>44</sup> It is not stated if other people have a preview of their upcoming life, which could affect their activity in this life.

3) Principles are abstractions unless they are manifested through a personality or some other empirical entity. It is the living example that proves these ideas are valid. As Frank Alexander (1887/88-1917) one of the main authors of *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples* (1912-18) wrote, "He was the embodiment, the personification, the very incarnation of the philosophy He taught. It was the life of Him, His soul, and all His thought.... He was the *Vedas*; He was the *Upanishads*; He was the Spirit Incarnate of the Vedanta."<sup>45</sup> Professor James Michael G. Fell of Mathematics at the University of Pennsylvania added, "If no historical individual had ever embodied it in his life, it would carry no conviction; it would be a mere play of ideas. The most priceless gift of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda to the modern world was their own lives, by which they showed that the Advaita philosophy could really be lived, and also how it could be lived."<sup>46</sup> Sister Nivedita confirmed, "He taught with authority, and not as one of the Pundits. For he himself had plunged to the depths of the realization which he preached, and he came back like Ramanuja only to tell its secrets to the pariah, the outcaste, and the foreigner."<sup>47</sup> Swami Vivekananda lived not for himself, but to benefit others. He sacrificed his life for this one ideal.

4) Vivekananda being fluent in English was a master in his use of words and phrases, continually coming out with the unexpected. The renown Harvard psychologist-philosopher William James wrote to Sara Bull on August 2, 1900, "I have just been reading some of Vivekananda's

Addresses in England, which I had not seen. This man is simply a wonder for oratorical power." His writings are pervaded with an awe-inspiring fervent enthusiasm that he is able to convey to his reader. Never dull, he wrote with great vigor, enthusiasm, and charm.<sup>48</sup>

It was necessary for Vivekananda to make every effort to make his ideas as understandable as he could, to the people who came to listen to him. He could express the most subtle and sublime religious-philosophical ideas in the clearest manner, using simple idiomatic English. Vivekananda performed the extraordinary feat of presenting Advaita Vedanta in a way that Westerners untrained in philosophy could have some idea of what he was saying. He wrote to Alasinga on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1896, "My success is due to my popular style--the greatness of a teacher consists in the simplicity of his language."<sup>49</sup> Moreover, he advised Paul Deussen (1845-1919) a Professor of Philosophy at Kiel University and the leading Indologist in Germany, in connection with translating Sanskrit books into German, "that clearness of definition was of primary, and elegance of diction of very secondary importance."<sup>50</sup> To give an example, back in 1918 an eyewitness Brahmachari Gurudas (later Swami Atulananda), testified to Vivekananda's clarity of presentation, "Western scholars had given us some of the Hindu scriptures in our own language. But to very few, the teaching as it stood, was intelligible.... It is therefore that we hailed the Swami Vivekananda as the first authoritative exponent to the West of the ideas of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. His exposition was clear and comprehensible. It was masterly, he brought order out of chaos."<sup>51</sup>

Another reason for the need for clarity in this context was expressed by Professor James Michael G. Fell, "It is a matter of our common experience that each of us carries within himself a massive array of preconceptions and ill-founded ideas to which he clings, and which are constantly hindering his efforts to gain understanding and new knowledge. In fact any deep new insight into any field of study requires not merely that we enlarge our existing stock of information, but that we

unlearn a great deal of what (perhaps unconsciously) we thought we knew before. Thus, to grasp Einstein's theory of relativity we must actively give up our customary unanalyzed notions of space and time."<sup>52</sup>

5) Vivekananda had an inner-directed (as compared to an other-directed) personality (Riesman, et. al., 1954), in that he had the courage and self-confidence to act according to the dictates of his inner being, and not out of external pressure to conform to the established beliefs and norms of society. With a strong sense of mission, guided by his own conscience and values he was willing to take risks, to follow his own inner voice, his own perception of what is right and what is wrong, and was willing to go against the grain if necessary. But this is not the inner-direction of the ego, but of the Divine within him. Of all of the cities in the world outside of India he was internally directed by the Lord to spend most of his time in Chicago, Boston, New York, London, Los Angeles, and San Francisco and this is where the Vedanta Society in the West have developed best since that time. Vivekananda was very flexible in his path of action. He was willing to change his plans if necessary.

