The NT is essentially a salvation-centred sacred book. In fact, according to the official teaching of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, the infallibility or inerrancy of the Bible has to be considered in so far as it has a bearing on man's salvation, in so far as it has salvific relevance. This shows from the Christian point of view that the value of the Bible as a whole, and also of the NT, primarily depends on its quality of being an infallible guide for man's salvation. Hence, it is easy to see how salvation is the pivotal theme of the NT.

A: SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

1. The Problem of the Study of the Concept 'Way of Salvation'

Two chapters have been devoted to the treatment of the themes of salvation and the ways of salvation according to the BG. But these questions will be dealt with here in one chapter. Or rather, the only concern of this chapter will be the question of salvation itself apart from a few, casual remarks on the way of salvation, in the introduction itself. Indeed, from the Christian point of view, to deal with the way of salvation in the NT independently of the person of Christ would be even more incomplete and onesided that the description of the nature of marital life solely referring to one of partners. In this part, the concepts that are such that they can
give some insights into the nature of the theanthropoi Krishna and Christ; but the way of salvation according to the NT presupposes certain definite notions of and certain definite attitudes towards the person of Christ. This point has to be briefly dealt with here before the plan for the main topic of this chapter is proposed.

In the NT Christ says, "I am the Way" (Jn 14:6). Using another metaphor Christ communicated the same idea elsewhere as follows:

"I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe; he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture." (Jn 10:9). In the following verse of this chapter of John Christ says that "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full." Hence, according to Jesus to have the fullness of life, that is, salvation, one has to enter through him who is the gate. St. Paul conveys this idea calling Christ as the one and only mediator between man and God. "For there is only one God and there is only one mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:6). The concepts of way, gate and mediator, express the idea that the reality what Christ is, is that through whom or by means of whom man has to find salvation.

But the chief purpose of this part of our thesis is to consider only those concepts which would help us to understand the natures of Krishna and Christ.

Then what about the treatment of the ways of salvation according to the BG? In fact all the three ways are intimately connected with the person of Lord Krishna. A fairly satisfactory answer can be attempted only in the third part after the consideration of the nature of avatāra in the BG. Provisionally it can be said that in the BG Lord Krishna
does not stand as a mediator between God and man, but rather he presents himself as God himself. Besides, in the Hindu tradition the three mārgas are not bound up exclusively with Kṛṣṇa-cult nor even with Vaisnavism. Hence, taking Lord Kṛṣṇa as the UR, we could deal with the three mārgas, though the mārgas taken together imply a qualified brahman and the particular description of these mārgas could give us some insight into the nature of the āvatārin. All the same, it must be stated that once the nature of the āvatārin is fully explained the treatment of the mārgas will get a deeper meaning.

From the Christian point of view, even the treatment of salvation independently of Christ is onesided. For, according to the NT, salvation essentially depends on God's work through Christ. Christ is essentially a savior. But here we consider salvation in terms of the *summa bonum* of man, in terms of the situation of man's final destiny. And the *summa bonum* of man can be considered as a theocentric reality, understanding God as Trinitarian which includes Christ also. In a sense, one can prescind from the incarnate nature of Christ in a theocentric approach to the ultimate destiny of man. But, even, here, there is a hitch. For, in the NT, in the ultimate destiny of man, Christ as a man has a very important place, as shall be pointed out later. Since however, the advantage of the treatment of salvation prior to that of the incarnation overrides the disadvantages, this study can be justified.

2. The Concept 'Salvation'

The term used in the Greek original of the NT for salvation is *soteria*, coming from the verb *sozein* (= to save). In the Greek OT,
the Hebrew גא is translated as σωζειν some 260 times. Other Hebrew roots with similar meanings like פת (= to allow to escape, to deliver) מַס (= to rescue and יִה (= to live, to let live) too are mostly translated as σωζειν. These remarks are made here about the connection between the Hebrew and Greek roots to express the reality signified by the concept 'salvation', because the NT takes over much of the content of the OT concept of salvation.

After examining the various terms used to convey the idea of salvation with its different shades of meaning Boer writes: 'The New Testament takes over in all essentials this wide range of meaning connected with the concept of salvation as this had been developed in the Old Testament.' Concerning the progressive evolution of this concept in the OT adding new shades of meaning until it is taken up in the NT, Lyonnet says:

It is of special interest to note the progress in the notion itself of salvation which from day to day became more spiritual, as did the notions of life and death. In the beginning, it was mainly a question of liberation or of preservation from merely temporal dangers: e.g., Jgs 15:16; 1 Sam 10:10; 11:9; 2 Sam 22:3 (the canticle of David). Then, the emphasis was placed upon the salvation of the chosen people: e.g., in the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 1:13; 15:2) or in the Babylonian captivity (Is 45:17; 46:15; 52:10). A greater emphasis was placed upon the salvation of the people from spiritual dangers, that is to say, from sin: Is 33:22 ff: 'He will save us.... they will be forgiven their iniquity.' Ezek 36:25 f: 'You shall be my people, and I will be your God; and I will save you from all your impurities.' ...And the expression became thus a technical term to designate Messianic salvation which was considered less as a mere preservation from temporal evils, than as something quite positive, namely, a
summary of all blessings, as appears quite clearly from the passages of Isaiah... (Is 45:17 and 49:6).

The above remarks show how the concept 'salvation' evolves from meanings which are materialistic and this-worldly to more and more spiritual until it gets the meaning of Messianic salvation. The NT concept of salvation shares much of the spiritual meanings, especially of the meaning salvation. As will be pointed out later on, Jesus appears on the scene of Palestine as the Messiah longed for by the Jews bringing salvation to them.

3. A Few Remarks on our Procedure

In this chapter first the question of the time-element of salvation will be dealt with. For there are quite a number of passages that seem to say that salvation has already come to the followers of Christ, and there are also passages which seem to say that salvation is a future reality. Then we shall consider the three aspects of salvation, namely, the individual, social and the cosmic. And these considerations will be strictly from the NT standpoint accepted by the Christians as a whole. In the fifth section certain philosophical reflection will be made to understand the various aspects and shades of the meanings of the NT concept of salvation.

B: THE TIME-ELEMENT IN THE QUESTION OF SALVATION

Salvation or liberation is usually understood in terms of man's final destiny. However, there are passages in the NT some of which seem to affirm that the salvation is a present reality while others seem to view it in terms of the future. A synthetic understanding of
this apparently contradictory position is of great importance for an insight into the NT concept of salvation. The Dh concepts of kramamukti and jivanmukti can shed some light on this problem, as shall be pointed out later on. For a clear solution to this problem we have to wait for the study of the nature of Christ-incarnate.

