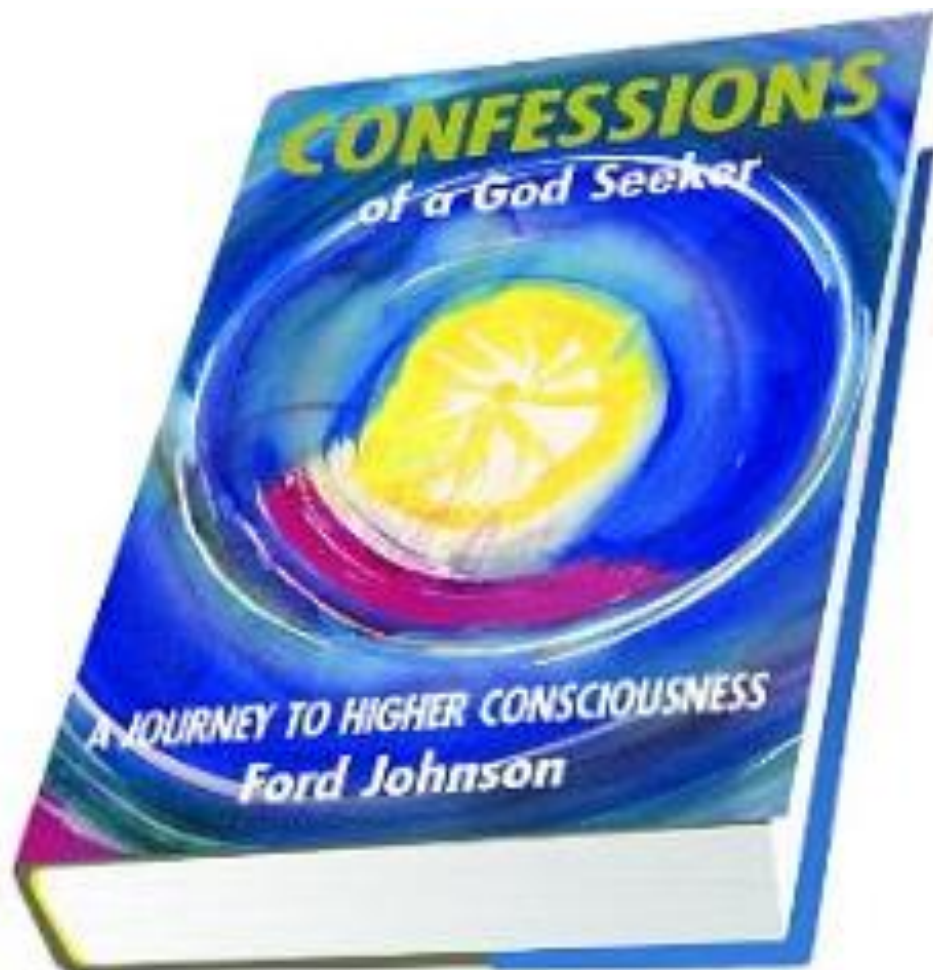


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**CONFESSIONS OF A GOD SEEKER:
A JOURNEY TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS
*(WITH SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR)***



INTRODUCTION
TO
CONFESSIONS OF A GOD SEEKER: A JOURNEY TO HIGHER
CONSCIOUSNESS (*Excerpted Edition*)
By: Ford Johnson

Congratulations on your decision to download this free excerpted edition of ***Confessions of a God Seeker: A Journey to Higher Consciousness***. I know how scary it is to download anything from an unfamiliar source. I want to assure you that the publisher's intent is quite genuine and anything you might see or receive in the future should similarly be seen as a safe and benign communication.

I gave my approval for the production and distribution of this excerpt because of the importance of getting truth to thousands of earnest seeker so they could determine for themselves whether the content and direction of their spiritual activities was providing the sustenance, guidance and answers to the deepest and most complex spiritual questions life poses for us. As a teacher, explorer and student of inner and outer spiritual truths I have read, studied, participated in and/or personally explored virtually every strain of spiritual and religious pursuit available. In all of them I have found a common thread of truth that rises above culture, dogma and ceremony. It is this transcendent truth that has been my life's pursuit.

This book is the first of the major published works that bring together this knowledge and experience base. It *is* a journey to higher consciousness and will take the seeker to the very gates of the next and most extraordinary spiritual adventure that is the inevitable destiny of all fervent and serious seeker. *Confessions* provides a base of knowledge, which is essential for any truth seeker that is exploring or has an inclination to explore the divine impulses that stir within. It is equally important to esoteric students that have studied far and wide but have become enmeshed in a singular spiritual paradigm thus committing the seekers most stultifying spiritual experience, i. e. getting trapped in dogma, ceremony, ritual and outer social dependency and confirmation.

Spiritual deceptions, fabrications and traps lie everywhere in the path of the God Seeker. I have personally stepped into and out of virtually all types. That is why I feel so deeply about helping prevent the spiritual harm and misdirection so many earnest God Seekers unknowingly are dwelling in right now or are encountering in their search for truth that will genuinely set them free.

Whether the teaching has its origins in hinterland of India or the holy lands of the near east, the misinformation, ensnarements, and deceptions are legion. And, that is what this book reveals as it documents and analyses what they are and the divine truth they hide or exploit. In highlighting the religion of Eckankar, this book dissects its

history, dogma, spiritual devices and deceptions and serves as a surrogate for other world religions and spiritual paths that contain the same if not identical patterns of deception and misdirection.

Of the many thousands that have read this book, their comments and observations are the most telling. That is why we have provided links to Amazon reviews that represent the impact the book has had on earnest truth seekers, regardless of their religious or spiritual affiliation. It is also instructive to see the comments of the “defenders of the faith”, who’s comments, in most cases, reveal they have not read the book or grasped its content. In those comments, one can see very clearly the difference between the spiritual “Truth Seeker” and the religious “Gate Keeper.” Here are two reviews that demonstrate the impact of this book on a devoted member of Eckankar, and one who is not a member but simply a seeker of truth.

Amazon 5.0 out of 5 stars I can hardly find the words to describe Confessions, July 24, 2003

By A Customer

This review is from: Confessions of a God Seeker: A Journey to Higher Consciousness (Hardcover)

I was very reluctant to read this book because as an Eckist I simply didn't want to do anything to disrespect the spiritual leader and place myself in jeopardy. But after reading an open letter to Harold Klemp, I felt I had to see for myself just what Ford was talking about. To say that I have mixed feelings is an understatement. The information and the research that Ford completed is simply overwhelming. I had to put the book down to simply digest the enormity [sic] of what he was revealing about Paul and how he systematically invented a religion. I would not have believed it unless I had seen the documentation for myself. But what was most disturbing was the extent to which Harold was involved in the cover up even adding stories to enhance what were clearly invented stories by Paul.

There is one example where Harold explains that Pauls [sic] description in Drums of Eck of the life of Pedar Zask (the spiritual name for Paul) was really a description of his existence in his past life were [sic] he was born on a packet boat on the Mississippi. Then Ford quotes Paul as saying that he was born in the Caucasus mountains [sic] in Russia in his past life illustrating how Harold's [sic] attempt to cover for Paul misfired and showed how he too was involved in spinning the myths. It goes on and on like this with one illustration of coverup [sic] and fabrication after another. Most disturbing but also most liberating. As much as I love this teaching, I don't like being lied to and being treated like a fool. Fortunately, by the time I got into part IV of

the book, the pain was behind me and I felt a growth in consciousness that was like a final step to discover the God force within myself rather than giving all the credit to the Mahanta the Living Eck Master. It is some book and beautiful besides. The cover should win an award it is so beautiful. I can only say thank you to Ford Johnson for writing this book.

Amazon 5 out of 5 stars ["ronwash"](#) (Crestwood, New Mexico) - [See all my reviews](#)

This review is from: Confessions of a God Seeker: A Journey to Higher Consciousness (Hardcover)

This is a very thought-provoking book. The author takes a bold and courageous step in providing a critical review of the main religions and spiritual paths. More importantly, he offers a new paradigm that basically brings every human being closer to the truth and the god himself. If people are already empowered in many areas of life, why not empower them to try and reach out to god directly by themselves. This sounds very simple, but it is a very powerful idea that breaks ground. It is starting to change my own perspective. I commend the author for his diligent research and rich bibliography to help anybody who is interested to further go into those spiritual issues.

The excerpts that follow will give you some sense of the depth and content of the book. Whether you choose to acquire *Confessions...* or not, I hope you will read the excerpted edition often as it will lay a ground work for whatever is your next step on the journey to higher consciousness.

Ford Johnson
Maryland
2015

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***[Original]* Introduction**

Writing this book has in every respect been a journey to higher consciousness. The events of November and December of 2001 were the turning point in a search for God-awareness that has been the center of my life. These events were the catalyst that led me to challenge and ultimately change my paradigm of the God-experience. As a result, my consciousness expanded from a modest house into what felt like a coliseum. This is what happens when old paradigms are shattered and new perspectives based in truth come into view.

This book chronicles that expansion of consciousness. It began in earnest more than thirty years ago. As the title suggests, *Confessions* reflects the journey of a God-seeker to discover truth. Truth, of course, takes many forms and exists at many levels. In the final analysis, it is what each person chooses to believe and act upon. Yet, there is the conception of eternal truth that does not bend to the whim of individual predilections. This has always intrigued me. I longed for something eternal, not a childhood construct like Santa Claus that was designed to be shattered or the dubious mythical foundations of most religious dogma. Indeed, it was this longing that propelled my initial search for spiritual truth.

Over many years and numerous spiritual teachings, paths, and religions my journey has taken me to what I have come to view as the heart of truth, the eternal bedrock that is unchanging and just is. In this book, I describe this journey and the often astounding discoveries and captivating revelations along the way. As you might imagine, it is a roller coaster ride at times. But that is the nature of spiritual growth, especially for the God-seeker.

This book addresses several audiences simultaneously. First, it is directed to anyone who seeks the God-reality that lies beyond religion, philosophy, or science. Thus, it speaks to those who treasure truth above all else. Second, it is directed to anyone associated with Eckankar its progeny or any similar teaching of the light and sound of God. These include the Radhasoami Satsang Beas, Ruhani Satsang, and Sant Mat teachings in general. All of these groups share common threads that help and hinder the God-seeker on his journey to the heart of truth. Third, it is directed to those who have ever wondered -- as did I -- about the origins and reality of Christianity, especially in light of evidence concerning sixteen other crucified saviors who predated Christ. Regardless, all paths and religions are important way stations on our journey to God, but they are only way stations.

This is the quandary I searched long and hard to resolve. When the facts about any religion or path are made known, it is easy to dispel the belief paradigms that hinder the seekers spiritual growth. But with what does one replace them? The adults in our lives were ready to dispel the Santa Claus myth with a sobering, albeit less exhilarating truth. Yet, the feelings and memories lingered as proof of the residual power of myth, even when overwhelmed by truth. Dispelling a spiritual paradigm can have a disquieting impact if not replaced with a more spiritually enlightened construct built on truth. After struggling with this dilemma, I proceeded with *Confessions* because I believe this requirement is fulfilled. Therefore, after presenting facts that will undoubtedly challenge cherished ideas and well-established spiritual paradigms, Part IV of the book presents an empowering exemplar that fills the void. It shows the nexus between science and spirituality and how both are saying

the same thing; exploring the same truth. Using insights from both, keys to the movement of consciousness to ever higher levels are presented. They are coupled with practical steps to integrate spiritual wisdom into the mastery of life.

My orientation to studying and teaching spiritual and esoteric subjects has always been practicable -- real world. I have had to apply these principles to running a business, raising children, married life and the realities of living in a modern world. I know from these experiences and the responses of those who have attended my workshops that what is outlined in this portion of the book actually works. More importantly, it provides a framework to evaluate the experiences of life from a spiritual perspective. Happiness, success, and accomplishment take on a different and broadened meaning when every experience is seen as a gift that is always present but often overlooked.

As one who is notorious for reading a book from the middle or the end, I am probably not in the best position to give this suggestion, but I will. *Confessions* reveals, and possibly astonishes as it lays bare false religious constructs with facts, history, and documentation that are powerful and verifiable. Then it builds and expands consciousness as it progresses from one set of concepts to the next. It is like rebuilding a house requiring fortification of its foundation before it can bear the load of new heights. Skipping too far ahead might confuse and raise questions that would have been answered at earlier points in the book. Likewise, it would be wise to reserve drawing conclusions too early; there are many twists and turns in this real-life spiritual journey. In the end, I believe the experience will lead to an expansion of consciousness, for this was certainly my reward as well as the response of those who participated in reviewing the book. Also, you may reach a point where the facts are enough and you are ready to move on to the next stage. If you reach this point, I suggest moving to Part IV of the book. Then you can return to Parts II and III from a more spiritually fortified position.

As you might imagine, I felt considerable inner trepidation in writing some of the chapters. I wondered if I should simply discontinue the writing and move on. But something within -- my higher self -- kept urging me on, forcing me beyond my outer fears to complete what I believe to be of great importance. One event that helped to reinforce this decision was a movie I watched while taking a break from writing. *Quiz Show*, an acclaimed drama, tells the true story behind the infamous television show scandal of 1959. Herbert Stempel, a disgruntled former champion, prompted a Congressional investigation into the popular game show *Twenty-One* with charges that the current champion, Charles Van Doren, a popular Columbia University lecturer, had been provided with answers by the producers. The investigator (and author of the book that inspired the film) became the trustee of truth, and it was his unpleasant task to see that it not be suppressed. The investigator was confronted with the same questions I had posed to myself. Why disturb people's happiness with the ugly truth? I know how he felt and also how he had no choice. Once the mantle of truth seeker is assumed, a road is traveled that leads in only one direction, though there are many curves and bumps along the way.

