

**THE CONSPIRACY OF IGNORANCE**  
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**Some I Met Along The Way**

As I was walking toward my home, I came upon three men. The first man I saw was lying helpless on the ground and weighted down with a large tangle of chains. “Throw off your chains,” I said to him; “stand, and be free, as your immortal soul intends you to be.”

“I can’t stand,” he said; “perhaps you can help me.” And, attempting to aid in his release, I took hold of one of the chains and lifted it. “Hold on,” cried the man; “would you take from me the knowledge of my sinfulness, and leave me unremorseful? I would rather bear the weight of this chain,” he said. And so, letting go of that chain, I grasped another chain and began to lift it from him.

“O please,” cried the man, “would you take from me the faith in my savior, who was not made, but begotten of God, as Light from uncreated Light, Himself become man so that man might become ‘God—would you take away from me the Way, the Truth, and the Life?’” I loosened my hold on that particularly heavy chain and began to tug on another.

But, as I attempted to lift the chain, it was as though I was causing the man injury and pain, for he cried out, “O sir, that is the holy religious tradition to which I have vowed allegiance, and to which my soul is bound. I would as soon die as remove that chain! I gently placed the chain back in its place on his chest and stood upright.

“No one has wrapped you in these chains but yourself,” I told him; “and you alone can remove them. I’m sorry that I cannot rid you of them, but I will leave you with these words that may give you some guidance: Like the one you call your savior, you are God’s own Life in human form. God is your true savior, and He lives within you *as you*. Therefore, rise up, and throw off your chains.” And then, after so addressing him, I saluted him and continued on my way.

The second man I encountered was armed to the teeth with rifles and handguns, bullets and knives. “Why are you so heavily armed?” I asked him; “and who are you fighting?”

“I am a warrior of Allah,” said the man, “and I am the slayer of the godless infidels!”

“What godless infidels?” I asked.

“Those who do not worship Allah,” he said.

“But do not all men have the right to choose the path that they will take?” I asked, in an attempt to reason with him.

“I am simply following the mandate of the prophet,” said the man. “He has written, ‘Kill those who join other deities to Allah, wherever you shall find them. But if they shall convert, ... then let them go their way.’<sup>1</sup> And again: ‘Say to the infidel, if they desist from their unbelief, what is past is forgiven them. But if they return to it, ... fight then against them to the end, until the only religion left is Allah’s.’<sup>2</sup>

“All religions already belong to Allah,” I said to him, “whether He is called Allah, Hari, Yahveh, God, or Shiva; for all these names refer to the same Creator and Lord recognized as the universal Spirit dwelling within everyone.”

“You are mistaken,” the man insisted. “The God they worship is not the same as the God we worship.”

“But how,” I asked him, “is it even possible for there to be more than one Creator, more than one all-pervasive Spirit?” But I could see that this line of reasoning was having no effect, and so I took another tack: “The spiritual quest is *not* the pursuit of a worldly victory for a particular sectarian ideology,” I said; “it is not a pursuit that is advanced by physical conquest at all. The spiritual quest is an *interior* pursuit of the direct inner revelation of God as one’s own divine Self.<sup>3</sup> And when we do come to know Him, we realize that He can never be limited to any single name, concept, or form.”

“Are you not aware that there are many different religions?” he asked me.

And I replied, “Yes, of course, there are many superficial differences among religious traditions: the various items of faith, the various rules and rituals, are distinctly different in each religious tradition, but so what? They arose in different times and places, in different cultures with different customs, and were written in different languages; so, it is only natural that they would be different. Let them be! If your faith and your rituals help you to become aware of the Divine within you, adhere to them, and let others adhere to their own. God has made us innately free: we are free to choose our own scriptures, our own ideas, and our own ways of worshiping, so long as by doing so no one is harmed. It is incumbent upon us to leave others to choose their own ways as well. God has given each man and woman the ability to see things from their own individual perspective and by the light of their own intellect.”

For a moment, the man had nothing to say, and so I continued, “Each of us is given a mind capable of thought and judgment and self-rule; each of us is a manifestation of the Divine, possessing the God-given freedom of independent choice. Honor that gift—and give voice to it. In this current period of time, it is crucial to establish this truth on earth for all to share, along with the mandate of ‘Do no harm’. May Allah bless everyone with the possession of this wisdom.”

But the warrior of God was having none of it, and he pushed me away threateningly, and so I continued on my way.

The third man I met was in a mechanized wheelchair; he was noticeably crippled in body, and his face was drawn by his disease into a frightening grimace. He had witnessed my encounter with the other two men, and he came right up to me and said, “Do you not see that those men are deluded who place their faith in a God who doesn’t exist?”