1. Salvation as a Present Reality

Reaching the house of the rich official Zacchaeus, hated by the Jews for his service of the Roman oppressive regime, Jesus said: "To-day salvation has come to this house" (Lk 19:9). What did Jesus mean by it? Was Zacchaeus liberated from all his bondages by the presence of Christ and by his decision to change his way of life? Jesus tells the repentant prostitute Mary Magdalen: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Lk 7:50). What is the nature of salvation she achieved? At the moment of Christ's death the Jews derisively said reminding him of his claiming to have saved others: "He saved others ... he cannot save himself" (Lk 15:31). In what sense did Christ make this claim?

In Pauline Epistles there are a number of texts where the followers of Christ are said to have already achieved salvation. Paul says: "Well, now is the favourable time; this is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2). Of course here Paul seems to mean by the day of salvation, the time given to prepare oneself for attaining eschatological salvation. But in the following statement Paul cannot be so easily explained: "But God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ - it is through grace that you have been saved - and raised us up with..."
him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus." (Eph 2:4-6). Paul seems to tell the Ephesian followers of Christ that they were already saved and have been risen with Christ and were given a 'place' in heaven. More or less the same idea is found in the following passages too: Rom 6:5 ff; Col 2:12; 3:1. Without going for an exhaustive survey of passages of this sort we can already say in the light of the few samples given above that the NT does hold that salvation is a present reality.

2. Salvation as a Future Reality

In the context of his eschatological speech Christ says: "You will be hated by all men on account of my name; but the man who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Mk 13:13; cf Mt 10:12; 24:13). Jesus said to the disciples that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven". The disciples ask: "Who can be saved, then?" (Cf Mt 19:23-28; Mk 10: 23-27). In this text salvation is considered as an entrance into the kingdom of heaven, understood in terms of another worldly reality having the Jewish mythical background of the heavenly joys.

In Paul there are a number of references to salvation as a future reality. He says that the followers of Christ are "saved only in hope" (Rom 8:24) expressing the futurity of salvation. In 1 Cor 5:5 St. Paul considers salvation as belonging to the "Day of the Lord" meaning thereby the final judgement day at the end of the world. Giving a number of references to the Pauline writings Lyonnet says:

According to St. Paul, indeed, the notion of salvation seems to designate an essentially eschatological reality, that is to say,
eschatological blessings which include the resurrection of the bodies. This is quite evident from the passages in which Paul distinguishes between salvation and justification or reconciliation: Rom 5:9 ('justified ... we shall be saved'); 5:10 ('reconciled ... we shall be saved'). Rom 1:16, therefore announces the two parts of the Epistle: 'The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation'; for it brings about not only 'justification' or 'reconciliation'(chapters 1 to 4), but also 'salvation' (chapters 5 to 11). In the same sense it occurs elsewhere: e.g., 1 Cor 3:15; 5:5, and so forth, and perhaps also in Tit 2:13: 'Looking for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ' (see Phil 3:20).\(^5\)

According to St. Peter one has to grow gradually into salvation (1 Pet 2:2). Elsewhere he says: 'Through your faith, God’s power will guard you until salvation which has been prepared is revealed at the end of time' (1 Pet 1:5). In Hebrew 6:9 salvation is considered as an end of the ‘way’ affair in the sense of its eschatological happening.

The texts cited above show us that salvation in the NT is described both as a present reality and as something to be realized in the future. Once the different aspects of salvation is explained in the following section of this chapter, this antinomy can be better understood. Our study in this chapter is chiefly concerned with the final salvation as the ultimate destiny of man.

A comprehensive view of ultimate or eschatological salvation implies its personal, social and cosmological dimensions. True, the NT affirms that soon after death (without describing how) one attains one's salvation or damnation. But, salvation as a social phenomenon is much more strongly emphasized than as something personal. The
crucial concept, however, of the NT teachings of ES is that of the resurrection. Man in his totality, man whose 'life' (nefosh) expressed through the transformed body enjoys the bliss of ES. A doctrine intimately connected with the resurrection of the 'body' is that of the transformation of the world, a necessary ambiance of the transformed risen body.

C: THE PERSONAL DIMENSION OF SALVATION

It is a defined dogma of the Church to which majority of the Christians submit, that soon after the death the destiny of man is settled once and for all in terms of eternal salvation or of a state towards eternal salvation or of eternal damnation. The official dogma solemnly defined by Benedict XII, in 1336 A.D reads as follows:

... all these souls, immediately (mox) after death and, in the case of those in need of purification, after the purification mentioned above, since the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ into heaven, already before they take up their bodies again and before the general judgement, have been, are and will be with Christ in heaven, in the heavenly kingdom and paradise, joined in the company of the holy angels. Since the passion and death of the Lord Jesus Christ, these souls have seen and see the divine essence with an intuitive vision and even face to face, without mediation of any creature by way of object of vision; rather the essence immediately manifests itself to them, plainly, clearly and openly, and in this vision they enjoy the divine essence.

This document was officially defined and promulgated as a corrective to the teaching of Pope John XXII, in the capacity as a private theologian, and an answer to the raging controversies with regard to this question. The term used by the Christian thinkers and the ordinary
Christians to express the situation of salvation is heaven. We shall consider the state of the saved as being in paradise, as being in an eternal home, as being with Christ, as having beatific vision of all which expressions depend directly or indirectly on the NT.

1. As Paradise

The promise of Jesus to the good thief was that he would be with Jesus on that day "in paradise" (Lk 23:43). What did Christ mean by it? The Greek paradisios is the translation of the Hebrew gan which means garden. There are allusions in the OT that salvation is a return to a 'heavenly' garden of Eden, a sort of restored state of the earthly garden of Eden from which Adam and Eve were expelled due to their rebellion against God (Is 11:6-9; 51:3; Ezek 36:35). According to the Apocryphal writings in Judaism, this belief was widespread among the Jews. In Apocalypse 2:7 this state of salvation is described in spatial terms with the mention of a "tree of life". This could also be considered as an allusion to the garden of Eden or earthly paradise. Paul describes using the third person his vision of heaven using the term 'paradise'. He says: "I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, was caught up - whether still in the body or out of the body, I do not know; God knows - right into the third heaven. I do not know, however, that this same person ... was caught up in paradise and heard things which must not and cannot be put into human language."

(2 Cor 12:2-5). Certainly, for the Jews and for the Jewish followers of Christ paradise was a symbolically expressive metaphor to convey the idea of the state of the saved.