As the truth struggled to come out, I observed how delicate yet inexorable its power was. It could be suppressed, hidden, and falsely profiled, but it was unrelenting. Everyone has a deep and abiding love and need for truth, even if they are temporarily engaged in holding it back or benefiting from a deception. There is a divine spark that forces us to truth. That is why people confess to their crimes and feel relief in having done so. They cannot deal with its unrelenting pressure and pain. That is also why it is the infallible road

to God, for Truth is GOD of ITSELF. Once we see truth for what it really is, we will also see ourselves and know that we are a part of the ONE. This cannot be achieved as long as we allow temporary expediencies and comforts to guide our lives.

A good friend had once argued:

[T]his is a world of duality and nothing here is perfect. My yardstick is, "is it good enough." In our culture at a certain point in life we seem to lose the capacity to innocently idealize anything or anybody.

He was right in a way, but is "good enough" really good enough? I suppose "good enough" is alright when speaking of Caesar salad or bean soup, but what about spiritual unfoldment? Doesn't good enough imply stagnation, acceptance of the status quo, quitting, deceiving ourselves into thinking that we are there when clearly we are not? Without new insights and truth, we are apt to say it is "good enough." But when we see the truth in something, it leads us to new levels of awareness where the old is no longer good enough, because part of divine discontent is the driving force to want more and to want the best. Who willingly accepts something less when better is known and available as an equal choice? At first, we feel this drive as a desire for things and stuff. In time, it is sublimated to a desire for higher consciousness, to know who and what we really are. This is where truth leads.

But truth also can cause discomfort, for it is the catalyst of change. Change produces distress only when we reject where it is taking us. We always prefer the comfort of the known and reject, as long as we can, the mystery and uncertainty of the unknown. This entire discussion could be a metaphor for the underlying theme of this book: good enough is not good enough if it means avoiding truth.

However, even growth and change are not uniformly continuous. There are rest points in eternity. Points where we can sit back and absorb what we have learned and benefit from our advancement. When we tarry too long and are not challenged to advance to a new level of awareness, we are stuck in "good enough." To my friend and to others who read this book, I can only say that I hope it will be good enough for a while -- but only for a while.

Ford Johnson

PART ONE -- THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Chapter 1 -- The God Seeker

Who is a God Seeker?

Maybe you are. In truth, we are all God-seekers, only some of us are more aware of it than others. The proof is everywhere. The lover of music searches for celestial motifs once heard during a dream excursion that continues to beckon. The architect looks within, sees a finished version of his masterpiece, and is humbled by the knowledge that he has touched some higher force. The poet tries to translate inner ecstasy into words but is exasperated because he has experienced something words cannot express. The dancer moves with flowing lines to express a balance, a feeling that connects with something much deeper. The minister faithfully preaches the church's doctrine but wonders, questions, and inwardly explores the ageless conundrum: Is this all there is?

In time, these disguised longings for God initiate a search for truth that leads a person to become a conscious seeker. Eventually, all seekers reach a point where they realize that there is a force greater than them. They may even suspect that it permeates all things and is both powerful and intelligent.

Questions and doubts can remain for years. Some seekers will always question or doubt what they inwardly sense. Even with an intellectual or inner awareness of this force, their inability to trust it and surrender to it can persist. We experience the God force in many different ways. Our God may be personal, sensed within, and sustained by private and personal communication. Others, affiliated with a religion, may experience this force through the teachings, rituals, holy books, and inspired words of a spiritual leader or savior.

In spite of doubts, the God-seeker persists in believing because he has experienced miracles in his life. He has been rescued from too many scrapes, brought back from too many mistakes, and shown enlightenment in too many dark moments to remain a non-believer. Through these encounters, he has sensed a connection between his life experiences and his spiritual development. Yet, he may have erroneously attributed his many blessings to something or someone outside of himself. He does not understand, at least not yet, that the power lies within. He does not see that it is spirit coupled with the power of his belief, rather than the object of that belief, that is the true source of the power. But the God-seeker pushes on, looking for a bedrock upon which he can build an edifice of greater control over his life.

All searches for greater knowledge or truth are aspects of the search for God. But most of us get lost in the petty details of life. With so many complex layers of illusion dominating our lives, we remain estranged from the truth of our origin and our existence. Sadly, most of us define ourselves by marital status, number of children, nationality, location, job, sex, race, religion, musical tastes, sports preferences, and other predilections. But these details miss the point of life and delay the expansion of our spiritual awareness. Even if we are clever enough to realize that these social descriptors are only layers of illusion that do not truly define us, we are still apt to get lost in our physical bodies. We delude ourselves into thinking that we are what they are, identifying with our physical accoutrements, medical problems, aches, pains, and physical desires. But this too is an illusion separating the God-seeker from truth.

We may even identify with our emotions and feelings, but this is yet another illusion. They are merely aspects of ourselves that enable us to function in the physical dimension of reality. Through these layers of illusion, the self must navigate its journey to discover the truth about itself and its connection to the creator. This is the journey of the God-seeker. Like Odysseus's return home, the journey is long, complex, and fraught with perils. Thankfully, however, the journey can be completed.

Steps along the Way

My journey as a God-seeker began at an early age. My late grandfather, an Episcopal priest, instructed me in the teachings of Christianity. As soon as I was able to put together a full sentence, I was asking questions, challenging his assumptions, and generally making life more difficult for this stern but loving man. I was a complete flop as an altar boy; I never became adept at my ceremonial duties. Whether to stand or to kneel, or what words to recite after a particular invocation by the priest, was always a mystery to me. I simply did not see the connection between the detail of church rituals and spiritual development.

Nor could I accept the notion that I was a sinner. I questioned how a creation of the Supreme Being could be inherently sinful. Why would God create such a wretched being? Being born in sin and spending the remainder of my life atoning for it made little sense to me. It was like a weight on my back that could never be removed. I wanted no part of it!

Up to this point, my religious exposure was limited to Christianity. If it had the best explanation of my relationship to the divine, then I preferred to believe in nothing. Little did I realize that this period of questioning was a fortunate and portentous cleansing, in which the dogmas of sin, guilt, hell, the devil, and similar concepts were expunged. No longer hindered by controlling rules and moral strictures that leave feelings of guilt and shame, I moved into a state of spiritual freedom. Fortunately, this sense of freedom did not lead to reckless behavior, as it does for many. I avoided this pitfall because, as I was later to learn, I had lived before. Expunging these constrictive beliefs was merely the continuation of a process of spiritual education that had started lifetimes ago. The lessons from each of these lives were ingrained into the core of my being. They were there to serve as stop signs, warning me when I tried to use that freedom irresponsibly.

Through my early education, college entry at age fifteen, service as a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa, and the "paper chase" at Harvard Law School, I made my way into life and full adult responsibility. Through successes and setbacks, I learned life's lessons. Questions were sometimes answered, sometimes raised, but a deep spiritual hunger remained. Despite a flurry of social events, continuous travel, and other forms of outer excitement, the feeling persisted. I discovered what all truth seekers must realize: that my life was focused primarily on my outer or physical existence. My senses of self-worth, satisfaction, and happiness depended on the approval of others, my achievements, and my possessions. I was searching outside myself for confirmation of who and what I was. Nothing could fill the void I felt when I sought only pleasure and outer fulfillment. This was one of the first clues that the life I had constructed in the outer world was not the final answer.

In moments of inner silence, I would cry out to be shown the way. This was a critical point in my life, as it is in the life of any God-seeker. When the God-seeker realizes that there is more, and that help is needed to discover it, it is as if all the forces in the universe converge to show the next step in the quest for truth.

Though the seeker is unclear about what is sought, there is comfort in words like "love" and "truth." Somehow, the God-seeker instinctively knows that truth is pure and powerful. Even in college, while others enjoyed sports and socializing, I found greater joy in engaging in debate -- over virtually anything. I learned that as long as I stayed with truth and never allowed my ego to be trapped, I would never lose an argument. Invariably, as if in a Socratic dialogue, I would identify some error in fact or argument in which an opponent had become invested, shift the discussion to that vulnerability, and show the point to be untrue. I learned a great secret about the power of truth. Thus, I came to understand the sacred responsibility entrusted to one who seeks truth as a life goal and finds some measure of it.

During this time, a friend handed me some books on esoteric knowledge. At first, because I regarded mysticism and the occult as insubstantial, even flaky, I ignored them. These books, with their unusual titles and topics, had an increasingly strange allure, enough to keep them out of the trash can. Eventually, I picked them up. Their contents exploded with insights and perspectives on existence that I had never imagined. Here were the answers to questions with which I had annoyed and frustrated my grandfather. Once I picked them up, I could not put them down. My life as a God-seeker shifted into high gear.

A Higher Consciousness Primer

For many readers, it will be necessary to establish certain basic concepts in spiritual development. The expansion of awareness is a continuous process. In the early stages of my spiritual education, I was exposed to basic concepts of higher consciousness. In time, I became grounded in broader and deeper concepts of life and living. Years of spiritual study and contemplation would enlarge and expand these basic concepts. They will be explored in later chapters. However, to fully grasp the content and meaning of this book, especially if your background is in traditional religion or you are new to concepts of higher consciousness, this section will serve as a primer.

Know Thyself

Wisdom begins and, as we shall see, ends with an understanding of self. "Know thyself" has been the imperative voiced by philosophers, the spiritually enlightened, and sages from the beginning of recorded history. Yet, as much as we think we know ourselves, most of us have only a clue about who or what we really are. We are unaware of ourselves as spiritual, immortal beings living temporarily in human consciousness. We do not understand the extraordinary power and potential that we possess as soul because we identify so completely with our physical bodies, emotions, memories, and minds. We do not realize that they are only tools that we use to function in the physical and other dimensions of existence.

By the standard of time that we generally understand, the journey of soul is long and arduous. Our life as humans, in the physical dimension, is but a small part of that education. The purpose of this education is for soul to expand its awareness to encompass all of its God-like powers. With this knowledge, it can eventually take its place in running the universe.

Many of us have endured difficult and even harsh experiences during childhood. We accept these experiences as a necessary part of personal growth. In the same manner, soul must grow from the experiences encountered during its many lifetimes. Without these

experiences, soul, in the human state, cannot pierce the illusion of life and experience divine reality. Even as humankind struggles to accept the concept of a sequence of lifetimes, the truth is even more remarkable. We live in the eternal now, and all experiences, reality, and lifetimes exist simultaneously. The illusion of a three-dimensional, holographic universe sustains the illusion of time as a sequential phenomenon and of space as possessing separateness, distance, and dimension.

These concepts seemed fantastic when I first encountered them. They seemed possible, but little was happening in my outer life to warrant an immediate change in my paradigm of life. As I began to embrace them, however, events of the past began to make more sense. I saw in these events a pattern that was inexorably moving me to a higher level of spiritual awareness. The idea of life consisting of layers of illusion was a helpful concept. It enabled me to rise above numerous social and ethnic labels and function from a neutral and detached perspective.

Even though I intellectually understood the power of soul, I found it no easier to manifest the things that I wanted in my life. In time, I would learn more about this power and how to harness it for my benefit and for the benefit of others.

The Classroom of Life: How Souls Evolve

Another concept that had an enormous impact on my early understanding of life was the idea that every individual is at a different level of spiritual development and awareness. Some individuals are highly evolved and manifest remarkable abilities and insights from an early age. Attempts to explain the phenomenon of the child prodigy from a genetic, cultural, psychological, or psychiatric perspective fail to account for her advanced level of development. Yet, when life is viewed as a continuum, and death a mere transition from one form of existence to another in an ever-evolving life cycle, this phenomenon is easier to understand. This perspective was vital to me in gaining an appreciation and respect for the spiritual beings that were to become my children. It enabled me to understand my sacred responsibility to guide them to discover the thread that united their many lives, pointing the way to their spiritual expansion in this lifetime. While I have always dearly loved my children, I have never felt a sense of possession that so often fouls the parent-child relationship.

Other souls may just be starting their cycle of incarnations in human form. Not understanding who or what they are as spiritual beings, they are likely to cause disruptions for those who are more spiritually evolved. We look at the actions of our fellow humans and sometimes shake our heads, wondering how people can do such things. From our present more enlightened perspective, the answer is difficult to fathom, for we have forgotten the actions, experiences and lessons from our own earlier incarnations. Yet, it has always been the case that more advanced souls must interact with less evolved ones in order to teach and guide them. That is why the accelerated interaction of nations and peoples that is occurring today will result in the greatest expansion of spiritual consciousness in recorded history. While this will lead to greater levels of upheaval, it is the price that must be paid for the movement of all souls to higher states of consciousness. It is not difficult to see the patterns of human migration around the world and the resulting growth of awareness spreading along with it.

