

**THE MYSTIC'S VISION:
ESSENTIAL ARTICLES
OF SWAMI ABHAYANANDA**

Volume One

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The Essential Articles, Vol. One

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Introduction

The essays, poems, and other writings that make up this volume of the Essential Articles were not originally composed as parts of a larger work, but were independent pieces written on the spur of the moment according to unique moments of inspiration occurring over the course of several decades. Each short piece first appeared independently on my website, “The Mystic’s Vision” (www.themysticsvision.com). But I saw that these various brief writings centered around only a few mystical or metaphysical topics, and that these short pieces could easily be consolidated, combined to form a broader informative treatment of each of those few important metaphysical topics.

And so, each of these metaphysical topics then became the chapters of this little book, each chapter containing an expanded treatment of that specific topic. And now, rather than search through all my writings for those that speak to a specific mystical or metaphysical topic, you can now easily find those writings that reflect my best thoughts about a particular topic simply by searching the chapter headings of this collection.

It is my sincere wish that this collection of my combined reflections will prove to be a beneficial contribution to your own spiritual understanding. Blessings on you all.

—Swami Abhayananda, February 18, 2019

1. ABOUT MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

**A Compilation of Articles from The Mystic's Vision by
Swami Abhayananda**

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A Gift To Be Shared

We all realize that we possess a perspective on the world that is entirely self-centered. Each of us is the center of our own world, the subjective focal point round which everything else turns. My experience is different from your experience; yours is different from mine. And, while we can verbally share our experiences and our perspectives with one another, if those experiences and perspectives are not *personally* acquired, they remain mere hearsay, and do not have the same affect that *personal* experiences do.

Despite this acknowledged incommunicability of personal experiences, I have spent a good portion of my life attempting to convey to others some sense of a mystical experience of my own that I feel has some real importance for everyone, and therefore needs to be communicated.¹ It is an experience that occurred to me more than fifty years ago, and yet it is a timeless one, in that it was an experience of eternity itself. Strangely enough, I had vowed to God to give pronouncement to this experience even before it was given to me: "Let me be one with Thee," I prayed, "not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory, for the benefit of all Thy children." I can only explain the uncharacteristic selflessness of this prayer as being itself the work of God. And, of course, since God granted my request, you can well understand that I am not only obligated but am resolutely committed to praising God in His glory for your benefit, and for the benefit of everyone.

When Jesus first described the mystical experience that occurred in him during a baptism ceremony on the banks of the Jordan river, the term, "mystical experience" had not yet been coined. Today, it is a commonly recognized term, and yet the experience it connotes is still not yet fully understood. This is because it is an experience not of the body or the mind, but of the soul, and it is described by those who have experience it in various ways, according to the intensity or profundity of each individual's experience.

In the early twentieth century, William James pointed out in his book, *The Varieties*

of Religious Experience, that religious or mystical experience occurs in a myriad of ways, as though on a spectrum, from a vague and momentary sense of God's love filling the universe to a complete immersion in the Divine, in which one experiences their separate identity to be merged in and made one with the universal Spirit. Each instance of mystical experience has its own unique characteristics, and each experiencer appears to be absorbed in the Divine Light to a greater or lesser degree. For some, it is but a momentary mood or fleeting awareness, and for some others it is a prolonged period of a life-transforming 'union' with God, and the awareness of "oneness" with the Father of all Creation.

I am well aware that it is as true today as it was in the time of Jesus or Plotinus that the great majority of the people are ignorant of the existence of such mystical experience. Despite the many learned studies and the many available accounts of mystical experience by well-reputed people throughout the ages, the majority of the people remain as ignorant as before. Why is this so? It is so because the people comprising the ignorant majority do not have personal knowledge of mystical experience in their own lives and are therefore extremely reluctant to believe that such experiences have occurred to others or that they are relevant to their own lives. I understand this well, as I was once a member of that ignorant majority. And yet, today, I would say to that majority: the very fact that a few souls have experienced divine revelations *does* have a major relevance to your own lives. Mystical experience is a revelation of the nature of the reality in which all of us live. It is as relevant to you as it is to those who are the direct recipients of that experience.