2. As a Permanent Home

In 2 Cor 5:1-10 Paul calls the human body a tent which has to be
abandoned to reach the "everlasting home not made of human hands, in the heavens". This statement brings before his Jewish readers the nomadic Jews travelling towards their home abandoning their temporary tents, and thus indirectly conveys the idea that human-life on earth is a journey towards man's eternal home in heaven. About this metaphorical use of the human body J3C comments: "Profane authors also used the figure of the tent to show the mortal condition of human bodies. Paul did not share the view of some of these authors or other Greek philosophers that the body was a prison of the soul." St. Paul writes to the Philippians: "For us our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the savior we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ"(Phil 3:20). St. Peter would say referring to ES that as long as "we are living away from home" we should live a life of holiness (1 Pet 1:17; cf Heb 11:15-16). In these texts ES is metaphorically expressed as a home at the end of his earthly 'journey', a home where he can find peace, love and joy permanently.

3. As Being with Christ

Since the incarnate nature of Christ has not been dealt with, here only a brief, non-interpretative study is intended referring to a few NT passages. Our references will be from the Pauline epistles as it is he who stresses emphatically this aspect of the ES. Paul says: "I am caught up in this dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much the better, but for me to stay alive in this body is more urgent need for your sake"(Phil 1:23-24). He makes this statement after expressing his intense longing for being with Christ. In 1 Thes 4:7 he expresses the eschatological state as
a situation of "being with the Lord" (cf Rom 6:8). Persons who surrender themselves wholeheartedly to Christ in faith will become "joint-heirs of Christ" in heaven (Gal 4:7). Since it is expected of a true follower of Christ to "be shaped to the likeness of God's Son" (Rom 8:29), this "being with Christ" implies an intimate union the nature of which will be dealt with later on.

4. As Beatific Vision

'Beatific vision' is a popularly used expression to convey the idea of the Es, among the Christians from the mediaeval times. Though this term is not found in the NT it is very much dependent on it. St. Paul writes: "Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror, but then we shall be seeing face to face. The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known" (1 Cor 13:12). Here Paul seems to say that then, that is after death in the situation of salvation, he will know as he is known, obviously, by God. In other words, he will know, in the BG terminology, through a divine caikew. The following Johanne text seems to confirm this interpretation: "My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). For John too the reason for "seeing" God as "he is" is that "we shall be like him". The expression "we shall be like him" (omioma) reminds us of the concept of "similitude" (omioma) in the Genesis story of man's creation where it is said that man has been created in God's image (eikon) and in his likeness (omioma) (Gen 1:26). In the NT, as has been pointed out earlier, this idea
gets a deeper sense. When Jesus said that the "pure in heart shall see God" (Mt 5:8) it was more or less in this sense.

D: THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF SALVATION

Usually the Christians distinguish three main elements in the ES, viz. the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the "body" and the judgement of humanity by Christ at the end of time. The profession of faith formulated by the Ecumenical Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) teaches that Christ "shall come again to judge the living and the dead" and Constantinople I adds the doctrine of the "resurrection of the body and the life everlasting". Under the influence of Jewish apocalyptic literature these meta-historical 'events' are described in the NT very picturesquely giving sufficient clues to their symbolic meaning.

1. The Second Coming of Christ

In the Christian tradition the second coming of Christ is expressed usually by the term parousia, a Greek word used in this sense exclusively by St. Paul (1 Thes 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:25; 2 Thes 2:1,8; 1 Cor 15:23). Paul uses this term elsewhere (Phil 1:26; 2:12; 1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 10:10) in the sense of presence. Other terms through which Paul expresses the second coming of Christ are apocalypse (= revelation, 2 Thes 1:7; 1 Cor 1:7) and epiphania (= manifestation, 1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim 4:1,3; Tit 2:13). However, the doctrine on parousia does not exclusively depend on Pauline writings; in fact, it depends perhaps more on the Gospels.

Here we shall cite a part of a long passage on parousia from Mark's Gospel:
But in those days, after that time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory; then too he will send the angels to gather his chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of heaven (Mk 13:24-27).

Unless we interpret this passage according to the mentality and background of this author, it can look very absurd. For instance, one could ask the question as to how could the stars fall on earth which is only a tiny speck in comparison with some of the stars. But if one has gone through some of the Jewish apocalyptic literature one can understand the source of the imagery through which this metaphistorical event is described. The influence of Daniel 7 is obvious in the description of the coming of the Son of Man meaning thereby Christ himself:

I gazed into the visions of the night. And I saw, coming in the clouds of heaven, one like son of man. He came to the one of great age and was led into his presence. On him was conferred glory and kingship, and men of all peoples, nations and languages became his servants (7:13-14).

In this OT passage Daniel describes his vision of 'heaven' where in the presence of 'God' a kingly figure whom Daniel calls 'Son of Man', an expression which Christ used very often to express his identity as shall be indicated later on. St. Mark in the above passage mixes the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70 about which Christ has prophesied, and the persecutions of the followers of Christ.

Another picturesque about the second coming of Christ is found in one of the earliest of the NT writings, namely in Paul's first
letter to the Thessalonians:

We can tell you this from the Lord's own teachings .... At the trumpet of God, the voice of the archangel will call out the command and the Lord himself will come down from heaven; those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and those of us who are still alive will be taken up in the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. So we shall stay with the Lord for ever. (4:15-16).

This primitive cosmology, current in Paul's time, need not surprise us if only we realize that Paul's intention over here is not to teach us cosmology. In the OT theophanies the blowing of the trumpet plays an important role (Ex 19:13, 16, 19; Zep 1:16; Is 27:13 etc.), and Paul was well aware of these.

It is beyond the scope of our study to get into other eschatological texts like 2 Thes 1:5 ff; 1 Cor 7:29-31; 15:24-28. We overlook the controversy with regard to the texts which seem to say that nobody, not even Christ knows the time of his second coming (Mt 13:32; cf Mk 1:7) or those which seem to say of his imminent coming (Mt 10:23; 24:24; Mk 13:30). Paul too believed that the parousia would not be very late as it is evident especially in his first and second epistles to the Thessalonians and in the 1 Corinthians. This belief of Paul has given a special colouring to his teaching about man's involvement in the world, a doctrine which he modified later on.