He had high self-esteem so consequently he was self-confident, optimistic, self-reliant, confident of being successful, was willing to take risks, and was persistent in spite of some setbacks.

6) He motivated his associates in order to create a high level of social cohesion. In this way the members of the group experienced a high esprit de corp meaning a strong positive feeling concerning the welfare of each other; a high degree of consensus and an awareness of a common purpose and collective goals; a sense of belonging and intense group loyalty, and willingness to participate. In addition, social cohesion involves agreement with and acceptance by the members of the group's goals, norms, shared values, attitudes, and role structure, meaning the distribution of rights and responsibilities.

The Bengali *Udbodhan* journal was initiated by Swami Trigunatita under the direction of Swami Vivekananda who told a disciple, "In the *Udbodhan* we must give the public only positive ideas. Negative

thoughts weaken men.... In language and literature, in poetry and the arts, in everything we must point out not the mistakes that people are making in their thoughts and actions, but the way in which they will gradually be able to do these things better. Pointing out mistakes wounds a man's feelings."<sup>53</sup>

7) Vivekananda's purpose was to produce teachings that would influence as many Vedantists as possible in the present and in the future. He wrote in March 1894, "Let them, if they will, carry and scatter my ideas broadcast--not I. This is only a just division of labour. The same man never succeeded both in thinking and in scattering his thoughts."<sup>54</sup>

With brilliant insight, Swami Vivekananda knew which people to select for the job and he skillfully motivated that person to take over the responsibilities and give a hundred percent effort. For example, he got Alasinga Perumal to initiate and edit the *Brahmavadin* (1895), twenty-four-year old B. R. Rajam Iyer to edit the *Prabuddha Bharata* (1896), and Swami Trigunatitananda to establish the *Udbodhan* (1899). While Vivekananda might offer occasional advice, he allowed other people great freedom in performing their tasks. He wanted to make contact with many people and not to concentrate on a few, so he tended not to remain too long in any one location. Consequently, he could not devote his time to running a localized Center. So, in America early on he allocated administrative authority to Sara Bull and Francis Leggett on the East Coast, Shanti Hansbrough in Southern California, and Dr. Milburn Logan and others in Northern California. They were replaced by Abhedananda to take charge of the New York Center (1897), and Turiyananda (1900) and later Trigunatitananda (1903) at the Northern California Vedanta Society. As far as the publishing of his books in England and the United States, he allowed other people to make most of the decisions. In 1896, he asked Swami Saradananda to write a biography of Ramakrishna for Max Müller's upcoming book *Ramakrishna His Life and Sayings* (1898). When Saradananda gave

Vivekananda the manuscript he had written, "He simply changed a few words for fear of exaggeration and sent the whole manuscript to Professor Müller."<sup>55</sup> Vivekananda also took an active interest in establishing the Ramakrishna Math and Mission by raising funds, providing instructions, listing duties and the function of the organization, and motivating others. Yet, many Westerners pointed out his lack of interest in acquiring money.

8) Vivekananda practiced threefold love: compassion toward lesser people, love of equals like Swami Brahmananda, and devotion for his superiors like Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother.

Keith Ward (b. 1938) an Anglican priest and professor at Oxford University made an in-depth study of Vivekananda's teachings and came to the conclusion that Ramakrishna Order teaches the goal is, "to see divinity within oneself, to revere others as parts of the Divine, to overcome passion and anxiety, and to serve others with reverence and devotion.... In practice the key teachings of the Ramakrishna Math are its emphasis on realizing the Brahman-God within, on sensing the presence of divinity in all things, on compassionate service of others, on meditation and renunciation as the true paths to knowing Brahman-God, and on celebrating the good in all faiths and cultures.... It does affirm the existence of one nondual Self, which alone is absolutely self-existent, and so independently real. This Self is not a distinct person, standing in need of or in contingent relation to other persons. It is a reality whose infinite fullness is beyond all conceptual grasp. Yet it can and does truly manifest in personal form, perhaps as Siva or Kali, and can rightly be worshipped as a supreme personal divinity. It manifests in human forms, in Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi, to communicate Brahman-God-realization to those who are ready for it. And it lies potential in every human soul, waiting to be realized in all who seek release from bondage to possessions and desires. From it all universes emanate, without beginning or end, and by necessity. In their emanation, infinite possibilities of the divine Self are expressed, from



ignorance, suffering, and passion, to worlds of wisdom, bliss, and calm."<sup>56</sup>

Albert Einstein mentioned, "Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. The mediocre mind is incapable of understanding the man who refuses to bow blindly to conventional prejudices and chooses instead to express his opinions courageously and honestly."<sup>57</sup> The mediocre minds misunderstand the great spirits whose values differ from theirs and who think different than they do.