Sin versus Learning

Sin, especially original sin, was a concept I always found repugnant. This was not because I wanted to avoid accountability, but because the concept and ideas surrounding it seemed geared to create guilt and entrapment rather than learning and emancipation. As my spiritual education progressed, I was gratified to learn that sin is not "sin," as my grandfather had taught me. Rather, it is a consequence-producing action that leads to an awareness-expanding lesson. Soul must have the experience, good or bad, in order to internalize the lesson. We see this everyday in raising our children. We can tell them what we want them to do, but only when they have personally experienced an event and its consequences do they understand for themselves. As much as we would want to spare our children many painful experiences in life, there are some lessons that are only learned this way. No amount of fear-evoking declarations of sin can teach a lesson that only life's experiences can convey. Of course, this is not the only way to learn. While experience is most often the best teacher, the old adage that a wise person learns from the experiences of others is certainly true. Once the God-seeker understands that there is wisdom in a teacher's words, the process of spiritual growth accelerates.

A danger that soul faces in its expansion of awareness is the limits imposed upon it by many religions. That is why the idea of sin is not only mistaken but also harmful. It focuses more on the act than on the positive lesson that can be learned. The system of sin even results in the individual looking to something and someone outside of himself for forgiveness. In this manner, it becomes a form of control, for it vests the power of absolution in an outside agent rather than empowering the individual with the knowledge that sin is simply a "control-by-guilt" mechanism. Thus, though the act of confession may serve as a temporary relief, in the end it misleads the individual and distorts her spiritual understanding. It fosters the illusion that the power for such absolution lies with the priest and the religion that established this indulgence. In actuality, the power lies within her consciousness. Here is where all power to change, forgive, and create ultimately derives.

Birth, Death and Reincarnation

My early upbringing in the Episcopal Church saddled me with ideas of heaven or hell in the afterlife, intended to shape my actions in this life. Not only were the notions of heaven and hell, reward and punishment, wrong, but they also had a crippling, fear-producing effect during their reign over me. Religious dogma has had its greatest impact in misleading people about the phenomena of birth and death. Religions have, since their inceptions, used the ideas of heaven and hell to keep followers in line. This simplification of life, death, and the afterlife is largely erroneous, and continues to lead people away from truth. Instead, it places them in a constant state of guilt and fear.

These myths of heaven, hell, and sin are shattered the instant the God-seeker comes to recognize that soul is eternal. Its very existence is evidence of a divine being, because soul is a spark, a part of a divine reality. Just as a drop of water from the ocean contains all of the characteristics of the ocean, so does soul, a part of God, contain all of ITS characteristics. This is the origin of the idea that we are made in God's image, which has mistakenly come to mean resemblance to our physical form.

Conventional notions of heaven and hell, salvation and damnation, are off the mark. Indeed, no less a personage than Pope John Paul II has gone on record as retreating from

the literal interpretations of heaven and hell to a more enlightened, albeit limited, view of these two putative destinations. Of heaven the pope has said:

In the context of Revelation, we know that the "heaven" or "happiness" in which we will find ourselves is neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a living, personal relationship with the Holy Trinity.¹

On the more sensitive subject of hell, he explained:

The images of hell that Sacred Scripture presents to us must be correctly interpreted. They show the complete frustration and emptiness of life without God.... More than a place, hell indicates the state of those who freely and definitively separate themselves from God. Hell is not punishment imposed externally by God, but the condition resulting from attitudes and actions which people adopt in this life.... So eternal damnation is not God's work but is actually our own doing.²

However, much more is known about the journey of soul at the transition commonly known as death. Once the life of the physical vehicle has ended, soul moves out of its shell into one of its other garments that permit it to have experiences in other dimensions of reality. Though we are seldom aware of it, this is precisely what happens each time we have inner experiences during our dreams. We are actually experiencing another dimension of reality using one of the outer garments suited for the matter that predominates on that inner plane. The vehicle used by soul in the second dimension of reality, commonly called the "astral plane," is the corresponding astral body. Indeed, the existence of parallel universes has been postulated by leading quantum physicists.

At the point of "death," soul expands its awareness to encompass this dimension of reality. Here, more advanced souls, functioning from a higher level of consciousness, review the events of its physical life. For more spiritually evolved souls, because they are eager to understand the past life's meaning and proceed to the next lifetime, this encounter occurs soon after death. In this meeting, soul learns how well it used its opportunities for spiritual advancement and what potential experiences lie in the next life. I have studied this phenomenon over the years and will enlarge on its implications later. For now, I think it is fair to say that death is not the dreaded experience most people perceive it to be. It is merely a transition and is nothing to fear. Indeed, so wondrous and sublime are many pre-death encounters that some do not want to return to ordinary physical life.

For less-developed souls, and especially those in religions that do not teach the reality of inner worlds, the death experience is quite different. Upon leaving the body, soul's journey can take a number of different forms. One of the more common encounters is the movement through what is often described as a tunnel at the end of which the individual may see a glorious flood of light. When soul moves towards the light, friends, relatives, or others with whom it would feel comfortable, meet it. More highly evolved entities serve as support in this dimension, and can manifest in forms recognizable and comforting to the individual. These images can take on the form of Jesus for the Christian, Muhammad for the Moslem, Buddha for the Buddhist, and so on. The death experience is not unlike that described by those who have had "near-death experiences" in the operating room or after terrible accidents. But, and this is crucial, it is also common to those who have developed the skill of consciously shifting awareness into these inner dimensions of reality.

The Law of Cause and Effect (Karma)

Reincarnation cannot be fully understood without considering a complementary law, the Law of Cause and Effect, commonly known as karma. Newton's laws of motion are a material articulation of a broader esoteric principle: for every thought, word, and action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Everything we do is a cause that has a corresponding effect. This cause-and-effect cycle explains all of existence and is the basis on which spiritual development is founded. In earlier stages of soul's existence (e.g., in plants and animals), laws of nature govern life, with little if any conscious decision making. As soul progresses into higher states of existence, consciousness expands, as does soul's responsibility for its actions. In the human state, the Law of Responsibility (a corollary to the Law of Cause and Effect) operates. Regardless of our knowledge or acceptance of universal law, we are responsible for everything we decide, and everything we think, say, and do. Spiritual growth is the product of the lessons learned from making these choices. Consequences can be experienced in this lifetime or in succeeding lifetimes -- either way, they will be experienced.

Those whose lives reflect a string of tragedies are most likely experiencing early stages of spiritual growth. They have not yet drawn the connection between action and reaction. The early tendency is to blame other people and other situations. When soul comes to the realization that it is responsible for its own existence, it is then on the path to true spiritual freedom, taking control of its thoughts, words, and actions. Until then, soul is the puppet of people and circumstances that it believes are responsible for its current state of affairs. While this explanation reduces the burden of accountability imposed by taking responsibility for all outcomes, in the end, it reduces the individual to a condition of powerlessness. While taking responsibility for everything that happens in our lives is often a bitter pill, it is the only remedy that emancipates us from the control of outside forces. Once we acknowledge that we have created our own circumstances, we empower ourselves to change them and make them whatever we choose. When soul actively takes control of its thoughts, words, and actions, it attains true spiritual freedom and control over life.

Another corollary to the Law of Cause and Effect (Karma) is the Law of Equilibrium. It holds that everything in the universe seeks balance, including all human expressions of energy -- words, thoughts, and actions. All actions are balanced in conformity with this principle. In the process, our actions and their effects create opportunities for learning. When we take a particular action that produces a unique response, it either engenders pain or pleasure. The physical vehicle responds in a fundamental way. By its programming, it seeks pleasure and avoids pain. When an experience evokes a positive or pleasurable response (positive karma), we tend to pursue it. When an effect is construed as negative or unpleasant (negative karma), we tend to avoid it. It is through this simple mechanism that the Law of Karma and spiritual growth work. This principle has been long recognized in scientific research and has formed the basis of much of behavioral science. However, it also has deep spiritual implications.

Because the universe works in accordance with the Law of Equilibrium, it is not always possible to balance all energy flows in a single lifetime, that is, to receive the positive or negative effects of all of our thoughts, words and actions. Thus, unbalanced energy (karma) is stored and follows us from lifetime to lifetime. This is why life cannot be understood from the perspective of a single lifetime. When we grasp the concept of stored unbalanced

energy, we begin to understand the shape of life. A person who has inflicted pain, injury, or death on others, for example, learns under the spiritual law by having to endure a similar fate or by balancing this energy in some other way, in a subsequent lifetime. One who has enslaved learns by being enslaved or perhaps by devoting his life to setting others free. Another who has given much in worldly possessions or other tokens of generosity, returns to receive the bounty of these actions. Thus, in this meeting of Eastern and Western religious thought, one reaps what one sows, either in this lifetime or the next.

The great secret to avoiding the effects of positive or negative karma lies in the attitude of neutrality, that is, in detached actions for the good of the whole. One is absolved of individual responsibility once this attitude is adopted. An example of this is in the behavior of those who use power entrusted to them by society. A policeman, when acting for the good of society (i.e., consistent with the laws agreed to by society), is absolved of individual responsibility for actions that may have resulted in harm to another. However, when found to be acting outside the scope of that authority (i.e., outside of societal parameters), then the protection is removed, and the policeman must receive the consequences for his actions.

Those who genuinely act in the name of a higher good such as God live by this principle. This is the highest state of consciousness one can exhibit while in human form. This is the state of consciousness of those who have unfolded to the highest level. This is the level to which the Law of Cause and Effect, through the exacting application of "tough love," inexorably leads all souls. The number of lifetimes it takes for one to reach this level varies from individual to individual. Death does not serve as an evasion of this path, and thinking that suicide ends it all is the worst of illusions. The essential point, however, is that no one, regardless of his position of power, can escape the consequences of his actions. How long it takes the individual to learn this lesson is a matter of choice.

As I progressed in my journey to higher consciousness, my understanding of these and other concepts of existence continued to expand and deepen. The journey to the heart of truth eventually took me to a point of understanding that will be expounded in later chapters. But before reaching this point in the journey, it is instructive to follow the stages of spiritual evolution that are presented in the confessions of this God-seeker.

(Selected Excerpts from)

PART TWO — THE DISCOVERY

Chapter 6 — Eckankar: Revealed by Truth

Paul Twitchell and the Real History of Eckankar

Paul Twitchell faced a great dilemma. He had studied under his spiritual master for about ten years and had numerous inner experiences that spoke of a great spiritual role for him. Eager to tell his master, Kirpal Singh, of the experiences they had shared in the inner worlds of God, he sent a manuscript (later published as *The Tiger's Fang*), seeking his approval. But Kirpal Singh rebuffed him, saying his experiences were incomplete or inaccurate. (In this respect, Paul's experiences with Kirpal Singh were similar to Graham's with Harold.) Upset, he asked Kirpal Singh to return the manuscript and terminated his study with him.

In 1971, Paul completely disavowed his former Master in the harshest terms:

I have never recognized you as a master, or that you give initiations, and that your work is not in the best interest of spirituality. Your teachings are orthodox, and as a preacher you are not capable of assisting anyone spiritually.¹⁷

Rather strong words for a master who earlier had evoked admiration and praise:

My Saints are Kabir...Rumi, Hafiz, Shamsi-Tabriz and Kirpal Singh of India.¹⁸

I have studied under many teacher [*sic*]. . . . I have so far had seven, some outstanding ones, including Sri Kirpal Singh, of Delhi, India.¹⁹

Paul eventually denied that Kirpal Singh had initiated him. Eckankar officially confirmed this in 1977 when Darwin Gross, the Living Eck Master of the time, through his secretary, stated:

Kirpal Singh and the Radha Swoami [*sic*] group tried to "claim" Paul Twitchell and use him for their own purposes, as have other groups from the East and the West. Paul . . . wrote a letter to Kirpal Singh and . . . stating that he, Paul, would take Singh . . . to court if necessary. Due to the threats and harassment and material Kirpal Singh . . . tried to use against Paul Twitchell by faking Paul's signature on many papers. . . .

Sri Darwin Gross, the MAHANTA, the Living ECK Master of ECKANKAR has stated that he knows for a fact that Paul Twitchell only had two ECK Masters during his earthly stay here: the Tibetan Rebazar Tarzs, and Sudar Singh, and no one else.²⁰

Darwin was of course mistaken in his assertion that Paul only had two masters. He was also mistaken about letters from Paul to his then master presumably forged by Kirpal Singh's group. This was part of the official story line of Eckankar until Harold had to admit that Paul had studied under Kirpal Singh — so clear and incontrovertible was the evidence.

How Paul, and subsequently Eckankar, believed for so long that he could hide the truth is baffling. It is an ironic aside to this whole affair that Paul died of a heart attack around the time Kirpal Singh received his letter. His death occurred five, if not fifteen, years before he predicted that he would die, vitiating his own proclamation that a master dies only when ready and in a natural and predictable manner. This added to speculation about whether Paul was actually a master or something else entirely.

EXCERPTS FROM PART II

Chapter 7- Twitchellian Techniques of Spiritual Creativity *[Deception]: The Ten Devices*

(Here are two of the ten “Devices of Deception” extant in Eckankar and many other religions)

Device Nine: The Many Faces of Eckankar

By going on record as supporting both sides of an issue, a writer is able to seek shelter on whatever side of the issue is convenient at the time. With many faces and multiple expressions of Eckankar principles, each individual inevitably constructs her own version of the teaching. I am convinced that there are Eckists with entirely different views of what it really is. Some of these conflicting views we have already considered. As I delved into the substance of the teaching, I discovered many faces of Eckankar that I did not know. They certainly were not the Eckankar that I had taught audiences over the past twenty-five years.