2. The Resurrection of the Dead

One of the central elements of the Christian concept of salvation is the doctrine of man's resurrection with a transformed body. Already in the OT the Jews had gradually come to believe in it (Ez 37:1-4;
Is 26:19; Job 19:25-27; Dan 12:1-3; 2 Mac 7:9 ff.; 12:43-45), though not as explicitly as in the NT. It was the witnessing of the resurrection of Christ which gave firm faith to the disciples about Christ's teachings about man's resurrection, and they interpreted Christ's resurrection as a pledge to man's. Among the numerous passages in the NT which teach this doctrine it would suffice for our purpose to take into account one or two as samples.

The following remarks of A. Grabner-Haider from the strictly Christian point of view about the connection between Christ's and man's resurrection are enlightening:

For the world as a whole, Jesus' resurrection signifies a turning point, the beginning of something totally new that possesses ultimate validity. A new era has begun in which man is enabled to reach his full human potential. "New life" (Rom 6:10 ff.), as a reality and possibility, is now open to all men equally... Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of the general awakening from the dead, the onset of life's total victory. "Just as all mankind died in Adam, so in Christ all are given new life" (1 Cor 15:22). Christ is "the author of life" (Aa 3:15), the first-born from the dead (Col 1:18). All creation is taken up into the new life of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:20 ff.). Jesus died for all, representing us all; in his resurrection he conquers for all, representing us all.

Here Grabner-Haider expresses the Christian belief about Christ's resurrection and its causal connection with the resurrection of all men. The first passage we shall take for the understanding of the Christian doctrine of resurrection is one from St. John's Gospel. Here, Jesus teaches the doctrine of resurrection before giving life to Lazarus, dead for four days. Jesus speaks to grief stricken Martha,
Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you'. 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again'. Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day'. Jesus said: 'I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' (Jn 11:21-26).

One of the most popularly known passages about the resurrection of Christ and that of all men and about the connection between the two is found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. First of all he establishes the fact of Christ's resurrection enumerating the testimonies of quite a number of people, and then saying that in one vision of the risen Christ there were some five hundred people present of whom many were still even at that time to verify whether his affirmation is right or wrong. Then Paul speaks about the resurrection of all men:

Now if Christ raised from the dead is what has been preached, how can some of you be saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ himself cannot have been raised, and if Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless; indeed, we are shown up as witnesses who have committed perjury before God, because we swore in evidence before God that he had raised Christ to life. For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, you are still in your sins.... If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people (1 Cor 15:12-19).

The above passage cannot be explained intelligibly before the treatment of the question of the salvific relevance of Christ and his resurrection.
Provisionally this much can be said that according to Paul man's resurrection is not only just patterned according to that of Christ but there is an intimate ontological connection between the resurrection of Christ and that of other men. According to Paul, if man's solidarity with Adam and his sin produces death, man's salvific solidarity with Christ and his resurrection produces the fullness of life. Paul calls Christ the "first fruits" (15:20) in the Hebrew sense, namely in the sense that just as the first fruits represent the whole of the harvest so too Christ, by his resurrection represents all the risen people of all the times.

By citing only such a small portion of the chapter it is difficult to bring out the full meaning or the real force of Paul's argument. First he proves the fact of Christ's resurrection on the testimony of various witnesses who can be approached for verification at the time of his writing. Then he points out that if it were not true that Christ had not been risen, for evident reason he and the other disciples of Christ would be liars, and also would be fools since they were preaching this doctrine at the teeth of deadly opposition. "I face death every day brothers... If my motives were only human ones what good would it do to me to fight the wild animals at Ephesus?" (15:31-32). Then he tells his followers that they would be the most unfortunate people if it were not true that Christ had risen. For, "if our hope in Christ has been for this life only" then there would have been no need of following the "narrow path" of Christ which implies much self-sacrifice and suffering, indeed, the annihilation of the 'ego'.

Paul tries to explain the nature of the risen body through an
Someone may ask, 'How are dead people raised, and what sort of body do they have when they come back?.... Whatever you sow in the ground has to die before it is given new life and the thing that you sow is not what is going to come; you sow a bare grain, say of wheat or something like that, and then God gives it the sort of body that he has chosen: each sort of seed gets its own sort of body(15:35-38).

During Paul's time the Jews engaged in much speculation about the resurrection of the dead. The Corinthians were influenced by certain materialistic and hedonistic concepts of life after death without believing in a transformed, spiritualized body. "The Apostle shows that God wisely provides each being with a 'body' adapted to the conditions of its existence. He can provide glorified man with a body suited to his glorious state.... Nature itself shows that the death of a seed is not an obstacle, but the condition for its passage to a higher and richer life". 17

Paul also gives a vivid description of the risen body part of which could be cited here:

... the thing that is sown is perishable but what is raised is imperishable; the thing that is sown is contemptible but what is raised is glorious; the thing that is sown is weak but what is raised is powerful; when it is sown it embodies the soul, when it is raised it embodies the spirit(15:42-44).

Corruption according to Paul is due to the deprivation of divine life, but because of the sharing of the Spirit of Christ, the corruptible becomes incorruptible. And hence also it becomes spiritual(pneumatikon) in contrast to psychic(psykon). The glory(doxa) of God will shine
on the risen body also. And the risen body will share not only God's glory but also his power.

3. The General Judgement

The second coming of Christ is described in the NT as the coming of a judge of humanity. At the end of time all are supposed to be appearing before the judgement seat of Christ. The NT doctrine was very much influenced by the OT which in turn was influenced by the religions of the middle east and also of Egypt and Greece. Except in popular religion this concept does not seem to have any place in the religions of Indian origin.

Yahweh's judgement is one of the main themes of OT(cf for samples Is 3:13 ff; Am 5:18 ff; Ez 16:38; 34:17-22; Jr 25:30-38). Only two passages will be cited here for samples. Isaiah writes: "For see how Yahweh comes in fire, his chariots like the tempest, to assuage his anger with burning, his threts with flaming fire. For by fire will Yahweh execute judgment, and by his sword, against all mankind" (Is 66:15-16). Here the judgement is conceived as meant for all and the expressions are of apocaliptic nature. In Daniel God is described as an aged, powerful, terrifying judge in whose court the Book of Life is read: "A stream of fire poured out, issuing his presence. A thousand thousand waited on him, ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. A court was held and the books were opened"(Da 7:10). In the OT the day of judgement is often expressed by the phrase "Day of Yahweh".