God's gracious gift to me of mystical vision was undoubtedly meant for all of us. It was a rare gift of the knowledge that this world is His own, that you are His own, that nothing in the universe is outside of His divine domain; that if we can fully comprehend this truth, we will be able to see His love, and His wisdom in all that is created and know His blissful presence in our own lives. For He is the air that fills our lungs; He is the awareness that allows us to experience and to know; He is the kindness that overflows in our hearts. Open your mind to Him, and know the unlimited wonder and joy of being, for your being is *His* being; your being is the expression of His infinite love.

This God-given vision was my own personal experience, to be sure, but it is His wish, and therefore it is my wish as well, that you come to know Him in yourself. Look to Him for all that you wish for in this life, and you will be fulfilled beyond your wildest dreams. And, if you are very fortunate, He may also grant to you, as He did to me, the vision of your timeless divinity in Him. So, may it be.²

NOTES:

1. If you would like to read a detailed account of my experience of God, please see my book, *The Supreme Self*, available on my website as a free download.
2. *Belief* in God is ultimately unsatisfactory; one must come to *know* Him. Even if we *believe* something with all our heart and soul, it is not the same as *knowing*. *Knowing* is a personal first-hand experience of that which is known. *Knowing* is not a surety based on someone else's say so, regardless of however reliable that person may be, regardless of what religious bigots may say. And so, you may *believe* what I say, or what Jesus or Moses or Muhammed or any other revered spiritual seer may say, but neither you nor I may truly say, "I know," until we have *personally* experienced that truth first-hand in our own being.

The Unchanging Testament

Mysticism is that point of view which claims as its basis an intimate knowledge of the one source and substratum of all existence, a knowledge, which is obtained through a revelatory experience during a rare moment of clarity in contemplation. Those who claim to have actually experienced this direct revelation constitute an elite tradition, which transcends the boundary lines of individual religions, cultures and languages, and which has existed, uninterrupted, since the beginning of time. Mystical experience is, as Aldous Huxley points out, the source of the "perennial philosophy" that resurfaces again and again throughout history in the teachings of the great prophets and founders of all religions.

When we study the many speculative philosophies and religious creeds which men have espoused, we must wonder at the amazing diversity of opinions expressed regarding the nature of reality; but when we examine the testimonies of the mystics of past and present, we are struck by the unanimity of agreement between them all. Their methods may vary, but their ultimate realizations are identical in content. They tell us of a supramental experience, obtained through contemplation, which directly reveals the Truth, the ultimate, the final, Truth of all existence. It is this experience, which is the hallmark of the mystic; it goes by different names, but the experience is the same for all.

By many of the Christian tradition, this experience is referred to as "the vision of God"; yet it must be stated that such a vision is not really a "vision" at all in the sense in which we use the word to mean the perception of some 'thing' extraneous to ourselves. Nothing at all is perceived in "the vision of God"; rather, it is a sudden

expansion, or delimitation, of one's own awareness which experiences itself as the ultimate Ground, the primal Source and Godhead of all being. In that "vision," all existence is experienced as Identity. This world is experienced as 'the kingdom of God.'

