

Thoughts on Salvation

Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise (Isa. 60:18).

How long has “salvation” been in our personal vocabularies? How has its meaning changed both personally and historically? Often it seems that “salvation” is just a word tacked on to homiletic and spiritual discourse without any precise meaning, but rather to give the discourse a setting of importance within the spiritual matters being presented. “Salvation” conjures up notions of the personal goal in life. At least in the past, salvation was a reward for a righteous life to be received in the afterlife.

Or in a much broader sense, is **salvation** the gift given to mankind because of Jesus’ suffering and death that squared the books with God the Father for all of humanity’s sinfulness? It was proposed that without this gift humanity would be in a state of debt that impossible to rectify. The many “substitutionary atonement theories”—which have dominated the last 800 years of Christianity—suggest that God demanded Jesus to be a blood sacrifice to “atone” for our sin-drenched humanity. The terrible and un-critiqued premise is that God could need payment, and even a very violent transaction, to be able to love and accept God’s own children! These theories are based on *retributive* justice rather than the *restorative* justice that the prophets and Jesus taught.

Salvation as At-One-Ment

Deepening Connection

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If we would imitate Jesus in very practical ways, the Christian religion would be made-to-order to grease the wheels of human consciousness toward love, nonviolence, justice, inclusivity, and care for creation. Mature religion serves as a conveyor belt for the evolution of human consciousness. Immature religion actually stalls people at very early stages of magical, mythic, and tribal consciousness, while they are convinced they are enlightened or “saved.” Then we are more a part of the problem than offering any kind of solution. Only the nondual and mystical mind gets us all the way through, and that happens only by continual enlargement of the True Self and continual loss of the small ego self.

Unfortunately, Christianity became another moralistic religion. It was overwhelmingly aligned with a very limited period of history (empire building through war) and a small piece of the planet (Europe), not the whole earth or any glorious destiny (Romans 8:18) for us all. Not surprisingly, many Christians ended up tragically fighting evolution—along with most early human and civil rights struggles—because we had not been taught any evolutionary notion of Christ who was forever “groaning in one great act of giving birth” (Romans 8:22). Until the reforms of the 1960s and the Second Vatican Council, Roman Catholicism was overwhelmingly tribal. Protestantism wasted too much time reacting against that tribalism—which made it tribal too. We become another version of anything we dislike or react against too strongly.

Authentic mystical experience connects us and keeps connecting us at ever-newer levels, breadths, and depths, “until God is all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28). “The world, life and death, the present and the future are all your servants, for you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God” (1 Corinthians 3:22-23). Full **salvation** is finally universal belonging and universal connecting. Our word for that is “heaven.”

God is forever evolving human consciousness, making us ever more-ready for God. The Jewish prophets, Jesus himself (Mark 2:19-20), and many Hindu, Catholic, and Sufi mystics used words like wedding, espousal, marriage, or bride and groom to describe this phenomenon. That’s what the prophet Isaiah (61:10, 62:5), many of the Psalms, the school of Paul (Ephesians 5:25-32), and the Book of Revelation (19:7-8, 21:2) mean by “preparing a bride to be ready for her husband.” The human soul is being gradually readied so that intimacy and partnership with the Divine are the final result. Note that such salvation **is a social and cosmic concept**, and not just about isolated individuals “going to heaven.” The Church was meant to bring this corporate **salvation** to conscious and visible possibility, but it was itself too tribal to accomplish much in this regard. It was not *catholic* (universal or “according to the whole”), a word we began using to describe ourselves as early as the year 108 AD. In some ways we’ve gone backwards.

[References:

Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Eager to Love: The Alternative Way of Francis of Assisi*, pp. 218, 222-223, 226;

Hell, No! (Center for Action and Contemplation: 2014), CD, MP3 download; and *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality* (Franciscan Media: 2008), 212.

Ken Wilber is frequently referenced in Rohr’s works. Wilber is a fertile source of ideas related to the evolving of human consciousness.

Do you see three notions of salvation in these pages? Have you been taught other related notions in childhood or adulthood?

Other links:

<https://cac.org/universal-salvation-2017-04-07>

<http://wmpaulyoung.com/the-performance-principle>

<https://cac.org/full-circle-salvation-2017-03-27/>