## 5. Swami Vivekananda and the Apostle Paul

Swami Vivekananda and the Apostle Paul are Divine Beings who accompanied a Divine Incarnation (Avatars) to earth and aided his mission to raise the consciousness of a large number of people to a higher level.

Saul of Tarsus (c. 5–c. 67) later known as Paul the Apostle was born in Tarsus the capital city of the Roman province of Cilicia (modern day southern Turkey). It was one of the largest trade centers on the Mediterranean coast and was known for its renowned university. He was brought up in a devout Jewish family as a Pharisee (2 Tim. 1:3; Phil. 3:5) and was a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:25-29). Likewise, Vivekananda was born in Calcutta the capitol city of the British Raj and the biggest colonial trade center in India. Calcutta was the most important University town in India, being known for Calcutta University (Scottish Church College) and Presidency College.<sup>58</sup>

In Tarsus Paul received a Greek and Roman education, but then as a young man he was sent to Jerusalem to receive the finest Jewish schooling "at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God" (Acts 22:3). At this rabbinical school he received a religious education that later helped

him to quickly assimilate Christian doctrines and relate them to the scriptures. Coming from two backgrounds, he spoke Greek and Latin in one and Hebrew in another. When Peter and other apostles were on trial, Gamaliel (the grandson of Rabbi Hillel) "a teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people" warned the Israeli council, "Keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God" (Acts 7:29, 34, 38-39)!

At the time of Paul, Judea was a subjected country under the control of the powerful Western European based Roman Empire. So also during Vivekananda's time large sections of India were part of the British Empire. In both countries there was a great deal of political unrest and turmoil producing some radicalness. The Jewish Roman Wars occurred in the years 66-70 A.D. at the time Paul died. After Vivekananda's passing, there was a marked increase in rebellion in opposition to the British Raj. The establishment of an empire by the Roman's and British was an extremely important factor that allowed Paul to spread Christianity to Western Asia and Europe and Vivekananda to teach Vedanta in the West. The channels of communication and lines of transportation were available for both of them. Most important they became acquainted with the language and thought patterns of the Europeans which were valuable in teaching a message these people would later accept. Vivekananda's comments on the subject are, "This British Empire with all its drawbacks is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of ideas. I mean to put my ideas in the center of this machine, and they will spread all over the world." "British rule in modern India has only one redeeming feature, though unconscious; it has brought India out once more on the stage of the world; it has forced upon it the contact of the outside world."<sup>59</sup>

Prior to his conversion Paul persecuted Christians, "so extremely zealous was I for the tradition of my fathers" (Gal. 1:13-14). "Though I formerly blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him [Jesus]; but I

received mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13), rather than maliciously. About himself he wrote, "As to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless" (Phil. 3:6). Paul was unblemished before the Law of Moses, and Vivekananda was also impeccable before the moral law of dharma.

While traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus (dated c. 31-36) after the resurrection of Jesus, Paul experienced a dramatic conversion. "Suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'" For three days he was blinded and neither ate nor drank, spending his time in prayer to God. In Damascus he was spiritually healed by a Christian and "something like scales fell from his eyes and regained his sight," and then he was baptized and his sins were washed away (Acts 9:1-19). Vivekananda mentioned that, "Paul was converted against his will by realisation."<sup>60</sup> After his conversion, Paul soon began to preach that Jesus is the Son of God.

On more than one occasion, Ramakrishna also transmitted spiritual power to Naren (the young Swami Vivekananda). During his second trip to Dakshineswar, Ramakrishna placed his right foot on Naren's body and, "The touch at once gave rise to a novel experience within me. With my eyes open I saw that the walls, and everything in the room, whirled rapidly and vanished into naught, and the whole universe together with my individuality was about to merge in an all-encompassing mysterious void."<sup>61</sup> In fact Vivekananda had Nirvikalpa Samadhi before he had Savikalpa Samadhi.