“Oh, but He *does* exist!” I replied; “He is existence itself.” But this only brought forth a tortured laugh from the man in the chair.

“Well, my friend,” he said; “you may believe what you like, but science makes God unnecessary. This world is but a speck of dust in a random array of similar specks of dust in an endless extension of space. I have investigated and found only emptiness. There is no God, no invisible ruling

hand, no bearded archetype upholding this cosmic accident, but only the inexorable play of the laws of physics in a dazzling yet meaningless universal display.”

“You are mistaken,” I told him; “I don’t know why God has chosen to keep your mind in darkness and has not illumined your mind with His gracious presence. I only know that He has revealed Himself in me and has left no doubt that all this universe is His manifestation. I have seen the glory and grandeur of God, and how everything in His universe works in unison with everything else in the great unity of His mind. And I have known beyond the slightest doubt, that I am nothing else but God’s manifest appearance in this world. He is the entire ocean of existence of which I am but a single wavelet. Contrary to your opinion that God doesn’t exist, the truth is that nothing else exists but God. It is He who has inspired me with His own thought to sing His praise with His own voice so that all His children might know Him and know His infinite joy.”

“You cannot prove to me that God exists,” he said; “and I cannot prove to you that He does not exist. But know this: the origin of this universe can be convincingly explained by the laws of science, without recourse to the theory of divine intervention.”

“No, there is no proof of God,” I said, “—except for the sublime proof that is His revelation within the soul, which you seem not to have experienced. You have my condolences. But be aware that it is never too late: He is ever capable of illuminating your mind with the revelation of His presence. But you must be receptive to the possibility. You must open your mind and your heart to God if you wish to know Him.”

“My dear sir,” he sternly addressed me, “I am a man of science and I rely on science and the powers of my intellect to investigate the nature of the cosmos; I do not rely on fairytales.”

“Very well,” I said; “I wish you well.” And I bade him “Good day,” as we parted company.

Such were the three men I met on my way, each of whom was deluded in his own way and suffering terribly from his mistaken views. But what could be done? There’s an old saying that ‘you can lead a horse to water, but you

can't make him drink.' These days it seems that hardly anyone is willing to drink of the 'water' I'm offering. So, while I've been privileged to praise God for so long, it's probably time for me to reduce my activities, leaving the lifting of chains and reasoning with the unreasonable to those who are younger and more capable. Besides, I have faith that God, who is ever in charge of the unfolding of His creation, will bring all good souls home to His infinite Bliss in His own time and in His own way. May His Name be praised!

### NOTES:

1. Quran, IX:5, 6.
2. Quran, VIII:39, 40. Also II:191-193. This scriptural doctrine of 'conversion or death' was no doubt a highly expedient factor in the rapid expansion of Islam throughout the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. But today it is only the relatively few radical Islamic fundamentalists who regard this doctrine as still valid. They have adopted this policy as the foundation of their current universal *jihad* aligned against the entire rest of the world. But, I have it on good authority that for the great majority of all Muslims, this doctrine is considered to be a remnant of an antiquated past and no longer a valid or relevant portion of Islamic scripture.
3. "The spiritual quest is an *inner* pursuit of the direct inner revelation of God as one's own divine Self." Some of the greatest mystics of the Islamic tradition (known as 'Sufis') were followers of this spiritual quest—mystics such as Hasan al-Basri, Rabi'a Adawiyya, Dhu'n-Nun, Beyizid Bistami, Abu'l-Husayn an-Nuri, Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj, Muhammed ali Ibn Arabi, Fakhruddin Iraqui, and Jalaluddin Rumi, the account of whose lives and teachings may be found in Abhayananda, *History of Mysticism*, Atma Books, 1987 (freely downloadable at the download page of my website: [www.themysticsvision.com](http://www.themysticsvision.com).)

### Can You Not See?

Is there anyone who cannot see that the organizations of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, etc., are simply instruments for separating people into enclaves of partisans, instead of bringing diverse partisans together in the love of God? We have separated ourselves into what are in fact political camps, each with its own limited perspective on life's meaning and history;

and we call that 'religion'. Do we really think this mockery is 'religion'?

It appears that we want everyone to know that we are totally committed to the ideals and tenets of your own club, and that those tenets expounded by other clubs are simply wrong, perhaps criminal, and definitely despicable. And the members of each of the different clubs holds the exact same opinion regarding the other clubs. Has it ever occurred to you that you are *all* wrong? Religion, by its very definition, is all-inclusive, recognizing that *all* beings are included in God's all-enfolding creation, governance, and providence. It's not about that historical person who is your favorite religious representative and who you are convinced is Divinity incarnate; it's about the all-inclusive Divinity of each of us; it's about bridging the separation between yourself and God, and eventually coming to know the two as one.