I did not notice the threats rampant in written works. I naively thought that this was the one teaching that did not hold on to its followers. I also believed that the chela is always free to leave. When I tried to reconcile my understanding of Eckankar with recently noticed parts of the teaching, I did find a basis for the version I accepted and taught. How do we end up with so many versions of a single teaching? As indicated, Eckankar masterfully stakes out all sides of the issues; the reader sees and accepts what he feels comfortable with and discards the rest. This is particularly true of material presented to newcomers. This is the benign image of Eckankar that most Eckists continue to hold until they confront its controlling side or they are exposed to revelations of deception.

Let us compare some contradictory passages. Some are from the free introductory booklet, *Eckankar: Ancient Wisdom for Today*,¹⁸² others from other Eckankar writings. Each passage responds to a question a newcomer might ask. The initial quote is commonly presented in introductory sessions conducted worldwide. The latter response reveals the dark side of the teaching contained in other Eckankar books.

Issue 1- How should the Chela view the Mahanta, the Living Eck Master?

The Benign Face of Eckankar:

[T]he Living ECK Master is not idolized. He is given respect and love, but he is not worshiped. It is the Master's function, not his personality that is important.¹⁸³

The Entrapping Face of Eckankar:

Each Living ECK Master has served as the Mahanta, which is God made flesh on earth. Therefore, we look to the Mahanta, for he is the representative of the SUGMAD [God] in our midst today.¹⁸⁴

The Sat-Guru [Living ECK Master] is the Son of God. This same expression was used to describe Christ during his stay on earth.¹⁸⁵

We cannot, therefore, consider the ECK Master as an ordinary human person, like the rest of us, for upon his shoulders fall the problems of the whole world. He is the singular one who is responsible for all things that go on within the universes of God. This sounds very strange but it is true.¹⁸⁶

After reading passages that exalt the Living Eck Master to the status of a "Living God," it is easy to see how an individual coming from a Christian background, for example, would

tend to deify him. This is especially true when phrases like "the Son of God," are invoked. This is not by accident: it is designed to tap into emotional wellsprings that are well known and fully anticipated.

Having started with the soft face of Eckankar the newcomer soon becomes absorbed into the teaching and, in time, comes to see the "God-like" nature of the Living Eck Master.

Issue 2- Does the Eck student have the freedom to leave should he or she choose?

The Benign Face of Eckankar:

The Master always grants total spiritual freedom to his students. They are never controlled or manipulated, and they have complete freedom of choice in every aspect of life.¹⁸⁷

ECKANKAR's respect for the sanctity of the individual shows itself in how ECKANKAR is taught and honors the rights, privacy, and personal space of others.¹⁸⁸

The Entrapping Face of Eckankar:

Within the Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad is found the quotation, "He who leaves the path of ECK, or refuses to follow it, shall dwell in the astral hells until the Master takes mercy upon him and brings him upon the path again."¹⁸⁹

Woe be unto him if he does [resign], for it is known among those who have reached these lofty heights and witnessed the consequences of the few who have. Those few have found that spiritual decay sets in immediately, affecting the health, material life and spiritual life, and brings death more swiftly.¹⁹⁰

This doesn't exactly sound like "total spiritual freedom," or like a group whose members "are never controlled or manipulated" and have "complete freedom of choice in every aspect of life."¹⁹¹ The double-talk could not be more apparent. The newcomer is lulled into a sense of total freedom until she asks too many questions, hints at dropping out, or otherwise acts in a manner that goes against something the Living Eck Master has said, done or written. For in addition to the more severe consequences for more serious acts of "betrayal," there are similar consequences for acts such as writing a book like this. Paul writes and Harold sanctions:

Many simply do not know or understand the nature of the Living ECK Master and will take it upon themselves to be snide with him. . . . They likewise do not understand the troubles that befall them as a consequence of their overt and covert attempts to belittle or ridicule the teachings of the blessed ECK. . . . One does not realize what these small acts might be, but on closer scrutiny we find that they are such minor things as belittling the Master's words; arguing with him over some point; the posing of needless questions; smoking in his presence; being doubtful of any promise that he makes, whether it be of what is to come into a person's life or some point on ECK; turning against him and refusing to act in accordance with his desires, which are for the benefit of the chela and his spiritual unfoldment; and acting snide with the Master.¹⁹²

Incorporating the guidance from this passage into ones consciousness clearly leads to obedience and likely, blind obedience. And herein lies the danger to the God-seeker. Reading this passage more closely, it is clear why, in Eckankar, there is little discussion about controversial issues that perplex or disturb its members. But, there are countless stories of the wonders of spirit at work in the lives of Eckists. These stories are quite real and truly inspiring. But they are not unlike those heard at revival services in a thousand churches on any given Sunday....

Device Ten: The Land of Contradictions

Eckankar, as we have seen, originated as a scheme in Paul's head around 1965. Consequently, it had no established doctrine, except his earlier writings. The positions in these writings changed dramatically after Paul decided to transform Eckankar into the world's preeminent religion. Together, these older and newer views present very different images of Eckankar doctrine. A seeker is likely to embrace one of these positions and overlook or ignore others. Some of these have been presented already.

In most of Paul's earlier writings (The Flute of God, Illuminated Way Letters, and Letters to Gail), he presents more traditional, albeit enlightened, views on a range of topics. In fact, the word "Mahanta" (a Twitchellism) is cited in the index to the Flute of God only once (even though he refers to the term "Mahanta consciousness" twice). In his one reference to Mahanta, it is used as a synonym for spirit, nothing more.¹⁹⁴

The Flute of God shows what Paul believed before he decided to invent the world's greatest religion. He wrote these books between 1960 and 1966, before he created the concept of "the Mahanta, The Living Eck Master," the manifestation of "God on Earth." How else does one explain the virtual absence of any reference to Eckankar and the Masters of the Vairagi Order in earlier works? If he knew and was being prepared to become "the Mahanta, the Living Eck Master" since he was sixteen, why does he act and write as though he is completely unaware of this fact?

There are two positions voiced by Eckankar apologists that help to sustain belief in the Mahanta, the Living Eck Master as one who "speaks for God on every plane"¹⁹⁵ and is the "the trinity discussed in the New Testament,"¹⁹⁶ "God made flesh on earth,"¹⁹⁷ and even "the Son of God."¹⁹⁸ The first effort to explain the absence of anything in his early writings about Eckankar, the Mahanta, or the Vairagi Masters, holds that Paul took a pledge of silence from age sixteen....

Paths to God

In his early writings, Paul presents the view that there are many paths to God:

I am aware that there are many approaches to the SUGMAD, for nobody has a monopoly on any path.¹⁹⁹

When anyone lays down the phrase that "My way to God is the only way," be careful for he is only trying to postulate us into submitting to him.²⁰⁰

This statement is so clear that one wonders how Paul could have reconciled it with later writings. Either Paul thought that he and Eckankar should be exempt from this exhortation, or he simply forgot that he had made it. But this was not just a fleeting thought, for Paul restated this position many times throughout his early writings:

God never established a definite group for the liberation of man. IT has given the power to many for the particular way to ITS kingdom. There are certain paths that one must follow, some better than others, because the masters of these particular ways have developed resources for their chelas in seeking the way. This is because men are on various levels of consciousness and not all can follow one universal way.²⁰¹

The declaration that there is no single path to God is an honest recognition by Paul, in his pre-Eckankar days, of a universally accepted truth. When I first read this, it rang true and continued as part of my belief structure throughout my years in Eckankar. However, I must admit that, in a number of my Eckankar talks over the years, I veered from this position in an effort to reconcile it with Eckankar's doctrine of the role of the Mahanta in soul's journey to God-Realization. Many others in this teaching started with this view but

were similarly persuaded to a more doctrinaire position consistent with Paul's later writings and current Eckankar dogma.

From an effort to sell personal spiritual insights to a small group of devotees, Eckankar grew into an organization with an army of followers. The decision to move from a simple teaching to a precursor religion required that the teaching become more doctrinal and exclusive....

Now, Eckankar was the only path to God, a view that was definitively expressed in the Spiritual Notebook and the Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad:

All these things can be learned through the medium of ECKANKAR, the only and universal path to God.²⁰²

Again and again I have pointed out that there is no other path than ECK. It is the original source from which all things spring, and anyone who tries another path is trying to start on a lower rung. It seems so foolish for anyone to use his human judgment in trying to select a spiritual path for himself, when it is laid out for him to move on to the original and only path to God.²⁰³

Paul also writes, rather messianically, "It is not possible to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven except through the teachings of ECKANKAR."²⁰⁴ This leaves little room for debate. Paul was talking about Eckankar the religion and, typically, drew no distinction between the fabricated ancient version of Eckankar and the one that exists today. Why Paul stated such conflicting views is open to speculation. Did he start with one position and gradually move to another as the strength of his movement increased? Did he present one position to attract followers only to surreptitiously move them into a more doctrinal and exclusive view of Eckankar? Or was there something else at work, explained only by Paul's psychological state? (The latter possibility will be explored in a later chapter.)

In a document prepared with the assent of Harold, the Living Eck Master, some attempt was made to clear up Paul's excesses. This statement clearly evidences that Harold was well aware of what Paul had done. Through his attorneys, Harold conceded that:

The word "Eckankar" . . . was not used to describe any religious doctrines until the mid-1960's when the term was coined, adopted and first used by Paul Twitchell, Eckankar's modern day founder.²⁰⁵

In spite of these admissions during the litigation between Darwin Gross and Harold Klemp (following Darwin's firing from Eckankar), Harold has never modified any of the Eckankar writings that contain the fictionalized and distorted version of Eckankar's history.

Need For the Mahanta, the Living Eck Master

Another issue critical to the God-seeker is the need of a master, teacher, savior, or guide in spiritual unfoldment. On one hand, Paul speaks to the responsibility of the individual for his own spiritual unfolding. On the other, he emphasizes that no one can make substantial spiritual progress without the Mahanta, the Living Eck Master. Individual spirituality leads to the development of strength and independence in the journey to God; the other road produces dependency on the Mahanta and the master, without whom spiritual unfolding is limited. These positions obviously conflict. A seeker remains confused or simply accepts the position he likes or one that seems consistent with Eckankar doctrine. Chapter 8 has, in part, been devoted to the issue of the need for a master. The reader is referred to that chapter for a thorough treatment of the subject. Further, the subject of the Mahanta and the core doctrines of Eckankar are considered in that chapter.

Responsibility of the Individual for Spiritual Growth

Here are Paul's views on the independence and responsibility of the individual as soul for his own spiritual development, a view expressed in his earlier writings:

The SUGMAD is, and of course, Soul is, since the latter is a part of God. When we understand this as Truth, then we learn that all a teacher can do is to put our feet upon a path and point the way. No teacher, living or past, can give us the actual understanding of Truth. It is wholly dependent upon the individual to make his way to Truth.²⁰⁶

If we get the teachings directly from the Supreme Being, by our own individual efforts, through our simplification of personal techniques worked out by our own understanding, we enter the true path in our own way.²⁰⁷

The notion that I am responsible for my own spiritual growth rang true to me and formed the basis of my spiritual journey in Eckankar. This was the view expounded in Paul's earlier book, *The Flute of God*...

Dependence on the Master

As definitive as Paul once was on soul being responsible for its own destiny and finding its own way to God, he was later equally definitive on the necessity of strict obedience to the Mahanta, the Living Eck Master, throughout soul's journey to God. On this later view, he writes, **"Only the Living ECK Master can offer the chela a definite method by which he can prove all things for himself,"**²¹¹ and **"No man comes to the SUGMAD except through the Mahanta."**²¹² Also:

Only the living ECK Master is capable enough to give truth as it is to the chela. Unless he is under the Living ECK Master, the chela's gathering of truth has little value. He is unable to establish any link with the Godhead and, more importantly, is unable to find a way to discover truth for himself. The Master is the link between the chela and the Godhead, for he is the Living Word Itself. And he does not work only on the lower planes and planets, but in every plane throughout the universes of God.²¹³

And finally:

The chela must be dedicated to the ECK. Dedication is his greatest asset. He must give this dedication to the Mahanta, the Living ECK Master because he is the only manifestation of God that can be recognized by those in the human state of consciousness. If the chela is not possessed of this quality of dedication and loyalty to the path of ECK, his incarnations are lengthened in this world, and he shall not be able to enter into the next worlds at the end of his present life.²¹⁴

These are only a few examples of Paul's insistence on the importance of the Mahanta, the Living Eck Master in the spiritual development of the chela. Paul began as a simple student. As a chela of the Radhasoami Master, Kirpal Singh, Paul learned first-hand the hypnotic power of devotion to and adoration of a master. Paul incorporated this device into his new religion with a subtlety and sophistication that would make Kirpal Singh envious. In addition to establishing the co-dependency relation of master and chela as a central part of his teaching, Paul went a step further by elevating the Masters of Eckankar to a status heretofore unknown. The chela's relationship with the master was designed to move from devotion to reverence:

Each Living ECK Master has served as the Mahanta, which is God made flesh on earth. Therefore, we look to the Mahanta, for he is the representative of the SUGMAD in our midst today.²¹⁵

The Sat-Guru [Living ECK Master] is the Son of God. This same expression was used to describe Christ during his stay on earth.²¹⁶

[A]ll the power of God must reach these worlds through the perfect instrument of the Mahanta, the Living ECK Master. There is no other way, for he is the distributor of the power.²¹⁷

Hence, the Living ECK Master is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. Each who has served his respective time in the worlds of God, including the physical plane, is known as the Mahanta, the Vi-Guru, the highest of all spiritual Masters throughout the universes of the SUGMAD. None are higher than the Mahanta for he alone possesses the shining consciousness of the SUGMAD.²¹⁸

It is hard to imagine how the average person, confronting such passages and coming out of a religious tradition of God worship, would react in any manner other than to worship the one who is "God made flesh." If one does not worship "God made Flesh," the "Son of God," and the "distributor of the power of God," whom should one worship?