Because of their unique qualifications, each was specially selected by their Master to spread their teachings widely. While their Masters were intuitive geniuses who gained their knowledge from religious experience, Paul and Vivekananda added to their teachings by discussing more intellectual subjects relying on reason. Some people think Paul was to Jesus, what Vivekananda was to Ramakrishna.

Paul has been described as, "Dedicated, compassionate, emotional, sometimes harsh and angry, clever and quick-witted, supple in argumentation, and above all possessing a soaring, passionate commitment to God, Jesus Christ, and his own mission."<sup>62</sup> Likewise, Vivekananda was brilliant, totally dedicated to his work, and wrote extremely important ideas with remarkable clarity. Paul's influence on Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity has been profound and pervasive.

Vivekananda took interest in the life and teachings of Paul. He wrote, "The mild type creates, the thundering type spreads. Paul was the thundering type to spread the light."<sup>63</sup> According to his younger brother Mahendranath Datta, in an emotional mood Vivekananda told a small group of devotees in London, "Paul was a learned fanatic, so he could overturn the Greek philosophy and Roman government. Mere religion and devotion doesn't do the trick; there have to be fanatics. Do you know what I am? Paul was a learned fanatic and I want to create a band of learned fanatics. You see, just a fanatic is not enough – that is a kind of brain disease and makes much mischief. It must be a learned fanatic."<sup>64</sup>

Christian tradition holds that Paul was martyred in Rome during the reign of the Emperor Nero at the location where the Tre Fontane Abbey (Eng. Three Fountains Abbey) now stands. Asim Chaudhuri mentioned that Vivekananda visited this secluded monastery during the Christmas season of 1896 before departing for India.<sup>65</sup>

They were bicultural, exposed to both indigenous and Western ways of thinking. Paul's cultural background and education prepared the "Apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:13) to teach and convert both Romans and Jews to the gospel of Christianity. For example, in his letters, Paul utilized his knowledge of Stoic philosophy employing Stoic terms and metaphors to assist Gentile converts in their understanding of the Biblical teachings.

It is well known that Vivekananda was well versed in Indian and Western subjects which he intelligently and creatively wrote on. While his Mother was a pious Hindu who influenced Vivekananda, his father was more of a freethinker skeptical concerning the value of traditional Indian religious thought. Ramakrishna exposed him to traditional Indian ways of religious thinking and he was well acquainted with the intellectual systems of the great Indian philosophers. During his university days, he received an English education and read the writings of many Western European social-political, philosophical, and scientific thinkers. During his travels to America, England, and Continental Europe he was intimately exposed to their cultures and studied their ideas. As Swam Abhedananda wrote, "As a philosopher, he was the greatest of all Eastern and Western philosophers."<sup>66</sup> It is only a matter of time before more people realize he is the greatest philosopher of modern times.

In 1903, W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963) a professor at Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University) developed the useful theory of a "Double Consciousness," stressing the difficulty for an Afro-American living in a prejudiced society to reconcile their Afro-American identity with their American identity. We can add that a person who is a member of any minority ethnic group has an identity both with that group and to the overall society. The reaction on the person depends how much they identify with their ethnic group and how in general the other people in the society feel about them. In 1928, Robert E. Park (1864-1944) a Sociologist from the University of Chicago developed the concept of the "Marginal Man (Person)" who internalize and participate in two or more different and distinct cultural-religious groups. He may live at the boundary where two cultures meet. Park's broadened the concept to apply to people from different ethnic and national backgrounds, such as Jewish, African-American, and Asian-American immigrants. There has been a tendency to emphasize the negative aspect of a mental conflict when identifying with groups that hold opposing ideas and values. Park's and his student's Louis Wirth (1897-1952) and Everett Stonequist

(1901-79) also stressed that the marginal man has a broader conceptual framework to work from and combined with a discerning intelligence has the potential to be a reformer and bring about a solution to the problems confronting society.<sup>67</sup>

Park's deals with the cultural Marginal Man (Person), which is different from the Ideological Marginal Person. An example of the latter is a political Independent who on some issues is a conservative and on others a liberal. Or a person who does not take sides concerning an intellectual issue and sees the pros and/or cons of each viewpoint.