Are we all insane? Are we unable to broaden our parameters? Can't we learn to see from the all-encompassing perspective of God, the one all-pervasive Spirit? Our opinion regarding the divine status of this or that historical personage is not important. It is the direct knowledge of God that is important! So, what if Jesus attained that knowledge? How has that changed what *you* have attained? At a sports event, all the partisans of the home team stand up and give each other high-fives whenever their team scores. But I've always wondered, what did the people in the stands have to do with it? Why are they so proud of themselves? And, likewise, why are those who regard themselves as followers of Jesus, or Muhammed, or Krishna, or Buddha so proud of themselves?

So, you are a Christian! So, you are a Muslim! Have you known that one Spirit who contains, includes, and watches over all of you—Christian, Jew, and Muslim alike? Grow up! As a society, you are currently in a shameful state! You profess to love the fellow club-members who are on your team, and you congratulate yourselves that you are members of so prestigious a club, but you hate the members of the other club, the other party—even though you know next to nothing about them. What a lovely religion! You seem to have no clue whatsoever!

My dear brothers and sisters, I have encouraged you and attempted to inspire you for lo, these many years. And all the while I have grown older, until I am scarcely able to urge you on. I so want you to know God, to receive His

bountiful Grace, but, as you must know, I can only lead you to the water; whether or not you drink of it is entirely in His hands.

But please know that I have nothing to apologize for. I have told you nothing but the truth, I have shown you the path. I have rooted for you all the way. If you have not yet been the beneficiary of His Grace, I regret it, but I have not led you astray. The prize is there within your reach. It is eternally there within you. I can only pray along with you that the Lord will reveal it to your soul!

### **A Pertinent Question**

In the first century, a young Jewish man named Jesus declared to his companions that he had experienced a divine revelation. Today, nearly everyone has heard the story of Jesus' revelation; but here's a question you've probably never considered: 'If you had been a neighbor of Jesus in those days in which he lived way back in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, do you think you would have believed his story?' You can't really know for sure, of course, but do you think that, having known him as a sensible young man, his story would have seemed credible to you? Imagine yourself sitting with him and listening as he told of the remarkable experience he had while attending a baptism ceremony at the river Jordan with John the Baptist. Would you have believed him? Would you have believed that he had experienced the divine revelation that he was 'in God and God in him, and that all this world was the kingdom of God'? Would you believe that this young man had truly experienced that he and God, the Father, were one?

Would you have said, "Well, I have heard of people having such a personal experience of God; and what you describe seems to be a true experience. You are certainly very fortunate"? Or would you have said, "Jesus, my boy, you've experienced a hallucination. But nothing to worry about; it was probably just something you ate."

What if, instead of Jesus, it was someone you know today who experienced such a revelation, would you believe them? What if it was your brother? And what if you had never before heard of anyone having such an experience? It is almost certain that Jesus' brothers and sisters had never heard of such experiences either and were incredulous at hearing of Jesus'

revelation. No doubt, they, as well as his parents, regarded him sadly as deluded. But, today there is no excuse for such ignorance! It is high time that you and all religious people became educated regarding such spiritual experiences. Learn what you need to know: You can start by reading my two books, *The Supreme Self*, which tells the story of my own spiritual experience, and *History of Mysticism*, which is a documented and reliable history of some of the people throughout the ages who have also known such a spiritual experience, many of whom, like Jesus in the first century, suffered greatly due to the widespread ignorance and narrow-mindedness of the people at the time.

### **The Culture of Secrecy**

There is so much to be learned about our human nature from the famous mystic-teachers of the past, and yet, over the years, the subject of the human experience of the Divine has always been shrouded in secrecy. In ancient Greek and Roman societies, those rare and subtle 'mystical experiences' were regarded as belonging exclusively to members of the secret 'mystery' schools. Teachings about mysticism or mystical experience could be found only among the Adepts and initiates of those secret schools.

Even as late as the 3rd century of the Current Era, the mystic-philosopher, Plotinus, repeated the ancient warning that matters relating to mystical experience were "Not to be told, not to be written." The obvious reason for this is that, in the hands of the unlearned, the uninitiated, mystical knowledge is very likely to be misinterpreted and misrepresented, and those who spoke of it ran the risk of being persecuted by the ignorant. In those times, as well as today, one would certainly be ill-advised to bandy such mystical knowledge about in the public marketplace, as a certain young Palestinian mystic of the first century learned, much to his great chagrin.