We first hear of this extraordinary revelation from the authors of the Upanishads, who lived over three thousand years ago: "I know the Spirit supreme," said Svetasvatara, "whose grace moves the hearts of men."¹ "He is the Eternal whom the sages see as the source of all creation," said the author of the Mundaka Upanishad.² "[There] a man has all, for he is one with the ONE."³ About five hundred years later, another, a young prince named Siddhartha, who became known as the Buddha, the enlightened one, sat communing inwardly in the forest, when suddenly, as though a veil had been lifted, his mind became infinite and all-encompassing: "I have seen the Truth!" he exclaimed; "I am the Father of the world, sprung from myself!"⁴ And again, after the passage of another five hundred years, another young man, a Jew, named Jesus, of Nazareth, sat in a solitary place among the desert cliffs of Galilee, communing inwardly, when suddenly he realized that the Father in heaven to whom he had been praying was his very own Self; that he was, himself, the sole Spirit pervading the universe; "I and the Father are one!" he declared.⁵

Throughout history, this extraordinary experience of unity has repeatedly occurred; in India, in Rome, in Persia, in Amsterdam, in China, devout young men and women, reflecting on the truth of their own existence, experienced this amazing transcendence of the mind, and announced to everyone who would listen that they had realized the truth of man and the universe, that they had known their own Self, and known it to be the All, the Eternal. And throughout succeeding ages, these announcements were echoed by others who had experienced the same realization: "I am the Truth!" exclaimed the Muslim, al-Hallaj; "My Me is God, nor do I recognize any other Me except my God Himself," said the Christian saint, Catherine of Genoa. And Rumi, Jnaneshvar, Milarepa, Kabir and Basho from the East, and Eckhart, Boehme and Emerson from the West, said the same.

These assertions by the great mystics of the world were not made as mere philosophical speculations; they were based on experience—an experience so convincing, so real, that all those to whom it has occurred testify unanimously that it is the unmistakable realization of the ultimate Truth of existence. In this experience, called *samadhi* by the Hindus, *nirvana* by the Buddhists, *fana* by the Muslims, and "the mystic union" by Christians, the consciousness of the individual suddenly becomes the Consciousness of the entire vast universe. All previous sense of duality is swallowed up in an awareness of indivisible unity. The man who previously regarded himself as an individualized soul, encumbered with sins and inhabiting a body, now realizes that he is, truly, the one Consciousness; that it is he, himself, who is manifesting as all souls and all bodies, while yet remaining completely unaffected

by the unfolding drama of the multiform universe.

Even if, before, as a soul, he sought union with his God, now, there is no longer a soul/God relationship. He, himself, he now realizes, is the one Existence in whom there is neither a soul nor a God, but only the one eternal Self, within whom this “imaginary” relationship of soul and God manifested. For him, there is no more relationship, but only the eternal and all-inclusive I AM. Not surprisingly, this illuminating knowledge of an underlying ‘I’ that is the Soul of the entire universe has a profoundly transformative effect upon the mind of those who have experienced it. The sense of being bound and limited to an individual body and mind, set in time and rimmed by birth and death, is entirely displaced by the keenly experienced awareness of unlimited Being; of an infinitely larger, unqualified Self beyond birth and death. It is an experience which uniquely and utterly transforms one’s sense of identity, and initiates a permanently acquired freedom from all doubt, from all fear, from all insecurity forevermore. Little wonder that all who experience such liberating knowledge wish to share it, to announce in exuberant song to everyone who will hear that, through the inner revelation of wisdom, “You shall know the truth, and the Truth will make you free!”

NOTES:

1. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, 3; Juan Mascaro (trans.), *The Upanishads*, London, Penguin Books, 1965; pp. 89-90.
2. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 1:1; Juan Mascaro, *Ibid.*
3. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, 1; Juan Mascaro, *Ibid.*
4. *Sadadharma Sundarika*, 15:21; Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy* (Vol. 1), London, Geo. Allen & Unwin, 1962, p. 600.
5. New Testament, Gospel of John, 10:30.

Did You Know?

Did you know that the Lord grants to some chosen few an expanded vision whereby they are able to see all existence through His eyes, and from His unified perspective? In this vision, the narrow consciousness of the individual becomes suddenly transformed into the all-inclusive consciousness of God. Then the duality of ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ vanishes like a dream, and what remains is an ‘I’ that knows no ‘other’—an ‘I’ that is an eternal and limitless awareness, filling all. That ‘I’ is the one Mind, the original Consciousness, the sole Creator and Self of all selves.