The Apostle Paul and Swami Vivekananda were both "marginal men" who internalize and participate in two or more different and distinct cultural-religious groups. Being exposed to two cultures as spiritually inspired people they were able to develop a creative synthesis from apparently contradictory elements that following dialogical reasoning we might refer to as a thesis and antithesis. In letters Vivekananda acknowledged, "I belong as much to India as to the world, no humbug about that." "What am I? Asiatic, European, or American? I feel a curious medley of personalities in me."<sup>68</sup>

They wanted to establish a universal church. Paul stated, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). All are united in Christ Jesus (the Messiah) the Son of God. Paul spoke to Jews and Gentiles each from their own standpoint. "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law--though not being myself under the law--that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law ... I have become all things to all men" (I Cor. 9:20-22). Vivekananda was also a universal person identifying with both Indians and Westerners. He identified with the Atman, which is without gender or any other differential identification.

For the most part, Paul and Vivekananda worked independently of the establishment and power structure in creating a new religious

organization. Vivekananda made contact with many wealthy people such as John D. Rockefeller a great philanthropist and the daughter of the wealthy Jay Gould, but he made no attempt to solicit money from them. Abhedananda mentioned that Vivekananda was offered a teaching position at Harvard University, which he turned down. At one time, he wanted to give a couple of lectures at Oxford University, but did not pursue the matter. Later the Baha'is acquired Greenacres to establish a religious Center, but though he was a good terms with the owner of the property (Sarah Farmer), Vivekananda had no such intensions. In the West, Vivekananda tended to prefer the company of common people and not the leaders of society. The assistance he obtained in foreign lands came from ordinary people, not from those who held high positions in the economic, political, or intellectual world. His goal was to create a new collective vibration and consciousness, and auspicious group karma, somewhat independent of that of the prevailing secular society.

Both Paul and Vivekananda worked with whomever the Lord sent them. As far as the world was concerned people like Miss Sarah Waldo, Edward Sturdy, Josiah Goodwin, Leon Landsberg, and Alice Hansbrough were the most ordinary of people. They certainly did not have the talent or prestige of William James, Josiah Royce, Max Müller, or Paul Deussen whom Vivekananda conversed with. Vivekananda wrote to Swami Ramakrishnananda, "The distinction between man and woman, between the rich and the poor, the literate and illiterate, Brahmins and Chandalas--he [Ramakrishna] lived to root out all... Whoever--man or woman--will worship Shri Ramakrishna, be he or she ever so low, will be then and there converted into the very highest."<sup>69</sup>

Paul founded several churches while proceeding north up the Mediterranean Sea from Jerusalem to Syria (Damascus), then west through Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) (Antioch, Tarsus, Colossae, and Ephesus), Greece (Philippi and Thessalonica), and on to Italy (Rome) where a Christian church already existed. He might have continued on

preaching the gospel as far west as Spain.<sup>70</sup> He spent some time in Rome, which eventually became the most influential center of the Christian religion.

Similarly Vivekananda was directed to the right geographical areas for the future spread of the religion. He traveled to the West and delivered his message in the Midwestern, Northeastern, and Southwest regions of the United States and in England. These two countries have become the major source for both the spread of Ramakrishna Vedanta, and after 1933 (the rise of Nazism) for the contemporary development of the philosophy, theology, and the psychology and sociology of religion outside of India. Paul's churches were located near the Mediterranean Sea and Vivekananda centered his activities in Western cities located near large bodies of water.

During their missionary activity they were guided by their Master and listened to the inner voice. Paul revealed, "The gospel which is preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12). "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). The Holy Spirit and Spirit of Jesus forbid Paul to go to Asia. At night in a vision, "A man of Macedonia was standing beseeching him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'" (Acts 16:6-10). Macedonia in Greece was under the control of the Roman Empire. He was eventually led to Rome, which in time became the most important center of the Christian world.