Having retreated from Paul's more excessive positions, Harold entwines the two concepts again with all the old platitudes. Inasmuch as Harold has nicely resurrected an idea whose death he had proclaimed just two years earlier, it appears that Christianity is not the only present-day religion to have a resurrection in its history....

In a recent Eckankar publication, he writes:

Keep true to the faith. . . . There is but one way. Base your Vahana (missionary) words and messages on the Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad. The Shariyat is our holy book. It is a guide for all who desire to be true to the eternal teachings of ECK.²²⁵

The eternal teachings to which Harold refers include every reference that he had earlier proclaimed as the "Death of an Ideal." These include:

The Living ECK Master is always higher on the spiritual scale of God than any saints of the worldly religions . . . each in his time was the direct manifestation of God; the divine channel which God uses as ITS voice to speak to the worlds with ITSELF.

Hence, the Living ECK Master is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. Each . . . is known as the Mahanta . . . the highest of all spiritual Masters throughout the universes of the SUGMAD.²²⁶

Harold proclaims loudly about the "Death of an Ideal" while quietly letting the Shariyat proclaim his status as "the direct manifestation of God." Not once has Harold pointed to a passage in the Shariyat for reinterpretation. It is clear that he intends for the reader to take the passages in this book the way any follower would regard a "holy book" -- as the truth, the word of God. The chela is encouraged to "keep true to the faith," which means to base his words on the Shariyat.

Harold was not always so sanguine about the Shariyat. During the period when he was retreating from Paul's "God made Flesh" interpretation of the Mahanta, Harold also retreated from the sacrosanct status of the Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad:

Paul encouraged people to read the Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad and make their own study. He never said to take the words as holy, as the last word. You take the words and check out the teachings from within: Does this work for me or doesn't it? You have to know. And based upon what you know is how you conduct your life out here.²²⁷

This statement was reiterated in 1984 when Harold was apparently still going through a "true confessions" period in which he seemed to have a genuine desire to reform some of Paul's positions. Clearly, Harold struggled to find a way to be truthful without destroying the teaching. He finally decided to retreat gracefully from some of Paul's stances, demystify them, and, in the process, hopefully move away from Paul's self-serving history, doctrine, and dogma. Unfortunately, in his efforts to downplay the Shariyat-Ki Sugmad, Harold misspoke and directly contradicted Paul's position. Paul had specifically declared this bible to be exactly what Harold was now claiming it was not:

The essence of God-knowledge is laid down in these writings. Those who follow ECK are involved in the SHARIYAT-KI-SUGMAD for it is their bible, their everlasting gospel. All worldly doctrines on religions, philosophies, and sacred writings are offspring of the SHARIYAT-KI-SUGMAD.²²⁸

The ancient books of the SHARIYAT-KI-SUGMAD are indeed the true Light and the Word of God. . . . One will find within these pages an answer to every question man has ever devised to ask of any greater ones. All that which is truth is here now, within these pages.²²⁹

In light of these descriptions of the Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad, it would seem difficult for Harold to sustain his position that Paul "never said to take the words as holy, as the last word." Paul expressly intended that the words contained in these books be regarded as "holy." How else does one treat "the Word of God?"

Chapter 12 -- Holy Books and the Sixteen Crucified Saviors

In uncovering the devices used by Paul Twitchell to create Eckankar, I was struck by similarities to those used by the Church in creating its doctrine and dogma. A closer look at the origins of Christianity is useful to illustrate how tenuous is the undergirding of one of the most powerful religions in the world. It also illustrates the many techniques and devices that Paul Twitchell used, which paralleled those used by the Church Fathers. Whether Paul knew about this history and actively copied it in the formulation of Eckankar is not known. But as we will see, the similarities are striking.

This review is instructive because it is indicative of the origins of every religion that has at its center a mythical or historical figure whose life has taken on God-like proportions. The stories and myths that evolved have shaped their rituals and dogma. Indeed, most religions have become ritualistic recapitulations of their own history surrounded by pomp and circumstance. An emphasis on ceremony and ritual is designed to evoke emotions and reinforce the institution's belief structure. But these practices have little to do with transcendent truth and virtually nothing to do with the inner search that is indispensable to the quest of the God-seeker.

That religious practices are vital to the life of its followers is undeniable. But, as pointed out earlier, religions are classrooms in an eternal process of expanding awareness. Yet many religions purport to control access to heaven if not to God itself; otherwise excommunication or its equivalent would have no impact. Presenting the fragile foundations of truth that underlie these teachings is not intended to demean their importance in spiritual unfoldment. Nor is it intended to suggest that they do not carry positive principles and lessons. Rather, a closer look at the truth of these teachings is part

of a process that leads to spiritual awakening, which, in turn, leads to spiritual growth. Everyone must at some point break through the "Santa Claus Effect," the deliberate withholding of truth by a religion or society in the belief, perhaps well intended, that the faithful are not ready for it, or are happier and prefer living under illusion. However, unlike the Santa Claus myth, silence about certain religious truths has gone on for millennia. Religions, then, have become resting points of safety and security on the road to spiritual unfoldment, which, unfortunately have also discouraged or even forbade departure. The seeker must use other means to ascertain the truth about himself as soul and his awe-inspiring heritage as a spark of God. The keepers of the secret will not tell him, if by now they even remember themselves.

Old Testament Controversies

Debate over the origins of the Bible has been on going for centuries. So vigorous was the criticism at times that the field of Christian Apologetics arose to counter numerous assaults on the integrity, authenticity, and veracity of the Bible. Discovery of the true origins of the Bible does not diminish the value of its insights, though it has dimmed the light shone on many Old and New Testament stories. Religious scholars working within a fixed paradigm undertook the search for historical truth. But religious paradigms have so many layers of orthodoxy, dogma, and ritual that even the acknowledgement of a truth leaves the seeker only somewhat closer to higher truth, if at all.

An example of this is seen in attempts to resolve the centuries-old debate of whether the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, often referred to as the Pentateuch or the Torah) were actually written by Moses. Belief in his authorship was and is so strong that one would think that the entire faith hinged on its validity. In spite of obvious inconsistencies that suggest Moses did not write these books, the orthodoxy prevailed:

People observed contradictions in the text [Bible]. . . . It would describe Moses as going to a Tabernacle in a chapter before Moses builds the Tabernacle. People also noticed that the Five Books of Moses included things that Moses could not have known or was not likely to have said. The text, after all, gave an account of Moses' death. It also said that Moses was the humblest man on earth; and normally one would not expect the humblest man on earth to point out that he is the humblest man on earth.¹

The debate raged for more than six hundred years, with few scholars brave enough to question the obvious. In more recent years, the weight of orthodoxy has lifted somewhat from the backs of scholars and truth seekers. The new and more widely held view is that the "Five Books of Moses had been composed by combining four different source documents into one continuous history."² Eureka! After centuries, the debate was resolved, at least for the open-minded investigator. But the movement to truth through the refinement of orthodoxy remained an exercise in pedantry. The truth seeker was still focused on events of past millennia. He searched in the shadows of history to discover the reality of God that was and is within, always here and now. Old Testament controversy continues at an unprecedented rate, with challenges to the authenticity and veracity of most other books of the Bible. Indeed, there is increasing evidence that many parts of the Old Testament have their origins in the stories and myths of Egyptian culture.³

New Testament Controversies

The idea of the Bible as the word of God has evolved among many Christians to a more enlightened and historically accurate view that recognizes the labors of the men who

actually wrote it.⁴ What is most remarkable about this late recognition is the extent to which early Church leaders and scholars labored to deny or suppress the truth about the origins of the Bible and the history of Jesus. As we will see, truth was not their concern. Defense of orthodoxy was the motivation, and anyone who questioned it was branded a heretic or worse. However, the accounts of Jesus contained in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were viewed with great skepticism if not incredulity from earliest times. In fact, the first three Gospels, often called the Synoptic Gospels,⁵ were so similar in content as to likely have been drawn from each other. Indeed, some scholars have maintained that they are plagiarisms, so similar is each version.⁶ But even as alleged plagiarisms, there are numerous contradictions in the portrayal of various stories of the life of Christ.⁷ No less a personage than St. Augustine (354-430) expressed the view:

I would not believe the Gospels to be true, unless the authority of the Catholic Church constrained [forced] me.⁸

Well, it did! He was not alone in his incredulity. The Gospels contained so many inconsistencies and parallels to each other and to other religious martyrs that, as early as 160-200, Church leaders were questioning stories of the life of Jesus that were appearing, for the first time, more than 120 years⁹ (some say forty to seventy years¹⁰) after the purported death of Jesus in 33. One such Church Father labored to defend the faith from "pagan" criticism that claimed his new religion to be a fabrication.

Understanding their criticism about religious fabrication, yet holding to his belief in the divinity of Jesus the Christ and the Gospels, Father Tertullian, *an early Christian theologian and polemicist*, in an oft-quoted passage, used a rather extraordinary form of reverse logic to defend his faith. In it, he also seemed to be acknowledging the obvious questions raised by the historical anomalies in the story of Jesus the Christ. His statement "Credo quia incredibilis est"¹¹ ("I believe because it is unbelievable") is interesting enough, but he amplified it:

[T]he Son of God was born; why am I not ashamed of maintaining such a thing? Why! but because it is itself a shameful thing. I maintain that the Son of God died: well, that is wholly credible because it is monstrously absurd. I maintain that after having been buried, he rose again: and that I take to be absolutely true, because it was manifestly impossible.¹²

The charge that the Church had fabricated the stories contained in the Gospels, indeed the Gospels themselves, was made during the early years of Christianity. The charge had considerable gravity because there existed no written historical record of the life of Jesus coterminous with the years he is said to have lived and taught. This situation prevailed in spite of Church efforts, with varying degrees of success, to create documents establishing such a record.¹³ In spite of this known deficiency and more than 125 years later, there appeared, in a series of writings to be called the Gospels, a story so powerful and profound that, if it occurred, it would surely have been known and extensively recorded by historians and scribes of the period. But it was not!

Was this the reason for Father Tertullian's strange flight of reverse logic? Was this the basis for Augustine's declaration that he would not believe in the Gospels except if the Church forced him to? What did these early thinkers know or suspect that the religious leaders and followers of today are oblivious to, have forgotten, or actively suppress? Why was there such skepticism about early Church efforts to piece together the story of Jesus? The answers to these questions are as enlightening to the truth seeker as they are disturbing

to the true believer. They tell of a period in Church history that goes to the very heart of the truth about its doctrine and dogma. Even as it demonstrates the dangers of constructing a belief system on the zealous writings of true believers who intentionally invented or borrowed stories from history, it also confirms the power of such a belief system to impact the lives of millions, irrespective of the provenance or veracity of the story behind it.

In many ways, the history of the Gospels and their acceptance parallels the creation of Eckankar doctrine derived from the stories put forth by its founder, who also saw himself as the "Son of God." Both teachings sustain themselves not on the genuineness of their founders or the authenticity of stories that grew around them, but on the unquestioning acceptance of these stories. It is faith and belief that bring the stories to life and provide the spiritual energy on which inner experiences and modern-day miracles abound.

As I delved deeper into the mystery of the Gospels, I wanted to know who actually wrote them. Why was nothing written about Jesus during his life? Why were the Gospels named after disciples (two of them anyway) if they didn't write them? These and other questions were of particular interest to me for I found many similarities between the early history of Christianity and of the one Paul Twitchell created for Eckankar. Had Paul and his successors had the benefit of even several hundred years between Eckankar's formation and the present, the stories relayed in earlier chapters of this book might have been lost to modern investigators. Instead, revelations about Eckankar came during its formative stages. We can see who Paul Twitchell really was and how he built defenses for the challenges that lay ahead.

In this respect, the Eckankar leadership of today is in an even more difficult position than the Church founders. They had to explain and defend stories about a person for whom there were no records, only an oral tradition. The appearance of Jesus in later Christian writings resembles that of Sudar Singh of Eckankar lore about fifty years after Paul alleges to have first encountered him. However, unlike the Church, Eckankar must defend a person about whom there does exist a traceable history and written record, albeit, one that does not stand up to scrutiny.

Parallels between the histories of both religions are fascinating and instructive. To those in the new religion of Eckankar still concerned with the truth, they show how important it is to reveal the unvarnished story to the world, so that the dust of history does not hide the truth. For the Christian believer (I was once one), it sheds light on the intrinsic truth of the teaching and the motivations and intentions of Church Fathers vis-à-vis their followers. For those who wish to know this truth, the broad outlines of what happened are presented here with enough references to permit a more in-depth study.