Because of this OT emphasis on judgement, including the eschatological judgement, at the time of Jesus the Jews were talking about it
widely. XIII, thus brings out this idea: "At the time of Jesus the expectation of the judgement of God, understood in its eschatological sense, was well established, although the concrete representation of it was by no means uniform and coherent. The opening of the gospel shows John the Baptist appealing to it when he threatens his hearers with the wrath to come and exhorts them to receive his baptism as a sign of their penitence (Mt 3:7-12). To understand the images and styles utilized in the NT in describing the Last Judgement one has to be familiar with the OT images and styles, though Jesus does not accept many of the OT images on this subject. Augustine George rightly writes:

To depict the judgement, Jesus utilizes themes provided by the Old Testament and Judaic tradition: the resurrection, the coming of the Son of Man, the separation of the good from the wicked, the fire of Gehenna, and everlasting life in the kingdom of God. But he also passes over some of the traditional images: salvation localized on Zion (Is 54; 60; 2:1-5; Zc 14:16-21); Israel's political sovereignty over the other nations (Is 60:10-16; Dan 7:14; 27); the temporal prosperity of the salvation era (Os 2:23; Is 29:17; 32:15; 60:16-17; Agg 2:7-8). 20

Before we enter into the key text in Mt 25:31-40, which is popularly known among the Christians, and which is heavily laden with apocalyptic images of a few less known passages shall be referred to which would pave the way for the better understanding of this key text. In Mt 12: 41-42 Jesus says that "On judgement day the son of Niniveh will stand up with this generation and condemn it" and "On judgement day the Queen of the South will rise up with this generation and condemn it", pointing out the lack of faith of his Jewish contemporaries in contrast
to the faith of non-Jewish people like the people of Ninivah (cf. Jon 3) and the Queen of Sheba (1K 10:1 ff; 2Ch 9:1 ff). This judgement day referred to by Jesus is in terms of the eschatological one. According to Christ every one will be judged by the same standard according to which one judges others (Mt 7:1-5; Lk 6:37). In Mt 10:15; 12:36; Lk 11:22, 24 the "day of judgement" is mentioned.

St. John's concept of judgement is more in terms of the present than that of the future. The judgement is operated by the presence of Christ in the world (Jn 3:19; 9:39). Christ being the light of the world (Jn 1:9; 8:12; 12:46) by his very being, by his very presence the darkness in others will be made manifest. He who believes in Christ, that is, he who accepts the light of Christ or rather the light that is Christ for guidance, will walk on the path of salvation while those who choose darkness instead of light will be condemned (Jn 3:18 ff). The following remarks in JBC can further enlighten this peculiar Johannine concept of judgement:

The legal terminology (judge, judgement, witness, testimony, accuse, convict, advocates, etc.) serves to underscore the fundamental Johannine conception of Jesus' work as krisis (= judgement). The author appears to prefer to think of the judgement as passed on men by their own attitude to the Light already in this world. In John's eyes, no man can afford to remain indifferent to Jesus: Every man must declare himself for Jesus or against him.

In Paul too the notion of judgement occupies a prominent place. He uses the OT expression "the day of Yahweh" or its Christianized version "the day of the Lord", meaning "by Lord" Christ (1 Thes 5:2; 2 Thes 2:2; 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14). These statements, influenced
by the Jewish apocalyptic writings, stress the victory of Christ or God over evil. JEC remarks: "The judiciary aspect of this judgement is also... prominent in Paul: Man must appear before the divine tribunal(Rom 2:16) to render account of his life(Rom 14:10 ff) and Christ will meet out justice(1 Cor 4:5-5; 2 Cor 5:10 f)". Christ will judge the living and the dead(2 Tim 4:1; of Rom 2:16) since Christ has been appointed by God as the universal judge(All 17:31).

With this overall NT view of the Last Judgement we shall enter into the key text which we have spoken of earlier. First the main part of this passage could be cited:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me". Then the virtuous will say in reply, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and food you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothed you; sick or in prison and go to see you?' And the King will answer, 'I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me'. Next he will say to those on his left hand, 'Go away from me, with the curse upon you, to the eternal fire(Mt 25:31-41).
The Judge repeats the same to those on the left merciful acts as not having been done by them, and they are punished for not doing these acts. McKenzie seems to object to the traditional position that this passage is the chief one that supports the doctrine of General Judgement. He prefers to consider it as referring to Parousia. Our answer to this is that both Parousia and General Judgement belong to the ES, and so not totally disconnected. Besides, by looking at the text it is too obvious to deny that what is meant by 'judgement' is verified here.

The scene opens with the coming in glory of the Son of Man with obvious allusion to Dan 7 which has been cited earlier in this chapter. Jesus had applied this element on various other occasions (Mt 8:38; 13:28; 14:62; Mk 10:23; 16:23; Lk 12:22; 17:22-30). Though in the above passage Jesus himself is the judge, elsewhere he considers himself a witness before God's tribunal (Mt 10:32-33; Mk 8:39). The angels accompanying him are court assistance as in Jr 7:10,16.

It is a judgement of all the nations keeping with his universalistic outlook (Mt 8:11-12; 10:19; 28:19; Mk 13:10). As in the parable of the wheat and darnel (Mt 13:24-30), of the good and bad fish, of the wise and foolish virgins (Mt 25:1-13) and of the ten talents (Mt 25:14-30) here the judge separates the good from the evil.

On what criterion are the good separated from the evil? What is the criterion for salvation? It is not 'faith' nor charity in the ordinary sense of the term, but charity towards the least of Christ's brethren, viz. the hungry, the thirsty, the prisoners, the sick etc. Rightly Augustin George remarks:
In his other pronouncements about the judgement, Jesus ties it with men's faith in his resurrection (Mt 10:15; 11:20-4; 12:41-2; 23:37-9) or their witness to him (10:32-3; Mk 13:13); he also mentions fraternal charity (Mt 5:21-2; 6:4,11-15; 8:1-2; 18:35; Lk 14:14). The novel element in Matthew 25 is that love for 'the least of my brethren' is interpreted as love for Jesus himself.23

What sort of judgement is this? Naturally all the anthropomorphic expressions and all the apocalyptic symbolisms have to be understood in a 'demythologized' sense. Since it is the question of a metahistorical 'event' which transcends space and time, it is not possible to speak except symbolically. Getting into the inner core of this 'judgement', going beyond the symbols to a great extent Rahner says:

It (Parousia) cannot really be thought of apart from the judgement, which is simply the definitive crystallization and manifestation the eternal results in history. For this manifestation makes it clear that history is the work of God, whose purpose is centred on Jesus Christ. Judgement, therefore, this final judgement, must be seen as one with the consummation of the world and history as a whole: as an intrinsic moment of the parousia of Christ and the resurrection of the flesh.... It depends on the sovereign disposition of God, having an end given to it and not just aimed at from its beginning. For these reasons the consummation is called the judgement of God. Since its nature is ultimately determined by the action of Christ, the consummation is called the judgement of Christ.24

5: THE COSMIC DIMENSION OF SALVATION

It is rather difficult for us to think of the human body without its ambients which is the cosmos with its numerous mutually interrelated realities. And the doctrine of the transformed risen body makes us
think of the possibility of a corresponding transformation of the world as a sort of necessary ambitions. And this precisely seems to be the doctrine of the NT. It is especially Paul who speaks of the bondage and liberation of the material cosmos corresponding to man's bondage and liberation. Lyonnets says: "The redemption of the universe is in Paul's thought essentially a corollary of the resurrection of the body and consequently is based, like it, on the fact of the resurrection of Christ".  