Does everyone know about this vision? I don’t think so. And yet this awakening, this transformation, keeps happening to a few young men and women throughout the duration of time— It happened to the authors of the

Upanishads; it happened to the Buddha, and it happened to Jesus, Plotinus, al-Hallaj and Meister Eckhart, and many others. It also happened to me in this present era, revealing the Truth to my inward eye. And yet so few are even aware of the occurrence in our midst of this strange transformative phenomenon!

Does the Lord wish to keep it a secret, or does He wish to gradually let everyone know about it in His time? I don't know! Many of those who have experienced this inner vision have spoken of it as best they were able, and yet, despite the many voices that have told of it, its occurrence remains largely unknown among the people.

No one seems to know how to bring about this rare vision, except by drawing near to God in highborn contemplative thought or prayer. It is agreed by everyone that it occurs only to those whom He chooses to reveal Himself; that it is His doing and His alone. Still, we must pursue it, for there is no other treasure so worth pursuing. It is an inestimable blessing that makes a wise man of a fool, a joyful man of a wretch; and turns an ordinary man into a king.

Therefore, seek Him out in the depths of your heart. Call to Him in the lonely darkness of your nights. Shine the searchlight of your desire into the hidden corners of His fathomless Being and beg Him in song and in prayer to shed His mercy on your otherwise inconsolable soul.

The Mystical Vision

Nearly everyone comes to the conclusion that there is a divine Reality that is our Source and Father, the Ground of our being, an all-embracing One, Lord and Ruler over all beings, permeating and constituting all. One may arrive at this conclusion through the exercise of one's logical intelligence, or one may *experience* this reality directly as a 'mystical' experience or revelation. The intellectual formulation of this knowledge through logical analysis is capable of providing a basis for a reasonable certainty of the basic premise outlined above, but the direct 'mystical' experience of the One brings a person to the conscious *awareness* of that One as the immediate reality of one's own being, one's ultimate identity.

To those of us who are reasonable men and who are slow to accept tales of supernatural occurrences that have no empirical basis, the 'revelations' that come through mystical experience to those who call themselves 'mystics'

must be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, as one who has known such a unitive mystical experience, I must tell you, on my oath, that, despite the doubts of reasonable men, I declare and affirm the truth of mystical experience and I wish to add my name to those who, throughout human history, have told of having known God directly through such transpersonal experience. However rare, however undemonstrable such experiences may be, they *do* occur and have occurred in every age to normal human beings. We need only consider the example of Siddhartha, the Buddha, Jesus, Plotinus, al-Hallaj, Ibn Arabi, Meister Eckhart, and many other well-known and not so well-known spiritual figures who have known God through the subjective unitive vision known as “mystical experience.”

The question that many feel it is necessary to ask is, ‘How does one attain to that direct ‘mystical’ experience of the One?’ And I have had to confess that I have no idea how to answer that question—except to say that the one thing you can be absolutely certain of is that *you* can't make it happen. Only the eternal Lord of all can make it happen. Therefore, learn to rely upon His unfailing will. If He wishes to draw you to Him, He will reveal it as a divine urge, an implacable yearning, guiding you from within your heart. So be true to your own heart, and you can't go wrong. A guru or teacher may serve as the instrument by which the knowledge of God's presence is awakened in you, but it is God Himself who kindles the flame of heavenly desire within you, and who leads you to union. We may be able to reduce our awareness of the multiform world to a single pair: I and Thou; but only He can reduce those two to one, only He can unite your awareness with His. And so, it is not to a human teacher that you must turn, but it is to Him within yourself that you must turn.

