

REVIEW ARTICLE

Finding Peace Through Christian Theology: Exploring Detachment, Divine Grace, and Liberation with Vedantic Reflections of Swami Vivekananda

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Abstract

This article explores the concept of peace within Christian theology, focusing on the teachings of the Gospels and *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. It examines theological themes such as *shalom* (divine peace), *gratia* (grace), and *metanoia* (transformative repentance) as pathways to inner tranquility and detachment from worldly concerns. The study also engages in a comparative analysis with Vedantic philosophy, drawing from the works of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ranganathananda to highlight shared insights into spiritual liberation and universal truth. Through this dialogue between traditions, the article offers practical guidance for finding peace amidst modern existential challenges.

Keywords: Christian Theology, Shalom, Gratia, Metanoia, Vedanta, Swami Vivekananda, Thomas à Kempis, Detachment, Liberation, Inner Peace.

1. Introduction

In a world fraught with turmoil and ceaseless striving, the quest for peace remains one of humanity's deepest aspirations. Christian theology, rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ and elaborated through the meditative reflections of Thomas à Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ*, provides a profound blueprint for achieving inner tranquility. At the heart of these teachings lies the promise of *shalom*—a theological term encompassing wholeness, harmony, and divine grace.

This article explores how Christian theology approaches the idea of peace through spiritual detachment and communion with God. Simultaneously, it engages in a comparative analysis of the Vedantic philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and the modern insights of Swami Ranganathananda, offering a broader, cross-cultural perspective on finding peace in a restless world. We uncover a holistic pathway to achieving spiritual serenity amidst life's inevitable chaos by weaving these traditions together.

2. Peace in the Gospels: A Foundation of Christian Theology

The New Testament repeatedly emphasizes peace as central to the Christian life, urging believers to embrace divine grace (*gratia*) and relinquish worldly attachments. In John 14:27, Jesus proclaims, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." This verse captures the essence of Christian peace—not as an external absence of conflict but as an inner harmony derived from trust in God's providence.

Similarly, Matthew 5:9 celebrates the peacemakers, those who actively seek reconciliation and harmony, declaring, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." This teaching underscores the *metanoia*, or transformative change of heart, necessary for true peace. Through surrender to God's will and the renunciation of selfish desires, individuals can experience the tranquility promised by Christ.

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3. Thomas a Kempis and the Practice of Detachment

In *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis offers practical guidance for those seeking to align their lives with Christian ideals of peace. Kempis emphasizes the importance of humility and detachment, asserting that “a pure, simple, and stable heart is not entangled by a multitude of affairs, for it does all for the honor of God.” Here, Kempis highlights the value of focusing on the eternal rather than being consumed by the ephemeral.

This theme resonates with Swami Vivekananda’s assertion that attachment to the transient is the root of all suffering. In his *Complete Works*, Vivekananda states, “Anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison.” Both Kempis and Vivekananda advocate a spiritual practice rooted in self-surrender, suggesting that only by turning inward and seeking the divine can one find lasting peace.

4. Vedantic Parallels: Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ranganathananda

Swami Vivekananda’s philosophy, while deeply rooted in Vedanta, offers universal insights into the nature of peace and detachment. He often referenced the concept of *mukti*, or liberation, as the ultimate goal of human life—a state that parallels the Christian idea of reconciliation with God. In his lecture, *The Secret of Work*, Vivekananda remarked, “Freedom is never to be reached by the weak. Throw away all weakness. Tell your body that it is strong, tell your mind that it is strong, and have unbounded faith and hope in yourself.”

Swami Ranganathananda, another luminary of the Ramakrishna Mission, built on these ideas in his work *The Message of the Upanishads*. He noted that detachment is not about abandoning the world but about engaging with it selflessly, much like the Christian concept of finding peace through *gratia*. Ranganathananda wrote, “The detached mind is like a lotus leaf, untainted by the water in which it resides. Such a mind is the seat of true peace.”

5. Modern Relevance: Integrating Theological and Philosophical Insights

In a world increasingly characterized by anxiety and materialism, the teachings of Christian theology and Vedantic philosophy offer timeless solutions. The Gospel’s call to relinquish worry and trust in divine

providence speaks directly to the challenges of modern life. Similarly, Kempis’ emphasis on humility and Vivekananda’s focus on self-strength resonate with individuals seeking meaning beyond superficial accomplishments.

Practical applications of these teachings include regular meditation on sacred texts, the cultivation of gratitude, and acts of service that transcend self-interest. By integrating these practices, individuals can navigate life’s uncertainties with grace and equanimity.

6. Conclusion

Both Christian theology and Vedantic philosophy illuminate a shared path to peace: one that demands detachment, self-reflection, and a steadfast focus on the eternal. Christian teachings, rooted in the promise of *shalom* and the call to divine grace (*gratia*), offer a profound vision of reconciliation with God and liberation from worldly anxieties. The Gospel’s exhortation to trust in divine providence aligns closely with the Vedantic ideal of surrendering to the higher self (*atman*) and transcending the illusory nature of existence (*maya*).

Thomas à Kempis, with his practical wisdom on humility and surrender, reminds seekers that peace is not a fleeting emotion but a state of being rooted in God’s eternal presence. Similarly, Swami Vivekananda’s call to strengthen the mind and embrace fearlessness reinforces the importance of self-discipline and unwavering faith in the journey toward liberation. Swami Ranganathananda adds another layer to this understanding, emphasizing that detachment is not escapism but a way to fully engage with the world without being bound by its transient nature.

In our modern context, where individuals often grapple with anxiety, materialism, and a sense of purposelessness, these timeless teachings hold immense relevance. Peace, as both traditions suggest, is not the absence of challenges but the presence of a higher truth that transcends them. By integrating the teachings of Christ with the insights of Vedantic thinkers, we are reminded that the ultimate source of peace is not found in external circumstances but in the quiet realization of our divine essence.

The harmony between these traditions demonstrates the universality of spiritual truths and offers a guiding light for individuals seeking refuge from the chaos of modern life. In embracing these teachings, we rediscover that true peace arises not from possession

but from detachment, not from striving but from surrender, and not from the self alone but through communion with the divine.

7. References

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