The Early Role of the Church in the Formulation of the Gospels and Christianity

It appears that the Church encouraged the creation of writings that set the story of Jesus in the desired historic and eschatological context. Perhaps the greatest confusion regarding the Gospels is over whether Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote them. Assigning authorship to four of Jesus' followers was intended to convey to the faithful that they were written during the time Jesus walked the Holy Land. Ascribing false authorship to a particular writing was common practice in the early Church. It was known as pseudepigraphy, a practice we will consider in more detail. However, most modern scholars agree that the Gospels did not appear on the scene or have any mention in literature

until forty to one hundred twenty-five years after the death of Jesus. Views about the authenticity of these early documents range from more strident and incredulous positions such as:

Although they are held up by true believers to be the "inspired" works of the apostles, the canonical gospels were forged at the end of the 2nd century, all four of them probably between 170-180, a date that just happens to correspond with the establishment of the orthodoxy and supremacy of the Roman Church. Despite the claims of apostolic authorship, the gospels were not mere translations of manuscripts written in Hebrew or Aramaic by Jewish apostles, because they were originally written in Greek.¹⁴

Other views on the matter reflect a more supportive though not inconsistent view of the origins. Paula Fredriksen¹⁵ writes:

What then must be borne in mind when reading the canonical gospels for historical information about Jesus of Nazareth? First, the impression of orderliness conveyed by their connected narratives should not deceive us about their true nature: these are composite documents, the final products of long and creative traditions in which old material was reworked and new material interpolated. As they now stand, they are witness first of all to the faith of their individual writers and their late first-century, largely Gentile communities. Only at a distance do they relate to the people and the period they purport to describe.... [T]he gospels are theological proclamation, not historical biography.... Second, we must remember that forty to seventy years stand between the public career and death of Jesus of Nazareth and the probable dates of composition of the gospels.¹⁶

Admitting the unreliability of the oral tradition of Jesus, Fredriksen acknowledges that Christian scholars must stick to the written record about Jesus. However, Fredriksen fails to address the issue of the reliability of these written documents in light of the Church's avowed program of creating a written record establishing the historical and spiritual continuity of Jesus. She uses euphemisms to convey a faint picture of the Church's involvement in the creation of the Gospels such as "composite documents," "long and creative traditions," and "old material . . . reworked and new material interpolated." But euphemisms obscure the extent of the Church's involvement in creating the Gospels.

To uncover this part of the story, we must go back to the time of the Gospel's creation and see the practices of Church Fathers in formulating the story. When the unvarnished picture of the Church's role in creating the history of Jesus is seen, the integrity of the New Testament and Church doctrine must be reconsidered. From this perspective, the inherent flaws in the writings of today's Christian scholars, who look to the Gospels as proof of the reality of Jesus, are exposed. These writings are almost exclusively based on accepting as wholly true the testimony of the Gospels, when it is the very truthfulness and credibility of the Gospels that is in question. A close examination of the Gospels and how they were created exposes a vulnerability that renders them impeachable. This is a weakness at which scholars such as Fredriksen will only hint.

Pseudepigraphy, Pious Fraud, and the Greatest Story Ever Told

This discussion portrays a general atmosphere and philosophy that permeated the thinking and actions of Church Fathers from the earliest periods when the different versions of the Gospels were first formulated to centuries thereafter. For once the Gospels were canonized, the efforts of later Church Fathers were directed at reinforcing this anointed version of the story. This called for additional tales and myths to stimulate and strengthen the belief of the faithful.

It was essential for the Church to create stories around the existence of a personage that many, by that time, had accepted as real. What difference did it make? He was no longer

around, and, in any event, only the memory and stories of his existence survived. If real stories did not exist, then it was possible, indeed necessary, to create stories appropriate for one who would become the Christ. And what if Jesus the Christ was a myth? Were there not other religions whose deities were regarded as myths, yet were no less powerful and effective once followers believed? To this point, the famous lecturer and Christian scholar, M. M. Mangasarian argues:

And to the question that if Jesus be mythical, we cannot account for the rise and progress of the Christian church, we answer that the Pagan gods who occupied Mount Olympus were all mythical beings -- mere shadows, and yet Paganism was the religion of the most advanced and cultured nations of antiquity. . . . [I]f the worship of Adonis, of Attis, of Isis, and the legends of Heracles, Prometheus, Hercules, and the Hindu trinity, -- Brahma, Shiva, Krishna, -- with their rock-hewn temples, can be explained without believing in the actual existence of these gods -- why not Christianity?¹⁷

What is remarkable about this is that the Church actually encouraged the creation of myths around Jesus. It was necessary to elaborate on a story that was active but sparse on details. No one actually knew what Jesus said or did. It is this void into which "pious fraud"¹⁸ rushed, a practice sanctioned by the Church during the first centuries of its existence. The Church encouraged or at least accepted "divinely inspired" accounts of the life of Jesus, which were falsely attributed to Biblical figures, a practice called pseudepigraphy.¹⁹ Nevertheless, these were inspired writers who believed they were serving a holy end. Nor was the pious fraud limited to writings. It also encompassed the forgery, creation, and presentation of objects and artifacts supposedly associated with Jesus. The reason was simple. The more detail that could be created, the easier it would be to convince the faithful of the reality of the Savior. Aside from misdirecting the attention of the devoted to objects and artifacts for spiritual succor, these misleading objects, the fruits of pious fraud, continue to emerge in later millennia to challenge the authentication skills of science and to rejuvenate the leaf of the faithful.

To better understand this phenomenon, which would be scandalous if practiced today, we must understand the thinking of the early Church as it attempted to keep the faithful in thrall and counter the criticisms of pagan antagonists. Joseph Wheless notes:

[S]uch frauds of the Church were not confined to the Middle Ages; they begin even with the beginning of the Church and infest every period of its history for fifteen hundred years and defile nearly every document, both of "Scriptures" and of Church aggrandizement. As truly said by Collins. . . :

In short, these frauds are very common in all books which are published by priests or priestly men. . . . For it is certain they may plead the authority of the Fathers for Forgery, Corruption and mangling of Authors, with more reason than for any of their Articles of Faith"²⁰

It is hard to imagine that the Church would engage in outright fraud, albeit based in piety, but it was not seen in this light, even though it would clearly be seen so today. Whatever was necessary to convince an audience or to keep the articles of faith alive could be done in the name of salvation. When stories didn't fit, they were blended to make them fit. Several statements of early Church leaders further illustrate this point. Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, the great "Father of Church History" (ca. 324) was considered by many as one of the most ardent practitioners of pious fraud. Of his early participation in the establishment of Church doctrine, it is written:

Bishop Eusebius, as we shall see, was one of the most prolific forgers and liars of his age of the Church To such an extent had the "pious frauds of the theologians been thus early systematized and raised to the dignity of a regular doctrine," that Bishop Eusebius, "in one of the most learned and elaborate works that antiquity has left us, the Thirty-second Chapter of the Twelfth Book of his Evangelical Preparation, bears for

its title this scandalous proposition: "How it may be Lawful and Fitting to use Falsehood as a Medicine, and for the Benefit of those who Want to be Deceived."²¹

Sharing Eusebius's Machiavellian view was St. John Chrysostom, who, in his *On the Priesthood*, advised his fellow clergy:

Great is the force of deceit! provided it is not excited by a treacherous intention.²²

I did a triple-take when I encountered this passage. It sounds like the credo of someone who lies to us for our own good. But to be an active practitioner of deceit and to proclaim its power, even endorse its use, so long as intentions are good, is a startling statement coming from a Christian saint. Acknowledging the penchant of early Church leaders to stretch the truth in their zeal to make all things right in the name of God, Cardinal Newman, commenting on this rather extraordinary piece of advice from St. John Chrysostom, said:

The Greek Fathers thought that, when there was a *justa causa*, an untruth need not be a lie.... Now, as to the just cause,... the Greek Fathers make them such as these -- self-defense, charity, zeal for God's honour, and the like.²³

This is surely magic, for Cardinal Newman has miraculously transmuted "deceit without treachery" into an untruth that "need not be a lie." Another commentator on the practice, the Great Latin Father St. Jerome (c. 340-420), asserted:

To confute the opposer, now this argument is adduced and not that. One argues as one pleases, saying one thing while one means another.... Origen, Methodius, Eusebius, and Apollinaris write at great length.... Consider how subtle are the arguments, how insidious the engines with which they overthrow what the spirit of the devil has wrought. Sometimes, it is true, they are compelled to say not what they think but what is needful....²⁴

In case the good saint's position isn't clear, he is arguing that it is acceptable to lie if necessary to overthrow the position of the devil, a justification that could be easily broadened to condone "overthrowing" anyone who disagrees with the Church. While explaining the rationale for pious fraud, Jerome implicates the greatest writers and religious historians of the day, Origen, Methodius, Eusebius, and Apollinaris, in this practice. Obviously, these musings were troubling, even to Church Fathers of the day, for, in reference to Eusebius and the others mentioned above, he observes that they:

[P]resume at the price of their soul to assert dogmatically whatever first comes into their head.²⁵

And in a final startling note of honesty, he appears to express contempt for the gullibility of early Christian communities:

There is nothing so easy as by sheer volubility to deceive a common crowd or an uneducated congregation.²⁶

The Catholic Encyclopedia acknowledges the prevalence of this attitude:

Enterprising spirits responded to this natural craving by pretended gospels full of romantic fables, and fantastic and striking details; their fabrications were eagerly read and accepted as true by common folk who were devoid of any critical faculty and who were predisposed to believe what so luxuriously fed their pious curiosity. Both Catholics and Gnostics were concerned in writing these fictions. The former had no motive other than that of a pious fraud.²⁷

This disdain for truth, unless it served the ends of the Church, was the rule of the day. It colored everything that was written, said, and done from the earliest days of the Church's founding and for centuries thereafter.

But the practice of pious fraud was particularly virulent during the first four centuries when the foundations of the Church were laid. Nothing was as important as filling the void left by the absence of a written history or records on the life of Jesus. Church Fathers were given a free hand to invent and embellish whatever stories were necessary to sustain the Church and its following. And invent they did! St. Jerome,²⁸ who played a significant role in the translation and revisions to the Gospels, was also notable in this regard and actively demonstrated his attitude about the credulity of his audiences when he propagated such divine pearls as:

- The River Ganges has its source in Paradise.
- In India, there are mountains of gold that men cannot approach because of the dragons and huge monsters that haunt them.
- And his grandest tale of all in which he recounts the story of the 113-year-old hermit, Paulus, who had lived in a hole in the ground in a remote part of the desert for sixty years. In an inner revelation, he was shown the neighboring hole (four days away) of another hermit, St. Anthony, who was only ninety years old. Paulus set about to visit his neighbor and encountered several strange animals, including a half-horse, half-man, and other strange beasts know as Fauns, Satyrs, and Incubi. They conversed about the salvation of the lord. The good Father Jerome admonished the congregation, "Let no one scruple to believe this incident.... [I]ts truth is supported by [the fact that] one of those creatures...was captured and brought alive to Alexandria and sent embalmed to the emperor at Antioch."²⁹

The story was apparently told in such convincing detail and with such startling proof that communities became convinced. Such was the practice of pious "prevarication" to communities or to anyone else if it was necessary to strengthen belief in the Church and Jesus. On this matter, Mangasarian states:

The church historian Mosheim, writes that, "The Christian Fathers deemed it a pious act to employ deception and fraud." . . . The greatest and most pious teachers were nearly all of them infected with this leprosy. Will not some believer tell us why forgery and fraud were necessary to prove the historicity of Jesus? . . . Another historian, Milman writes that, "Pious fraud was admitted and avowed by the early missionaries of Jesus." "It was an age of literary frauds," writes Bishop Ellicott, speaking of the times immediately following the alleged crucifixion of Jesus. Dr. Giles declares that, "There can be no doubt that great numbers of books were written with no other purpose than to deceive." And it is the opinion of Dr. Robertson Smith that, "There was an enormous floating mass of spurious literature created to suit party views."³⁰

Pious fraud had gotten so out of hand, infecting everything in the name of Jesus and the Church, that Augustine wrote a treatise addressed to the clergy entitled *De Mendacio* (On Lying, ca. 395), followed twenty-five years later by a second treatise, *Contra Mendacium* (Against Lying) -- it always sounds more holy in Latin. These treatises rebuked the clergy for its fraud, but their main point wasn't nearly so high-minded. His principal concern was the deleterious impact lying was having on the Church. In fact, Augustine's treatise was, according to Bishop Wordsworth:

[A] protest against these "pious frauds" which have brought discredit and damage on the cause of the Gospel, and have created prejudice against it, from the days of Augustine to our times.³¹

Augustine was against lying, even if used to trap a heretic:

It is more pernicious for Catholics to lie that they may catch heretics, than for heretics to lie that they may not be found out by Catholics.³²

In an atmosphere permeated by pious fraud, such that Augustine found it necessary to issue his admonition against lying for a second time, it was notable that someone stood up against the practice of lying. However, Augustine does not come right out and declare a moratorium on lying. Instead, he declares that the priesthood should live by a higher standard than heretics. This was a step in the right direction, even though truth was still not a full partner in the religious practice of the day. This is evident in the position taken by Augustine on the Church policy of *suppressio veri*. He argued in support of this policy of suppressing or concealing the truth for the sake of Christian instruction. This practice of shielding the faithful from the truth in order to encourage belief in the doctrine and dogma of the Church is practiced to this day, as the Church has never disavowed it. On this point, Augustine wrote:

It is lawful, then, either to him that discourses, disputes, and preaches of things eternal, or to him that narrates or speaks of things temporal pertaining to edification of religion or piety, to conceal at fitting times whatever seems fit to be concealed; but to tell a lie is never lawful, therefore neither to conceal by telling a lie.³³

Augustine was sanctioning concealment of any information, at any time and in any situation, if deemed appropriate by the clergy. Such concealment was deemed acceptable provided no lie was told to effect concealment. There was obviously no consideration of the standard that to conceal the truth was to mislead, thus to knowingly foster a lie, that is, a belief in something other than the truth.