It seems He has unique plans for each of us, and He brings each of us along the journey's path according to His own design. No one can know how or when He will lead a person to His presence. You must make your intimate acquaintance with Him entirely by your own efforts within your own consciousness. Needless to say, even your own efforts are prompted by His Grace. So, just follow His inner promptings. Know that He is aware of your desire—in fact, He has initiated it; and He will eagerly meet you in the still of your heart when the time is right. Keep your mind on Him and He will continue to be mindful of you. And, when the time comes, when He has brought you to the purity of heart that is required, then He will bring you into His pure land, and you will be filled with His presence and know unlimited Being.

This is without doubt the greatest attainment possible in this life, providing complete and unremitting inner fulfillment. To be sure, it will not bring you wealth or worldly success; in fact, it is much more likely that your pursuit of God-realization will cause you to experience economic privation and social isolation. But it is the greatest attainment possible in this life, and it will fill you with gratitude and provide you with unending peace and abundant happiness.

Beyond Learned Ignorance

When we learn about the truth of Unity and the possibility of experiencing our identity with the One, the Absolute, we may imagine that this understanding that we have acquired is the height and summit of attainment. But no; this understanding, this knowledge *about* Truth, is not the experience of Self-realization, but merely the setting of the foot on the path to Self-realization. If we were to say that Self-realization was simply a matter of increased understanding, it would be a gross misrepresentation of that knowledge. "Understanding" is a word which we use to denote the mind's ability to recognize the significance of a specific concept, thing, or event, and to assimilate that information into our storehouse of knowledge. But the word is woefully inadequate to represent that "realization" which is neither of a concept, thing, or event, but rather of the very Source of all concepts, things, and events.

The realization of the Self is a directly perceived knowledge, more on the order of "seeing" than understanding. "Understanding" refers to *indirect* knowledge; "Self-realization" refers to *direct* knowledge: a distinction that is brought out in a 14th century work on Vedanta, called *Panchadashi*:

"The knowledge arising from enquiry and reflection is of two kinds, indirect and direct. Inquiry ends on the achievement of the direct knowledge of the Self. The indirect knowledge is 'Brahman is'; the direct knowledge is 'I am Brahman.' ¹

"The direct knowledge dissolves the distinction between knower and known; it is an experience of absolute Unity, in which the knower is aware of everything as himself." ²

The consciousness by which we experience knowledge is the screen on which we project thought. Therefore, no amount of thought, of whatever quality, which is projected on that inner screen will reveal or portray the Self to you. For the Self is the screen, the very Consciousness, on which the thoughts are projected. This is why it has so often been emphasized by the

knowers of the Self that no amount of thought can reveal Him. He is the Thinker. He is the Source of that consciousness which you experience as you. And it is in His power to reveal Himself, when He so wishes it, and not otherwise.

Listen to what the sages of the *Upanishads* had to say:

"He is known by those who know Him beyond thought.
... If you think, "I know Him well," you do not know the Truth. You only perceive that appearance of Brahman produced by the inner senses. Continue to meditate." ³

"What cannot be thought with the mind, but That whereby the mind thinks: know that alone to be Brahman."⁴

"...It is not what is thought that we should wish to know; we should know the thinker. "He is my Self": this one should know. "He is my Self": this one should know." ⁵

The activity of the intellect, which is to say, the reasoning faculty, must be left far behind in the ascent to God, to the Self. Of course, it is by the means of this active intellect that we come to accept the fact of Unity, the fact of a transcendent Mind from which all minds devolve and to which they evolve again. But that is the extent of its function; to gather information and reach the proper conclusion. Once it has done so and has established the need for the mind's devotion to its Source, for the inversion of its gaze from outward to inward, then it has fulfilled its function. And then it is time for one's practice to begin: the turning of the mind to quiet reflection, meditation.