The chief advocate of this doctrine in the NT is St. Paul. And this doctrine is centred on Rom 8:19-23 though there are other Pauline texts which too teach this doctrine at least indirectly. First this text will be cited referring to its context. To get a deeper insight into this passage we shall try to have a glimpse of its OT background and then shall casually refer to the indirectly supporting NT texts. After placing the key text in connection with its background we will be in a position to view it in the right atmosphere and with right perspective.

1. The Key Pauline Text

Paul begins the eighth chapter, where our text is, teaching his people that for those who follow Christ, the life-giving principle is the Spirit of God, which puts man on the Christic way of salvation. And this doctrine is more or less a restatement of what he wrote in the fifth chapter of this letter. After speaking of the divine filiation in Christ through the Spirit, though seminally and ineffectively, Paul says that the present sufferings should not bother his readers since the glory that is waiting for them is of very great value (Rom 8:18).
This statement implies that just as Christ's risen glory was proceeded by toil and sufferings so too would be their glory. After this he propounds his doctrine of the glorification of the material universe, with which we are directly concerned here, by way of describing the nature of the future glory waiting for all the followers of Christ:

The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal his sons. It was not for any fault on the part of creation that it was made unable to attain its purpose, it was made so by God; but creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God. From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the Spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free (Rom 8:19-23).

It was the custom among the Western interpreters of this text to dismiss it as highly poetic and imaginative with very little reality-content. One could easily interpret such expression as the "material universe expects" or groans in terms of poetic personification. But for us Indians who call earth, "mother earth", and who are familiar with the the Bhāgavata Purāṇa text where mother earth is pictured as going to Lord Viṣṇu overburdened by the sins of men, asking him humbly for his incarnation to save the world of sin, such mythic or poetic expressions are not very baffling. Indeed, we have been accustomed to find some reality-content in such mythical expressions in which it is enshrined even as the modern Western scholars do at present. Due to such facts as the matter-energy equation, the production of elementary forms of life in the laboratory from matter, the theory of evolution,
and the growing understanding of the ancient concept of reducing the whole visible reality to a Primordial Sabda-Brahman or Logos, modern man is not too willing to dismiss such statements as realityless poetic imagination. However, the text has to be put in its OT background for a clearer view.

2. The OT Background of the Text

In the theory of evolution of man is one of the highest evolutes from matter passing through vegetative life, animal life, and finally self-reflecting sensitive rational life which aims at self-transcendence, and which can look back on life and on itself due to ability of self-reflection. As the theory of evolution gives the highest status to man in the cosmos so too the Bible does as we saw. In the Genesis-story of creation we saw how all the other creatures are meant to be subordinate to him serving his needs. The universe in the NT is very much anthropocentric. And so the material things of the world find their meaning in being useful to man, just as man finds meaning and fulfilment in having loving union with God his creator. So if the world is taken in a dynamic sense as the evolutionists would do then we can say that the destiny of man is bound to have its repercussions on the cosmos.

Adam’s sin affects the earth and the curse he brought upon himself affected the world as well: "Accursed be the soil because of you" (Gen 3:17). And according to this chapter, man’s difficulty in producing fruits is partly due to certain revolting attitude of the 'earth'. Similarly, after the flood when Noah offered sacrifice to God, not only he along was blessed but the material world as well.
Yahweh promises:

Never again will I curse the earth because of man, because his heart contrives evil from his infancy. Never again will I strike down every living as I have done. As long as earth lasts, sowing and reaping, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall cease no more (Gen 8:21-22).

In Leviticus we have a passage where the connection between man's behaviour and the 'behaviour' of the material world is brought out:

For all these hateful things were done by the people who inhabited this land before you, and the land became unclean. If you make it unclean, will it not vomit you out as it vomited the nation that was before you? (Lev. 18:27-28).

Giving references to a number of texts Beaucamp points out cogently this connection according to the OT. He says:

Directly affected by the wickedness of its inhabitants, the land will then rise up against the sinner (Job 20:27), refusing its fruit to the killer of Abel, for example (Gen 4:10-12). In the shame of its defilement, the soil will even go so far as to vomit forth those it has borne, or devour them: 'Because they say of you: Thou art a devourer of men and one that suffocates thy nation' (Ezek 36:13).

In the NT

In the NT there is a thought provoking concept of "New heaven and new earth". Though it is found in the OT (Is 65:17; 66:22), in the NT it gets a deeper meaning. In the last chapter of the last book of the Bible we read: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now" (Apoc 21:1). St. Peter too uses this expression to explain the eschatological nature
of the world: "What we are waiting for is what he promised: the new heavens and new earth, the place where righteousness will be at home" (2 Pet 3:13). The universal restoration (apokatastaseos panton) spoken of in the AA by St. Peter too refer to the sharing of the destiny of man by the material cosmos which is his ambients (5:21).

In Paul, the universal restoration is centred on the risen Christ. For him the risen Christ in glory is the focal point and the source of new life. Paul says:

He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, the hidden plan he so kindly made in Christ from the beginning to act upon when the times had run their course to the end: that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head, (anakephaisothi ta panta), everything in the heavens and everything on earth (Eph 1:9-10; Cf Col 1:20).

In the above text, it needs no mentioning that 'ta panta' includes also the material universe. Another text in which the whole of creation (ta panta) seems to be affected by the saving activity of Christ is 1,Cor 15:28: "And when everything (ta panta) is subjected to him, then the Son himself will be subject in his turn to the One who subjected all things (ta panta) so that God may be all in all (ta panta en pasin). Without getting into the way how the whole of creation would be subjected to God through Christ, it is obvious that the whole of creation will be in harmony sharing the 'divine touch'. In the following verse Paul equates the transformation of the body in resurrection through the salvific activity of Christ with that of the whole universe: "For us, our homeland is in heaven,
and from heaven comes the saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body. He will do that by the same power with which he can subdue the whole universe (ta panta) (Phil 3:21). What is to be noted by an overall look of these Pauline texts is that the salvation of humanity does affect the whole universe as well, and that this change in the universe is similar to that takes place in the human body at resurrection.