This practice of concealment, which is only today being exposed, constitutes and evinces what I have termed the Santa Claus Effect:

A state of belief or practice created and/or fostered by the active ongoing propagation of that belief and the simultaneous denial of facts or information that might challenge or destroy it, directed to a believer in the conviction that they cannot handle the truth at that time; or to perpetuate the belief in the patronizing opinion that it is in their best interest; or because it is in the best interest of the propagator.

When adults create or foster a story for the fun and enjoyment of their children, or convey a truth with euphemisms (such as the birds and the bees), that is one thing. But parents function as surrogates for spirit in whose care we are all ultimately entrusted. Even with such noble intentions, the child still feels a sense of betrayal upon learning the truth. But to exercise such control over an adult and intentionally withhold the truth is a violation of trust and is reprehensible.

As it turns out, St. Augustine should have included himself in some of his admonishments about lying, for he too told extravagant tales to hold an audience and enhance the power of the Church. In one notable example, he apparently couldn't resist a good story, even if he had to invent it:

I was already Bishop of Hippo,³⁴ *when I went into Ethiopia with some servants of Christ there to preach the Gospel. In this country we saw many men and women without heads, who had two great eyes in their breasts; and in countries still more southly, we saw people who had but one eye in their foreheads.*³⁵

Why all this lying was so rampant in the Church is largely a mystery. Perhaps it was that there was such a dichotomy between the Church hierarchy and the masses, that the former saw the latter as children, who needed stories to guide them and keep them in check. Yet, even with the greed and societal assertiveness of today, such sanctioned lying and deception is hard to conceive. As I read these accounts, they would have been even more incredible if I had not uncovered similar acts of fraud perpetrated by Paul Twitchell and

Eckankar. I had seen first-hand how it developed and how leaders would do whatever it took to uphold the image of their religion and their positions in it. Neither the Church nor Eckankar was concerned with the sea of truth on which the boat of their religious teachings floated. Their concern was to keep the boat floating and bring aboard more passengers. Those who boarded knew nothing of the port from which the ship had sailed or the course that had been set. In the eyes of the leaders, they were only the faithful; they didn't need to know.

Creation of the Gospels: The Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

Against the backdrop of creating a history in the name of God, we now examine the actual process by which the Gospels³⁶ came into being. Fredriksen provides some insight on the authenticity of the Gospels as well as the uniqueness of the events they narrate. She points out numerous competing and conflicting writings about the life of Jesus that were reviewed and considered for inclusion in the Gospels. Church leaders were well aware of the various writings that would compete to become the Gospels. They feared that different stories being told in different places by different clergy would lead to splintering and would undermine belief among the faithful. Something had to be done. Namely, one or at least a few accounts of "the greatest story ever told," had to be selected as the official position of the Church. So, notwithstanding the pious fraud and Pseudepigraphy that had stimulated the creation and copying of the many and varied versions of the Gospels, there had to be a winner. Some account of the life of Christ had to be selected that would best represent the Church, upon which everything else would be built.

Councils convened to decide which versions would prevail. One scholar who examined this period noted:

Half a hundred . . . false and forged Apostolic "Gospels of Jesus Christ," together with more numerous other "Scripture" forgeries, was the output, so far as known now, of the . . . first two centuries of the Christian "Age of Apocryphal Literature."³⁷

The unenviable job of making the selection and establishing the canon fell to Church Father and Bishop of Lyons, Irenaeus (ca.120-200), who settled on four of these "creative" works. Fredriksen notes:

[T]he canon . . . represents an attempt [by] one branch of the . . . church to produce order, to authorize only some of the growing quantity of Christian writings for its members. . . . The four gospels collectively stand as the survivors of a process whose principles of selection had more to do with competition between different Christian groups than with a disinterested concern for history. And once the choice was made, it was perceived and defended in terms persuasive and meaningful to its ancient audience.³⁸

Bishop Irenaeus first had to defend his decision on why he chose only four books out of almost fifty versions that were available, to make up the Canonical Gospels. The good Bishop provided this arcane explanation:

The Gospels could not possibly be either more or less in number than they are. Since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, the church . . . fittingly has four pillars, everywhere breathing out incorruption and revivifying men. From this it is clear that the Logos, the artificer of all things, he who sits upon the cherubim and sustains all things . . . gave us the gospel in four-fold form, but held together by one Spirit. . . .³⁹

Thus was the number of Gospels decided. The story of their origins is almost lost to today's Christian who generally believes that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John faithfully and laboriously recorded the words and actions of Jesus so that the world could hear and

know the good news. Certainly, there was a great deal of good news in these writings. They contained, as do most religious writings, a great deal of truth and wisdom drawn from many sources, albeit mixed with pious frauds that comprised its many stories. But this account of the writing of the Gospels is far different from what today's Christians -- including the clergy -- have been led to believe. Fredriksen's observations make it clear that historical accuracy about the life of Jesus was not of primary concern -- or even possible -- in the selection of the Gospels. Indeed, given the nature of the source documents how could it be? It was all created history, written by well-meaning clergy, but based on nothing but stories inflated over the years into the stuff of Gods. Fredriksen makes it clear that "competition between different Christian groups"⁴⁰ was the rationale for the selection of the chosen books rather than concern for truth.

But who did write the Gospels? One clue is found in the language in which they were written. The use of Greek as the original language of the Gospels is a sign that they were not written by any of Jesus' followers. Why would Jesus' apostles write about the activities of their lord and savior in a language that was not indigenous to their land or to them? If they were Jewish and spoke Aramaic, why and how could they possibly write in the high-Greek style of these works?

[A] Galilean fisherman could not have written what Kummel calls such "cultivated Greek," with "many rhetorical devices," and with all the Old Testament quotations and allusions deriving from the Greek version of these scriptures, not from the Hebrew original.⁴¹

The noted Christian apologist Norman Geisler glosses over this point even as he praises the erudition of Luke for the "high quality of the Greek" that he uses in writing the Gospel attributed to him. Jesus and his disciples lived and worked in Palestine, yet the authors of the Gospels make obvious errors in describing the geography of Palestine.⁴² Why explain to a supposed Jewish audience such details of Jewish life as "the Pharisees and the Jews in general never eat without washing the hands. . . . And there are many other points on which they have a traditional rule to maintain."⁴³ Obviously, such descriptions suggest a foreign writer catering to an audience that understood little about the Jews and Palestine. Christian apologists seem unable to answer these and many other questions -- and for obvious reasons.

Non-Gospel Sources for Jesus

There is no corroborating evidence of Jesus' life and works in the histories of authentic, disinterested writers. A possible exception can be found in the writings of Josephus, which Christian Apologists claim contains references to Jesus. Yet these have been found to be forgeries, as have all of the early non-Christian historical works attempting to establish the existence of Jesus. They were part and parcel of the age of pious fraud, an age so tainted by the pious but unethical actions of Church Fathers that scholars of today must hide or ignore the practice in order to make even a plausible argument of historical validity. There is simply no authentic record of the life of Jesus against which the Church renditions can even be compared. And while desperately needing such verification to establish the validity of Church claims, it was precisely the absence of such documentation that allowed pious fraud to flourish without fear of written historic contradiction.

We see how priests and writers of the time were inspired and sustained on stories of the life of Jesus. These stories inspired countless inner and outer experiences with Jesus.

In time, his reality became unassailable in the minds and hearts of the faithful, just as it is today. Truth has little to do with it. Belief alone created it and sustains it.

Thus, we have, in the case of Jesus and his followers, a person about whom there was no historical record yet around whom a mighty religion arose. He was reported to have performed public miracles. His birth so frightened Herod that he ordered the first-born male child of each family killed. He spoke to multitudes and shook up the entire region. Yet, somehow, he inspired not one word to be written by any historian of the time. And these were times with many chroniclers. One such historian, Livy (59 B.C.E.-17 C.E.) wrote more than 104 volumes on this period. While many of these volumes were destroyed (purposefully, some allege), no mention of Jesus can be found in them. One of the modern-day writers of this period wrote: "No literate person of his own time mentioned him in any known writing."⁴⁴

A Jewish historian and philosopher, Philo (20 B.C.E.-50 C.E.), similarly wrote nothing about this man who seems to have silently passed through, leaving no mark on the written record in spite of the historic, even monumental, events that were supposed to have occurred during his lifetime. In fact, of the more than forty other historians and chroniclers of the period, including Plutarch, the Roman biographer (46-120), who lived in the same area where large numbers of Christians supposedly lived, no mention was ever made of them, their religion, or their founder. Perhaps the strongest commentary on the historical validity of Jesus is:

The fact that no history, sacred or profane, -- that not one of the three hundred histories of that age, -- makes the slightest allusion to Christ, or any of the miraculous incidents ingrafted into his life, certainly proves, with a cogency that no logic can overthrow, no sophistry can contradict, and no honest skepticism can resist, that there never was such a miraculously endowed being as his many orthodox disciples claim him to have been.

The fact that Christ finds no place in the history of the era in which he lived... settles the conclusion... that the godlike achievements ascribed to him are naught but fable or fiction.... It would be a historical anomaly without a precedent, that Christ should have performed any of the extraordinary acts attributed to him in the Gospels, and no Roman or Grecian historian... make the slightest mention of one of them.... Such a historical fact banishes the last shadow of faith in their reality.⁴⁵

As indicated, even the most famous historian of the period, Josephus (37-95) appears to have overlooked the extraordinary exploits of Jesus:

[I]n the entire works of Josephus, which constitute many volumes of great detail encompassing centuries of history, there is no mention of Paul or the Christians, and there are only two brief paragraphs that purport to refer to Jesus. Although much has been made of these "references," they have been dismissed by scholars and Christian apologists alike as forgeries, as have been those referring to John the Baptist and James, "brother of Jesus." No less an authority than Bishop Warburton of Gloucester (1698-1779) labeled the Josephus interpolation regarding Jesus "a rank forgery, and a very stupid one, too."⁴⁶

PART FOUR -- JOURNEY TO HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS

Chapter 13 -- The Spiritual and Scientific Foundations of Higher Consciousness

The Nature of the Journey

My life has been a journey to the heart of truth. The pathway of truth is the only means by which soul can realize and experience the source of its being and what it truly is. This journey has taken me through fallow fields and others filled with a rich and wondrous bounty of insights and wisdom. All have added to my understanding of the infinite, that which I now refer to as the "ONE" or "ALL THAT IS." When I went astray, I was pulled back to truth by events that could not have been predicted, yet whose meaning was clear when they occurred. My encounter with Graham and the reaction of the spiritual leader of Eckankar to his journal were the catalysts that set me on this part of my journey. I discovered flaws in my paradigm of the God principle, which helped me refine my understanding of myself as a spiritual being and my identity in the oneness of ALL THAT IS.

I regret no part of this journey, for never was there a time when I was not learning and growing. During my journey's most trying segments, I encountered spiritual deception and misleading insights into the infinite. My discovery of this deception served to give me guidance that would keep the next leg of my journey on course. I am grateful for these experiences and for the awareness they brought. Without them, I would not have the appreciation I now have of how souls can so easily be misled, and once misled, how they often fight to remain in comfortable spiritual terrain.

Since I cleared away the confusion and deception Eckankar put in my way, my growth to higher consciousness has been breathtaking. Through intense inner and outer explorations, I have come to understand the nature of religions and the transcendent quality they all possess. By the same token, however, I have come to understand their limitations and how they can be spiritually debilitating. These insights are part of every person's journey to the heart of truth. At the center, it is simplicity itself. Mankind surrounds this simplicity with ritual, dogma, and endless ventures into logic, which have no outcome except an infinite cycle of questions and answers. Such is the nature of the pursuit of truth when limited to the devices of the mind.

The Journey to God-Realization and the Heart of Truth

The promise of God-Realization is not limited to incarnations of men and women. When the whole puzzle is put together, we see that all existence, from the lowest to the highest, is evolving to more advanced forms. Indeed, we are one of the channels by which it is evolving. How can one experience the love of a pet without intuiting that this beloved creature is preparing for a higher expression of itself? How can we not be aware of the conflicts that abound within our own bodies without sensing that there is something else going on quite independent of our wishes and self-interest? There is much more going on within our inner and outer bodies than we realize.

We can see in these structures a microcosm of the entire universe. Souls are embodied in each germ and cell of our outer shell, experiencing life and learning lessons that we, as the dominant soul of this collective, are struggling to control and direct. That is why it takes

so many incarnations in the human form alone to "get it all together." Thus, our experience here is not ours alone. We live in the company of other beings that are evolving as we are evolving. The more we establish harmony with all that we are, the more everything that composes our being unfolds.