To many, this word, *meditation*, means the swirling around in one's mind of one or another concept or idea, as one might swirl a sip of wine in one's mouth to garner its taste to the full. But meditation proper, is not the dwelling on thoughts and ideas, but rather the alert and expectant search of the inner horizon for absolute clarity of vision, much as a lover might eagerly scan the horizon for a sign of her returning beloved. There is no room for reasoning here; indeed, in this state, thought, other than a direct call to the Beloved, is a distraction, like weeds cropping up to obscure the distant view. It is the Infinite we wish to see; it is God's thrilling caress we wish to feel; it is the unveiling and delimitation of our consciousness that we wish to experience.

It is not reasoning or cunning that brings us to that vision of Truth; rather, it is prayer, it is longing, it is purity of heart, and naked humility of soul which

brings His mercy; it is a likeness of motive and will, conforming to His, which brings the soul into the necessary transparency for merging into the Absolute. Again, hear the words of the Upanishads:

"Not even through deep knowledge can the Self be reached, unless evil ways are abandoned, and there is rest in the senses, concentration in the mind, and peace in one's heart. ⁶

"He is seen by a pure heart and by a mind whose thoughts are pure. Not through much learning is the Self reached, nor through the intellect and the memorizing of the sacred teachings. The Self is reached by those whom He chooses; to His chosen the Self reveals His glory." ⁷

However, let us not imagine that the exercise of the intellect in Self-inquiry and reflection is a dead-end street. It is definitely not Self-realization, but it *is* a path to Self-realization. But you may object, 'if the Self is beyond mind, thought, and speech, how can thought, speech, or the mind enable one to reach the Self? Is not the intellect completely useless in acquiring Self-knowledge?'

And the answer is, "No. It is not useless." It is in fact most useful and necessary in bringing the soul to Self-realization. For, as the intellect focuses more and more on the Self, the intellect, itself, becomes refined. Ultimately, the intellect *becomes* pure Consciousness, and disappears as intellect. To comprehend this, we may think of the analogy of a flame produced by burning camphor. When the flame burns up the camphor, the flame is extinguished as well. The flame is the means to dissolve the camphor, and, in the process, it dissolves itself as well. Likewise, intellectual knowledge is used to burn up ignorance; and as it does so, it uses itself up as well, and becomes silence. As thought becomes more and more clear and refined, it leads us, beyond thought, to the silence of pure Consciousness. Then, only the pure stillness of absolute Consciousness remains, beyond the contraries of knowledge and ignorance.

The intellect, after all, is nothing but a contracted form of the one universal Intelligence. Its light is but a dim reduction of the universal Light of Consciousness. And, because it is nothing else but the one Intelligence, it is capable of expanding to its original state. It is a little like the expansion of the aperture of a lens: when the aperture is narrowed, only a little pinpoint of light is able to enter it; but when it is widened, its scope is greatly expanded, and the light streams in in its fullness. Likewise, the small aperture through which we presently experience Consciousness can be expanded.

This Intelligence, this Consciousness, which we *are*, is the only means we

have of experiencing the Self. Therefore, yes, the universal Consciousness is experienced, in a sense, through the intellect. But to say this may be misleading; for, it is not the activity of the intellect, which is capable of revealing the Self, but rather the intellect itself *is* that universal Consciousness in a contracted form. And when the Self is realized, it is known as that very Intelligence by which you have always thought and wondered and known. It is the “you” who has always been you.

The term, “learned ignorance,” which I have used in the title of this piece, is the title of a book by a fifteenth-century Cardinal of the Catholic Church, named Nicholas of Cusa, who was extremely interested in addressing this question of whether the intellect was capable of knowing God. In Nicholas’ time, the learned Doctors of the Church were much occupied with discussing theology and dialectics, with the thought that such intellectual busyness was the holiest of activities. Nicholas wrote his book, *de docta ignorantia*, “On Learned Ignorance,” to convince these learned scholars that no amount of reasoning, no amount of intellectual effort, could reveal That which is beyond the reach of words and intellect.