In his final days Ramakrishna told Naren (the young Vivekananda), "My Siddhis [powers] will manifest through you in time." "O Naren, today I have given you my all and have become a Fakir, a penniless beggar. By the force of the power transmitted by me, great things will be done by you."<sup>71</sup> He wrote, "While I am on earth, Shri Ramakrishna is working through me. So long as you [Swami Ramakrishnananda] believe in this there is no danger of any evil for you."<sup>72</sup> "I have work to do! I am a slave of Ramakrishna, who left his work to be done by me, and will



not give me rest till I have finished it! And, oh, how should I speak of him! Oh, his love for me!"<sup>73</sup> "Now, all the ideas that I preach are only an attempt to echo his ideas.... But every word that I have ever uttered which is true and good is simply an attempt to echo his voice." In a letter written in July 1894 Vivekananda wrote to Mrs. G. W. Hale, "Most probably I will go to England very soon. But between you and me, I am a sort of mystic and cannot move without orders, and that has not come yet."<sup>74</sup> He left for Europe in August of 1895.

In time Paul became the leader of the group. At Antioch Paul opposed Peter (Cephas) and other Christian leaders explaining that it is not necessary for a Gentile Christian to be circumcised or to adhere to Jewish customs, such as the special ritual and dietary teachings of the Law of Moses (Gal. 2:11-14; 6:15). The Law should serve as a moral guide. When Vivekananda set up the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897, he was challenged by Swamis Yogananda and Adbhutananda. They felt he was straying away from the teachings of Ramakrishna in creating an Order that promoted public preaching, social service, organization, and patriotism. Vivekananda's rebuttal was so profound and convincing that they accepted his ideas, as Peter and the rest agreed to Paul's approach.<sup>75</sup>

Paul endured many hardships including hunger, thirst, and verbal assaults. Vivekananda also encountered hunger during his earlier wanderings and during his ministry he had to face critics who at times made up lies about him.

Paul mentioned over ten women as playing an important role in early Christianity including Phoebe a deaconess. They "risked their necks for my life." Women had authority teaching in the early church and living, working, and traveling with the Apostle Paul (Rom. 16:1-16). Similarly for Vivekananda in the West he wrote in an 1894 letter, "American women! A hundred lives would not be sufficient to pay my deep debt of gratitude to you! I have not words enough to express my gratitude to you.... Last year I came to this country in summer, a

wandering preacher of a far distant country, without name, fame, wealth, or learning to recommend me--friendless, helpless, almost in a state of destitution--and American women befriended me, gave me shelter and food, took me to their homes and treated me as their own son, their own brother." He gave women the opportunity to utilize their talents to support the Vedanta movement.<sup>76</sup>

After their passing the teachings of Paul and Vivekananda were institutionalized by the religious orders they created, meaning they have been preserved and supported by a long-lasting organization. Most important, they both wrote relatively tersely, allowing future devotees to lecture on and expand upon the basic ideas they had set down. In this way, their teachings are open-ended, allowing their followers the opportunity to actively build up a creative body of literature.

Thirteen of the twenty-seven books in the *New Testament* are attributed to Paul. Seven of his letters that are considered to be his most important writings, are undisputed by scholars as being authentic: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon (totaling 56 Biblical pages). Two additional letters Ephesians and Colossians (9 pages) that bear a close literary relationship were probably edited. The five remaining letters 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, and Titus (11 pages) are considered to be pseudepigraphical works (though based partly on Paul's original letters) by most critical scholars.<sup>77</sup> Vivekananda's letters are of importance but less so than his lectures and other writings.

There are some significant differences Paul and Vivekananda. Paul was born outside of Palestine and he never met Jesus while he was living on earth. In his teachings Paul centered his theology on salvation coming from the acceptance of Jesus Christ as your savior, the Messiah and Son of God who was crucified for the sins of humanity. Vivekananda placed more emphasis on Vedantic principles than on personalities and certainly was more inclined to Nondualism. Vivekananda writings are far more extensive than Paul's 13 letters, which total 76 pages in *the*