3. A Closer View of Rom 6:19-23

The above considerations of the OT background of some of the NT texts has made it clear that the transformation of the universe in correspondence with the human body in the microcosm need not be taken as the result of Pauline lyricism. Indeed, it is very much in keeping with the Biblical concept of the essential solidarity between man and the material universe. Though many points could be considered in our text we shall concentrate on just two points: the fact of the "slavery" or bondage of the world which expects its liberation, and the promise of its future liberation or Redemption as a consequence of man's liberation. Before we enter into a brief consideration of these two points the following warning given by Lyonnet should be taken into account:

Of course, revelation teaches us nothing about the 'how' of this transformation - revelation does not furnish us with any information of a properly 'cosmological' order. Its teaching is of the religious order, not the 'scientific'.... In the same way, the dogma of the resurrection of the body cannot supply the biologist with a new datum; yet it teaches the Christian
a truth far more important, though of another order. It teaches him that, appearances to the contrary, this body, in which he may already detect the ravages of sickness, which he knows is going to decompose and turn to dust, is nevertheless promised a share in the glory of the risen Christ. 29

The cosmos after the curse it has received from God through the sin of the first man is in bondage. Paul says that it was made unable to attain its purpose by him (dia ton = by one, in the literal sense). Now this 'by him' could refer either to God in so far as it is God who cursed it or to Adam through whom this curse was given by God. 30 What is the purpose it missed? "To enjoy the same freedom and glory of the children God"(8:21) for which it is waiting in eager expectation(8:19). The Hebrew root meaning of the word 'sin' (hatta) as missing the target or purpose has already been explained. By missing its target the creation is in 'sin', in bondage. But creation can attain its target through man. If man fails to reach his aim, to that extent also the universe. Or to put in another terminology, if man fails in his self-realisation, to that extent the universe too will fail to attain its self-realisation about which Lyonnet comments:

The material universe is called to share in the future state of the children of God. 'It will be freed', says Paul, from what in its present state is 'vanity, servitude and corruption'. It will leave, then, its present condition to enter this new one which the Apostle does not hesitate to call a 'freedom' — in fact a freedom that is quite the same as that belonging to the glory of the children of God. 31

The second point to be considered is that the liberation' and the transformation of the universe is in consequence of man's
liberation. Fitzmyer writes: "Paul discloses his view of the created world, which in its chaotic state manifests its cosmic striving toward the very goal set for man himself. He affirms the solidarity of the human and subhuman world in its share in the redemption of Christ". 32 Lyonnet adds that the liberation or "redemption of the universe is in Paul's thought essentially a corollary of the resurrection of the body". 33 In verse 11 of chapter 8 Paul says that the Spirit of God dwelling in the follower of Christ will give life to his body as He gave life to the body of Christ because of which it was risen. And because of the spirit the creation groans for liberation and man groans for the liberation of his body. Paul brings out this parallel clearly as he did in Phil 3:21 which has been quoted above.

Conclusion

The liberation and the consequent transformation of the world is a NT doctrine. The bondage and liberation of the world are consequences of man's bondage and liberation respectively. When man fails to move along the right path towards his true destiny he will find himself in chaos. Since the world has to attain its destiny in immediate subordination to man's destiny, though ultimately in subordination to God himself, when man fails to go along the right path, the world itself will find itself directionless and chaotic. This doctrine could be explained with certain amount of scientific plausibility in the light of the theory of evolution especially as propounded by Teilhard de Chardin. All the same it must be admitted that the doctrine of the bondage and the liberation of the material cosmos still remains a mystery. This doctrine indirectly advocates
the basic solidarity among the various spheres of things in the world in spite of man's supremacy over them. If man fails God, he fails the material cosmos as well and it in turn fails man.

F. PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

The above matter of fact consideration of the NT concept of salvation has made it amply clear that it is rather complex with many ins and outs. Our study by no means has been exhaustive, but rather somewhat selective to suit our thesis. We have not touched upon the negative aspect of salvation, nor the question of eternal punishment as a possibility of man's final destiny. As has been said at the outset, though quite legitimately we prescinded from the Christological aspect of salvation, it had a crippling effect on this study. However, the salient aspects of the concept of salvation in the NT studied here do serve our thesis. In this section let us make some brief reflections on the above data provided by our sacred book to give some systematic unity to this chapter.

1. The Chronological Question of Salvation

In the first part it was brought out how salvation is viewed both as a present reality and as something to be realised in the future. Are these two views incompatible? A meaningful answer to this question implies a correct understanding of the divine factor implied in the human salvation which has not been taken seriously in our study for reasons already mentioned. However provisionally it could be said that the divine factor implies the
initiative by God the Father by deciding from all eternity to make
man share divine life in 'heaven' by giving man a Way of salvation
in the Son, the second person of the Trinity and by giving man the
Holy Spirit as the life-force to travel along this Way that is Christ.
This implies that the divine factor is functioning in man incoherently leading him towards the future provided that man would
collaborate with the divine help through the Spirit. Hence salvation
can be conceived as something seminal and as something fully realized.

McKenzie rightly remarks in strong words:

One of the recurring heresies of the history of the Christianity
has been the belief that salvation could be finally and completely
achieved by a single act, whether that act be conceived as the
predestination of God, the saving death of Jesus Christ, or the
reception of faith and baptism. There is in these texts a
massive witness of the NT teaching that the salvation conferred
by the death of Christ and accepted by faith and baptism and
membership in the Church the body of Christ, is real and genuine,
but incoherent; it demands growth and can be regarded as finally
achieved only in the eschatological event that marks the term of
human activity.

If salvation-reality has not begun in man through the divine-
human activity, the hope in the future would be groundless. Hence
we are in agreement with the following view of Schillebeeckx against
any reception of a capsulized, 'finished-product' salvation:

But according to the Bible the basis of the eschatological
expectation of the future is the certainty, in faith, of an
actual relationship with God... This is understandable when we
can build the future, otherwise we ourselves simply land in
futuristic fantasies. The past belongs essentially to our
human condition which in its present is oriented towards the future.  

Jesus said that a tree is to be known by its fruits (Mt 12:33). If one has received the Spirit of God as 'first fruits' (aparxe, Rom 8:23) one has to show it in life. A non-ethical life, a life which does not show the signs of inner gradual transformation by the divine touch of the Spirit, cannot be conceived as a life on the way of salvation according to the NT (Gal 5:22).