Just as our level of awareness aids in the expansion of consciousness of other beings struggling for spiritual growth, there are souls far more advanced than us working to assist in our spiritual development. How could it be otherwise, for the Great Work of every sentient being within all universes is to assist others in the expansion of awareness? Just as there are souls behind us in the unfolding of consciousness, there are also souls ahead of us, often far ahead -- not better, not greater, simply more advanced. This is the universal love system in which we have our existence. Despite events that may appear to the contrary, all events lead to growth in awareness, which, in turn, lead to God-Realization and a greater self-defined role in the running of the universes.

It is an incredible universe that we are and in which we live. We cannot completely understand it through the prism of science with its limitations and, far too frequently, arrogant blindness (though this is rapidly changing). We can only understand the inner and outer universes through a more comprehensive process. This process involves not just scientific exploration of the outer world but also meditation and inner travel to investigate other dimensions of reality. The journey to higher consciousness requires a focus on the proper objective and an ability to look past form to the unity of everything. We learn in time that masters, like teachers, must be left behind. We learn that light and sound are but fireworks compared to the reality of the ONE.

We are all capable of seeing and knowing this reality; we must progress beyond the limitations of inner constructs that are misconstrued as the journey to God. The cosmogony and cosmology of the inner worlds propounded by various spiritual paths do have an objective reality of sorts. They exist to the same degree that "objective reality" in the physical world exists. But in the inner worlds, we have the capability to create instantaneous reality/illusion by the thought forms and beliefs that we hold. That is why the myths and promises of every religion are experienced by its adherents as they move into the inner regions.

These experiences occur either at the transition point known as death or through inner exploration encompassed in dreams, soul travel, astral travel or consciousness shifting. Thus, constructs of the inner worlds exist and are created by our imagination (and outside of our imagination through the imagination of others) but are brought within the reach of our experience through our beliefs and expectations. We can change these constructs and thus change the course of our inner journey by altering our beliefs and expanding our awareness. This places us on an entirely different track of inner experience and enlightenment.

There is no intrinsically valid inner journey, destination, or geography, for we are already there, which is to say, here. The outer and inner reality/illusions that we experience are only props that have been established by creative souls that have gone before us or by ourselves. These reality/illusions are no more inevitable, absolute, or final than our ability to imagine something different. As we shall see, moving beyond these inner and outer constructs to a higher and more lasting awareness of ourselves as God-soul is not as difficult as it may sound.

The journey to higher consciousness requires a careful balance of query, analysis, doubt, intuition, belief, inner awareness, and knowingness. In the end, falsehood is purged. Truth emerges with an immanent power that satisfies the most critical analysis. This truth pierces the varieties of forms that masquerade as religion, philosophy, and society itself. What is left is the center of all things, the only reality that exists. This reality is awareness, beingness, and "is-ness" -- the qualities of God-soul, whose true home is formless and spaceless. In time, we come to know the secret of all secrets that we are an expression of ALL THAT IS.

This chapter presents the foundation for understanding this conclusion. When coupled with the inner journey, we come to understand and know truth for itself. This journey to higher consciousness, indeed, to the heart of truth, passes through a doorway opened by a mastery of direct perception, dream travel, meditation, contemplation, awareness shifting, or whatever we wish to call the experience of transcending physical and other lower aspects of consciousness. It all leads to the stillness, the oneness that is the reality of here and now, the gift that we already have when we finally come to realize it. This is the end to which divine discontent propels each of us and the whole of humankind, the quest that is the reason for our very existence. It is the journey that takes us everywhere, only to learn that we are already here. It is the journey to higher consciousness, the journey to the heart of truth.

The Law of Unity

There are spiritual laws that define the manner in which the inner and outer universes operate and our relationship to them. Many of these laws have been discovered by physical science, in so far as their physical attributes can be discerned. Many others we have intuitively sensed in our life experience. Others remain hidden and elusive, understandable only when we transcend earthly consciousness. Together, these laws form the foundation on which all things operate, under which all natural and spiritual phenomena can be understood. The overarching law, from which all other laws derive, is the Law of Unity, or the Law of the ONE.

The Law of Unity embodies the concept that the universe was created and is guided by a single, conscious, intelligent force -- the unity from which all creation has emerged. ITS purpose, as best IT can be described, is to achieve expansion by and through the expansion of awareness of all sentient beings. To better understand this Law, it is necessary to understand more about the nature of ALL THAT IS and how our lives reflect what IT is.

The Illusion of Life

It is often said that we live in an illusion created by individual and collective assumptions and conventions of civilization. However, for most of us, the illusion is far too real to be recognized as such. It demands our full attention to simply survive and hopefully to prosper. The illusion of daily life becomes our reality. Thus, we shall call it "reality/illusion." Every experience of life is designed to expand our understanding of who we are and to peel back the layers of reality/illusion so that we can see it for what it is. Dream creation (an aspect of imagination) as well as accepting and living so many roles in life exemplify the myriad levels of illusion we have created.

In a famous example of how quickly we accept illusion as reality, a group of young men was recruited and taken to a location in Stanford University's Psychology Department, which simulated a prison. None of the young men had been convicted of a criminal act;

each had simply agreed to participate in an experiment. They were "prisoners" in an illusionary world in which they were watched over by another group of volunteers acting as "guards," though all were drawn from the Stanford's student population.

The prisoners were sprayed for lice, strip-searched, and put in leg-irons. The guards were given authority to create the rules under which the prison operated. The experiment went on around-the-clock, though each participant could leave at any time. With little more than these ground rules, the guards began to humiliate the prisoners in an apparent effort to break their wills. So completely did each group adopt their roles and live the illusion, that the experimenters thought it might become dangerous, and the experiment had to be halted after just a few days. The psychologists concluded that "circumstances can distort individual personalities -- and how anyone, when given complete control over others, can act like a monster." While the latter part might be a stretch, the experiment does illustrate the degree to which illusion can become reality, and how our actions, words, and thoughts can be influenced by illusion.

We encounter this same phenomenon everyday when we listen to the news and become emotionally engrossed in it. We see it when we identify with a movie character and feel what he feels. The roles we play in life (mother, father, priest, lawyer) and social groupings (race, sex, sexual preference, height, weight, religion, nationality) are all examples of the different levels of reality/illusion that we move in and out of throughout the day.

Another example of the power of reality/illusion can be seen in the competition to win, especially in team sports. Our games place the individual in an illusory matrix in which participants are often prepared to sacrifice their bodies to accomplish a result that an illusion presents as desirable. Once the prize is reached, however, the victor is often unable to explain what it all means. She must conjure up a meaning, for one is not intrinsic to the experience. It is only upon reflection that she perceives the growth of inner strength and awareness as the real meaning in the reality/illusion.

When we look at life in this manner, we see that it is similar to our dream experiences, except that the scenery changes more rapidly and the transitions are not as smooth and predictable. The significance of dreams has long been known to be a hidden, intrinsic meaning not necessarily related to the scenery or the characters, except symbolically. These are only a few of the many clues that parade before us daily that hint at the illusory nature of reality.

We learn and grow only when we are engrossed in something and react as if it is reality. When we watch a movie and focus on the cinematography, acting, scenery, script, and other technical components, we easily see it as a created illusion. From this perspective, we are little affected by the plight of the characters. We are above the illusion. We think of cleverer ways to manipulate the variables of the drama. We can then weave even more convincing illusions with ever-greater impact. On the other hand, if we become engrossed in the drama, sensing and feeling the experiences of the characters, we may learn the lessons they would learn. In like manner, the lessons we learn in the reality/illusion of life depend on the level at which we enter into and participate in the illusion.

At first, we are the effect of all of life, for we cannot see that we are in an illusion. We are less likely to perceive the lessons we must learn to move to the next stage in our emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development. In time, we learn to see the illusion for what it is and detach from it, even as we live through and confront the illusion.

Experiencing life from a higher consciousness lessens the emotional pain in life's illusions, but it does not blunt our response to the point that we become disinterested observers. We simply learn at two or more levels of awareness simultaneously.

Illusion: A Scientific Perspective

A scientific perspective of the reality/illusion of life is useful in understanding the process of creation itself and the ways of ALL THAT IS. Recent scientific findings shed light on this phenomenon, at least in so far as it manifests in the physical realm. In 1982, a research team from the University of Paris, headed by physicist Alain Aspect, performed a series of experiments that suggested a holographic paradigm for the universe. Aspect later expanded the implications of his findings to an even more profound cosmology. To better understand the startling implications of this research and how it supports the idea of an illusory reality, it is useful to review earlier research.

The television series Star Trek and the movie Star Wars popularized the idea of a hologram. A holographic image is a three-dimensional representation of a real object that visually represents all aspects of it, but lacks physical substance. The present state of holography is not even remotely close to its depictions on the "Holodeck" of the Starship Enterprise. Yet, it has come far enough to propel our understanding of reality/illusion from where we were not too long ago. One scientist described the incredible potential of the holographic paradigm:

[T]here is evidence to suggest that our world and everything in it -- from snowflakes to maple trees to falling stars and spinning electrons -- are also only ghostly images, projections from a level of reality so beyond our own it is literally beyond both space and time.²

Proponents of this view include the highly respected quantum physicist David Bohm³ (a protégé of Albert Einstein) and Karl Pribram, a Stanford University neurophysiologist and author of *Languages of the Brain*.⁴

Let's look more closely at this phenomenon. Holography is a means for storing and displaying on photographic or other light-sensitive material, a three-dimensional image of a thing or person. The plate on which the image is exposed is a hologram. When a laser light is projected through this plate, a holographic image is produced. The production of this three-dimensional representation of a real object is a clue to a much deeper truth. Could this obvious illusion demonstrate a principle that has important parallels in understanding the true nature of the cosmos? This question intrigued Pribram, who found that the holographic paradigm was more useful than other theories in explaining memory. His observations suggested that memories were distributed throughout the brain rather than localized in a particular part, as earlier research had suggested. He came to this conclusion on observing the ability of subjects to recall particular memories, even though the part of the brain thought to hold that memory had not been stimulated.

Similarly, Bohm found the holographic paradigm explained previously puzzling phenomena in quantum physics. While Dennis Gabor (Nobel Prize winner in Physics in 1971) is credited with the discovery of holography, Pribram and Bohm are credited with expanding this discovery into a paradigm that explains many formerly inexplicable phenomena. This theory not only explained natural phenomena, but also paranormal phenomena such as precognition, dreams, telepathy, etc., subjects that science had assiduously avoided. In short order, the holographic paradigm was used to explain near-

death experiences, the workings of the brain, the dream world, and synchronicity (unusual coincidences that are more than chance).⁵

Alain Aspect and his Paris team discovered that sub-atomic particles appear to instantaneously communicate with each other, whether the distance between them is ten feet or ten billion miles.⁶ Aspect's findings carry implications that most scientist are unprepared to accept. Bohm, on the other hand, went far ahead of his colleague and put forth the interpretation that objective reality does not exist, that despite its apparent solidity, the universe is a phantasm, a gigantic and splendidly detailed hologram. In other words, the physical world is an illusion, the full nature of which we are only beginning to understand.

Seeing the universe as a gigantic hologram is a useful though incomplete bridge to seeing the greater miracle of creation and life encompassed in ALL THAT IS, the ONE, or GOD. It has long been a tenet of higher consciousness that each of us is a reflection, an image of that from which we derive. The properties of the hologram illustrate this to some degree. When a holographic plate containing the image of an apple is illuminated with a laser beam, the object appears as a perfect three-dimensional image of the original. If we were to cut the plate with the image of the apple in half, then project the light onto each half separately, we would reasonably expect to see only one half of the image. But this is not what happens! Even though we project the light onto only half the hologram, we see a three-dimensional image of the whole apple. The image is smaller (the plate is smaller by half) but it is as complete in all details as the original image. What if we were to cut the plate into fourths, eighths, sixteenths, and so on? Each time we project the laser onto a smaller fractional part of the hologram, we continue to see the image of the whole apple, though proportionately smaller.

The hologram is more than a metaphor for our relationship to and reflection of the ONE. It has profound implications. It demonstrates that everything is part of the whole, even though it appears as a subdivided part. Bohm embraced this expanded concept of the whole, as have others, for it offers a useful way to see and understand the universe and our relationship to it.

In his General Theory of Relativity, Einstein astounded the world by arguing that time and space are not separate but are smoothly linked and part of a larger whole he called the "space-time continuum." Bohm takes this idea a giant step further. He says that everything in the universe is part of a continuum. Despite the apparent separateness of things, everything is a seamless extension of everything else, and ultimately even the implicate and explicate orders blend into each other.⁷

Science has made us aware of other examples of this intriguing phenomenon. Every cell in our bodies contains a complete record of who we are (our genetic history) and reflects the whole of which it is a part. This is the basis of cloning. Each cell can be used to replicate a virtually identical specimen, just as the fractional hologram can produce an image of the whole. In like manner, we are not only a part of ALL THAT IS, we are an infinitesimally small replica of IT. And, just as the cell can produce a fully developed adult of the same size and capability, so are we capable of growing to become that from which we derive. This concept may appear blasphemous or inconceivable at first, but it is consistent with the spiritual law of expanding consciousness and that of the ONE. Like the acorn to the giant oak tree, we too are in the process expanding to the ONE.

We are limited in our reflection of ALL THAT IS only by limits we set on our acceptance of a deeper understanding, awareness and acceptance of ITS nature and ways. All religions place limits on the expansion of awareness by espousing static spiritual paradigms. It is as if they are saying, "GOD is no more than what we know HIM/HER/IT to be right now; we have the answer, and that's that."

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