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- <sup>6</sup> Cornelia Conger on cassette; WARHD, pp. 501-02; Hohner, pp. 6-8.
- <sup>7</sup> WWSV, pp. 15-27; PB (March 1985), p. 139; Hohner, pp. 5, 9-10, 17, 21-24, 34, 37-38, 68, 84, 93-94, 108.
- <sup>8</sup> *Reminiscences*, pp. 148-50, 197; PB (Mar. 1978); Hohner, p. 88.
- <sup>9</sup> Basu, pp. 597-99; *Brahmavadin* (Feb. 1903); *Reminiscences*, p. 120; PB (Jan. 1906); Hohner, pp. 47-52.
- <sup>10</sup> Malvina Hoffman, *Heads and Tales* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing Co., 1943), p. 306; Burke, III, p. 184.
- <sup>11</sup> Burke, IV, p. 177; *Reminiscences*, p. 294; VK (Feb. 1937); Hohner, pp. 53-56, 67-68.
- <sup>12</sup> Introduction to Swami Vivekananda, *The Vedanta Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1896). Inspired by Vivekananda's lecture on "The Vedanta Philosophy," Everett wrote the article, "The Psychology of the Vedanta and the Sankhya Philosophies" in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1899), pp. 310-16.
- <sup>13</sup> H. R. Haweis, *Travel and Talk* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1896), I, pp. 198-200; Burke, III, pp. 257, 270-71; Horner, pp. 6, 56-58, 70, 72, 80.
- <sup>14</sup> Burke, III, pp. 335-38, 520.
- <sup>15</sup> Br. Gurudas. "Swami Vivekananda's Mission to the West," PB (Mar. 1918), pp. 84-85; Swami Atulananda, "What Did Swami Vivekananda Teach in America?" PB (Feb. 1945), p. 45
- <sup>16</sup> PB (Feb. 2007), pp. 175, 177.
- <sup>17</sup> Life, II, p. 508.
- <sup>18</sup> Swami Abhedananda, *Swami Vivekananda and His Work* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1924, 1982), pp. 23-24.
- <sup>19</sup> PB (April 1977), pp. 191, 195; (Jan. 1911), p. 20; Burke, VI, p. 394; Hohner, pp. 115-18.
- <sup>20</sup> CW, V:376.
- <sup>21</sup> *Life*, I, p. 429.
- <sup>22</sup> Lucy Monroe, "Chicago Letters," *The Critic* (Oct. 7, 1893), pp. 232-33, 612; (Nov. 11, 1893), pp. 309-10; CW, III:477.
- <sup>23</sup> *Reminiscences*, p. 117; PB (Jan. 1906).

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- <sup>24</sup> Life, II, pp. 24-25.
- <sup>25</sup> Life, II, pp. 10-11; PB (Sept. 1907), p. 167.
- <sup>26</sup> PB (Feb-March 1911), p. 58.
- <sup>27</sup> Reminiscences, 122-24; PB (Apr-May, 1932).
- <sup>28</sup> *Vedanta Monthly Bulletin* (Feb. 1907), p. 224.
- <sup>29</sup> Sister Nivedita. Web: [www.balagokulam.org/teach/biographies/sister.php](http://www.balagokulam.org/teach/biographies/sister.php)
- <sup>30</sup> Swami Atulananda, *With the Swamis in America and India*, ed. Pravrajika Brahma-prana (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1988), pp. 59-60.
- <sup>31</sup> Life, II, pp. 516-17.
- <sup>32</sup> Reminiscences, p. 378; PB (Aug. 1938); Basu, pp. 224, 232-35, 572.
- <sup>33</sup> Ida Ansell, "On Recording Vivekananda's Lectures," *PB* (April 1955), pp. 153-54.
- <sup>34</sup> *Vedanta for East and West* (Nov-Dec. 1978), pp. 27-32.
- <sup>35</sup> CW, III:484-85.
- <sup>36</sup> Burke, II, pp. 252-54.
- <sup>37</sup> For a detailed study of Western tributes to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, see WARHD, pp. 41-199, 542-657.
- <sup>38</sup> *Complete Works of Swami Abhedananda*, V, p. 593.
- <sup>39</sup> Web: <http://www.vedantawritings.com/HVS2.pdf>
- <sup>40</sup> Swami Jyotirmayananda, *Vivekananda His Gospel of Man-making* (Chennai: Jyotirmayananda, 2000), p. 184.
- <sup>41</sup> Saradananda, III:8.11, p. 524.
- <sup>42</sup> Burke, IV, pp. 43-44.
- <sup>43</sup> *Vedanta and the West* (Jan-Feb. 1955), pp. 7-8. When Swami Vivekananda came to San Francisco, twenty-two year old Ida Ansell (1877-1955) attended many of his public lectures. At that time she transcribed many of Vivekananda's lectures with no thought they would ever be published. She received the Sanskrit name Ujjvala from Swami Turiyananda. Many years later Swami Prabhavananda insisted that she become a permanent resident at the Vedanta Society in Hollywood. She was encouraged by both Swami Ashokananda and Swami Prabhavananda to publish her shorthand lecture notes of Vivekananda's lectures. As a result Ujjvala contributed about 220 pages of Vivekananda lectures delivered in Northern California to the *Complete Works*. Four of her transcriptions were in the *Voice of India* (1946), and the remaining sixteen appeared in *Vedanta and the West* (1955-59). She made no alterations or additions to her shorthand transcriptions. Omissions in the text due to missing phrases are indicated in the *Complete Works* by three dots. Words added for the purpose of clarifications are placed in square brackets (WARHD, pp. 274-76; cf. Web: [www.vedantawritings.com/HVS6.pdf](http://www.vedantawritings.com/HVS6.pdf)).
- <sup>44</sup> Saradananda, V:5.2, pp. 777-78.
- <sup>45</sup> PB (Feb-Mar. 1911), pp. 48-49.
- <sup>46</sup> BRMIC (March 1963), p. 102.
- <sup>47</sup> Web: [rkmissionashrama.wordpress.com/swami-vivekananda-in-belgaum](http://rkmissionashrama.wordpress.com/swami-vivekananda-in-belgaum)
- <sup>48</sup> Burke, IV, pp. 554-56; Henry James, ed., *The Letters of William James* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), II, p. 144.