2. The Personal Dimension of Salvation

We have seen how this aspect is expressed in the NT with the mythical terminology of being in paradise, with the spatial terminology of being at the eternal home, with the personalistic terminology of being with Christ and with the mystical terminology of seeing God face to face. It is obvious that all these terminologies are symbolic and evocative. The term 'paradise' reminds one of ES as a restoration of the lost paradise where harmony, love and bliss reigned. The concept 'home' evokes the idea that ES as the culmination of a life of 'universal brotherhood' where God alone is the Father and all the rest are brothers and sisters. It also evokes the idea of a place of eternal rest and peace waiting for the weary traveller along the narrow path of salvation. To be with the risen Christ implies among other things that heaven is a state where one could experience human values especially of personal relationships in a transformed way can be experienced. And finally the concept Beatific Vision' gives us the sense of the intellectual aspect of the situation of ES, somewhat like the situation of Jñāna as a goal.
Among those various aspects the concept of Beatific Vision need a word more of explanation. Though this is a concept used by medieval philosophers in the West it is based on the NT. For the Jews, to see God was something superhuman yet was an ideal in life. This ultimate "vision" is expressed as seeing God face to face and of knowing God as man is known by God. We saw how according to the official doctrine of the Church it is a vision in which the divine essence manifests itself... plainly, clearly and openly, and in this they enjoy the divine essence". This kind of knowledge is similar to the way God knows man, and so it implies a sort of divinization in man, and the mutual self-communication between God and man in a very profound, intimate, personalistic sharing. And according to the NT this state cannot be achieved by man only by his own efforts without the divine help.

3. The Social Dimension of Salvation

If man is essentially a social being in his earthly life it is not very difficult to see how he persists to be social in his final destiny. Every virtuous and every sinful act has its social repercussions influencing others to practise virtue or vice. Hence there is a popular saying among the Christians that no man goes to heaven or hell alone.

The second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgement of the whole of humanity by Christ are the three elements we distinguished in the social dimension of salvation. The parousia and the final judgement by Christ described in the NT using
the symbols and images chiefly from the Jewish apocalyptic literature. This judgement is believed to take place for all men of all times. One might ask the question as to how each man is saved or condemned immediately after death, if the judgement takes place only at the end of times. This is answered by the concept of particular judgement, which is for each man at the moment of his death. It is not then a general judgement redundant at the end of times? No definite answer can be found to this question since here we are asking the date of a situation which is beyond both time and space. For people living beyond time and space both judgements could be conceived as simultaneous.

The doctrine of resurrection, as has been hinted at earlier, is very enigmatic, if not contradictory, from a scientific and rationalistic point of view. The resurrection is of which body? For, all the cells of a man are totally renewed every year. Or taking the humorous objection found in the mediaeval speculations concerning the resurrection of the bodies of the cannibals who live on the human bodies and the resurrection of those people whose bodies were eaten by the cannibals one might ask the question as to which bodies will belong both to the cannibals and to those whose bodies were eaten by the cannibals at resurrection.

In spite of this being a question concerning something beyond the empirical verification, and beyond space and time, St. Paul himself tries to give a plausible answer through the illustration of the grain of wheat. Though the grain of wheat dies and becomes dust it retains in it something which can produce many more grains of the same nature.
Similarly the human body could be conceived as retaining in it something which could get transformed and divinized at resurrection. The Indian concept of linga sarira can further illuminate this point.

4. The Cosmic Dimension of Salvation

Of the three dimensions of salvation the cosmic one is the most mysterious. It is certainly a NT doctrine that the good and evil that man does have their corresponding repercussions on the material universe. And the ES of man implies the ES of the material cosmos as well. Indeed, the liberation of the material universe is a corollary to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. This doctrine implies the vital connection that exists between the soul and the body, and the body and the material cosmos.

Among the various implications of this doctrine is the value of man's involvement in the world, Rahner asks the question referring to the NT statements about the "new earth" whether this new earth is something that comes down from above or something that is constructed below. Though in a slightly different context Rahner's statement that the concept of a risen, glorified body as an eschatological gift with no connection with the body which was part and parcel of man while alive is a contradiction can be applied to the concept of the transformed earth. Lyonnet says:

From the fact that the redemption of the body extends to the whole universe, it follows that the work of man - his efforts to master the material universe, to draw out its secrets, to domesticate and utilize it, to transform brute matter into instruments of greater and greater perfection right up to
'electronic brains' capable of operations defying the intelligence even of the man who made them - all such human work acquires a value for eternity. Indeed the world is made for man and it finds its fulfilment or 'self-realization' in serving man. Hence the world need, to be humanized. The progressive humanization of the world is a pre-requisite for its eschatological transformation.

Another point to be considered is that the liberation of the world is a consequence of man's final liberation. Hence, any effort to humanize the world going astray from the path of man's own salvation, rebelling against God as Adam did, would lead the world to more and more chaos. Hence Lyonnet says that "any effort to prepare for a redemption of the universe through human labour alone, without regard for the redemption of man, is a total delusion".

To conclude, it could be stated that the salvation in the NT is at once a human task and a divine gift. However, in the present study attention was chiefly paid to salvation as the goal of this task, and to the nature of this gift, rather than to the divine-human co-operation that brings about salvation. And this salvation-reality having its ground in the present is growing towards the future in the individual with social and cosmic repercussions. The doctrine of the social dimension of salvation holds the view that every genuine and deep inter-personal relationship will be transformed and eternalized. By the doctrine of the cosmic dimension of salvation the NT teaches that every human effort to humanize the material cosmos with transcendental openness and social responsibility,
is by the same fact is an effort to transform and liberate the cosmos itself. Thus according to our sacred book matter is no reason for bondage, the enemy of the spirit but a partner in self-realization in the eschatological salvation. The following statements with which Aquinas ends his famous work, Summa Contra Gentiles are a fitting ending for this chapter:

Since then, the bodily creation will at the last be disposed in harmony with the state of man – since men, of course, will not only be freed from corruption but also clothed with glory, as what has been said makes clear – necessarily even the bodily creation will achieve a kind of resplendence in its own way. And hence the saying of the Apocalypse (21:1) :

'I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH'. AND ISAIAH (65:17-18) BEHOLD I CREATE NEW HEAVENS, AND NEW EARTH, AND THE FORMER THINGS SHALL NOT BE IN REMEMBRANCE....