Though the interior experience of Plotinus (third century) was identical to that of Jesus, Plotinus was acutely aware that he could not openly announce his mystical experience to the commoners of Rome; rather, he spoke of his own mystical experience with only a few close students of philosophy, and his circle was very exclusive and very secret. Even to this day, only the few, the advanced elite among spiritual seekers, are able to access, appreciate, and find joy in the great spiritual wisdom of Plotinus. And yet, it seems to



me, that there is so much benefit to be had by the entire society through an open sharing of spiritual knowledge by those to whom it is revealed, and so much loss accrued to the whole society without it, that I believe the benefit of sharing this knowledge by those who have experienced it greatly outweighs the risk of its corruption by the foolish or its danger to the one who shares it.

Great, liberating knowledge is not to be hidden and relegated to whispers behind doors because of the fear of recriminations from religious fanatics. The more it is shared, the more accepted it will become, and understanding will increase in even greater circles, expanding to benefit more of those who would, otherwise, suffer in the dark and lonely blindness of ignorance. Hasn't the world done that for long enough?

### **The Conspiracy of Ignorance**

Mysticism is a revolutionary ideology. It was revolutionary in the times prior to Jesus, and it is still revolutionary. It goes against the complacency of the followers of traditional religious orthodoxy and is therefore always regarded as 'the enemy' by the ignorant majority. For this reason, every influential mystic, from Heraclitus onward, has been persecuted and denounced by the representatives of the established religious tradition.

Today, as ever in the past, that ignorant majority is predominant. As always, they are content to remain oblivious to the past and to the great and lasting legacy of both the ancient and recent mystics and their revelations; and they blindly strike out against any effort to educate them. Such entrenched ignorance can only be vanquished one person at a time, and too often any real progress in understanding comes only after an entire generation dies off and is replaced. It is true that ignorance is an affliction affecting individuals, but when that ignorance becomes the acceptable norm, it must be regarded as a conspiracy, a universal conspiracy of ignorance.

In fact, this conspiracy of ignorance has existed as part of the human legacy for thousands of years, and has always had the support of the "respectable" institutions and persons who rule this world from the centers of government power, from the pulpits of churches, mosques and temples, from the universities and all of the schools, from the newsrooms throughout the

world, and from all of the purveyors of public information, permeating all society and influencing all the ordinary people on the street; in short, this conspiracy is made up of and includes *all of you*.

A conspiracy of ignorance requires complicity from everyone and can only be countered by the willingness to honestly consider extraordinary new information, and to accept that information where it is universally and unassailably valid. I only ask that you investigate with an open mind the many declarations by countless honorable people regarding the ‘mystical experience’ that occurred in them, weigh their testaments, and draw your own conclusions. The evidence is staggeringly immense; people from all over the globe, from every historical period, have given testimony of a common interior experience of eternal Being that is transpersonal and all-inclusive.<sup>1</sup> Such a revelatory vision may go by the name of “mystical experience”, “spiritual experience”, or any number of other labels, but it is undeniably a God-given revelation of the underlying spiritual nature of this universe and everything and everyone in it.

Once realized and understood, the knowledge conveyed by the mystics will transform your world and refashion your life and the lives of all of us. Once the unanimous declarations of the mystics, who are the seers of our spiritual reality, are accepted as real and true, the truths revealed may be assimilated into our daily lives and given a central place in our thoughts and in our intellectual communications. The great mystical truths must become acknowledged and announced from the centers of power, from the pulpits, from the newsrooms, from the classrooms, and from all of us, if the world is to be truly revolutionized by the truth of our spiritual reality. Stand with me, brothers and sisters; boldly take your stand against the universal conspiracy of ignorance! Do whatever you can to let people know the liberating message of the mystics. Spread the word!

**NOTE:**

1. If you wish to learn more about the great mystics of times past and their unwavering message, read my *History of Mysticism*. It is available in PDF format for free download at: [www.themysticsvision.com](http://www.themysticsvision.com).

## A Greater Truth

Divine revelation is real. God-realization is real. Please understand that Jesus was not the only one who was visited by Grace, not the only one to know his own divinity and announce it to the world. The revelation of truth that dawned in Jesus has dawned in others and has dawned in me. The same truth that Jesus announced I have announced. It is a truth that *must* be heard—if not today, then tomorrow. It is the greatest of truths, and it *will* be heard. So, open up your minds, my friends and countrymen: A greater truth than you have ever known or imagined is dawning—once again!

I may appear a solitary figure paddling against the tide, but I am not alone. I am one among many thousand souls who have known the Father of all souls. Our combined voices will one day overtake the current and turn the creeping tide, for we have His truth behind us and within us, and we have His uplifting hands to carry us forward. We cannot be stopped. And one day you must join us. We are truth and we are legion, and our voices are His own.

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