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<sup>49</sup> CW, V:106.

<sup>50</sup> Life, II, p. 124.

<sup>51</sup> Br. Gurudas, "Swami Vivekananda's Mission to the West," PB (Mar-Apr. 1918), p. 67.

<sup>52</sup> James Fell, "Swami Vivekananda and the Scientific Ideal," VK (Aug. 1963), pp. 221-22.

<sup>53</sup> CW, VII:167, 170.

<sup>54</sup> CW, VIII:302.

<sup>55</sup> WARHD, p. 47.

<sup>56</sup> Keith Ward, *Religion and Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 30-35.

<sup>57</sup> Web: [www.goodreads.com/quotes/470750](http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/470750)

<sup>58</sup> Much of this material on Paul came from Web:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle)

<sup>59</sup> CW, VI:365-66; VIII:475.

<sup>60</sup> CW, VII:65.

<sup>61</sup> Life, I, p. 78.

<sup>62</sup> Web: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle)

<sup>63</sup> CW, VII:24.

<sup>64</sup> Mahendranath Datta, *Londone Swami Vivekananda*, tr. Swami Yogeshananda at Web: [www.vedanta-atlanta.org/online-books/SVLondon/index.html](http://www.vedanta-atlanta.org/online-books/SVLondon/index.html); Asim Chaudhuri, "A Comparative Study of Swami Vivekananda and St Paul," PB (April 2014), p. 270.

<sup>65</sup> Chaudhuri (2014), p. 271.

<sup>66</sup> *Complete Works of Swami Abhedananda*, V, p. 593.

<sup>67</sup> Web; [kristindoeestheory.umwblogs.org/understanding-w-e-b-du-bois-concept-of-double-consciousness](http://kristindoeestheory.umwblogs.org/understanding-w-e-b-du-bois-concept-of-double-consciousness); [www.soclabo.org/index.php/laboratorium/article/view/4/65199](http://www.soclabo.org/index.php/laboratorium/article/view/4/65199); Theodorson, p. 243.

<sup>68</sup> CW, V:95, VIII: 395.

<sup>69</sup> CW, VI:335.

<sup>70</sup> Web: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle)

<sup>71</sup> Life, I, p. 182.

<sup>72</sup> CW, VI:330.

<sup>73</sup> Life, II, p. 253.

<sup>74</sup> CW, VIII:79; IX:26; Chaudhuri (2014), p. 272.

<sup>75</sup> Life, II, pp. 249-55.

<sup>76</sup> CW, VI:248.

<sup>77</sup> Web: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authorship\\_of\\_the\\_Pauline\\_epistles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authorship_of_the_Pauline_epistles)