His theme was that all the metaphysical haranguing and theological bickering of such learned fellows was, in fact, nothing more than ignorance, “learned ignorance”; and that the highest state to which all their learning could possibly bring them was to the knowledge that they didn’t know the ultimate Truth. It was this highest state possible through learning, which he termed, “learned ignorance.” And it was this state, which Nicholas regarded as the starting point from which one could then truly embark on the spiritual journey to the *direct* knowledge of God.

Here is a passage from his book in which he explains that the reasoning of the intellect cannot possibly reach to God:

"Reason strives for knowledge, and yet this natural striving is not adequate to the knowledge of the essence of God, but only to the knowledge that God ...is beyond all conception and knowledge." ⁸

He goes on to say:

"The Reality, which is the Truth of all beings, is unattainable in its purity [through learning]; all philosophers have sought it, and none has found it, as it is; and the more profoundly learned in this ignorance [we are], the more we shall approach Truth itself." ⁹

And in another book, called *de sapientia*, “On Wisdom,” he describes his method of approach to Truth itself:

"Wisdom [or the one Intelligence], shining in all things, invites us,

with a certain foretaste of Its effects, to be borne to It with a wonderful desire. For life itself is an intelligent Spirit, having in itself a certain innate foretaste through which it searches with great desire for the very Font of its own life. Without that foretaste, it could neither seek after It nor know when it had acquired It. It is due to this that it is moved toward It as its proper life. Every spirit finds it sweet to ascend continually to the very Principle of life, even though this appears inaccessible. For a persistent and continued ascent to (the Principle and Source of) life is the constituent element of increased happiness.¹⁰

"... This Wisdom [or supreme Intelligence] is not to be found in the art of oratory, or in great books, but in a withdrawal from these sensible things and in a turning to the most simple and infinite reality. You will learn how to receive it into a temple purged from all vice, and by fervent love to cling to it until you may taste it and see how sweet That is which is all sweetness. Once this has been tasted, all things which you now consider as important will appear as vile, and you will be so humbled that no arrogance or other vice will remain in you. Once having tasted this Wisdom, you will inseparably adhere to it with chaste and pure heart. You will choose rather to forsake this world and all else that is not of this Wisdom, and, living with unspeakable happiness, you will die. After death you will rest eternally in that fond embrace which the eternally blessed wisdom of God Himself vouchsafed to grant both to you and to me." ¹¹

In closing, let me say that learning and the knowledge reflected in the intellect are wonderful indeed. Let us not disparage learning or intelligent discussion. It is the clarification of ideas through reasoning whereby the mind assimilates knowledge to itself, and centers in on the Truth. However, the greatest wisdom, such as that acquired by Socrates, is the acquisition of the knowledge that one doesn't know, and cannot by any intellectual means know, the ultimate Reality. The innate desire to know It can only be fulfilled and satisfied by *direct* revelation—by God's Grace, and not by any amount of study or thought.

It is at this stage of wisdom, as Nicholas of Cusa insists, that we are ready and able to embark on our *sadhana*, our search for God. This wisdom leads us beyond thought, beyond reasoning, to a simplicity attainable only by the wise fools of this world. It is the simple, child-like humility before our Lord and Father, by which we purify our hearts for the reception of His mercy and grace. In that grace we shall find the knowledge and freedom and perfect

happiness, which we seek.

Let us then give up this discussion, these wordy ideas, and turn to the simple regard of God, who is ever-present to us within.

Meditation

There is a Knowledge beyond knowledge, won only by the brave, who soar on wings of love, beyond the knowing mind. The penetrating laser-light of intellect is able to comprehend the spoken truth—but it cannot know the source of its own light. It can form myriads of concepts about the knower, but it cannot turn its light on itself and thereby *know* the knower.

To know that knowing Self, we must set out blindly, without words, without images; even that shining intellect which is our pride and joy must be left behind. With no borrowed or reflected light, with no idea-projecting faculty to cast images on the cave-wall of the conscious mind, we must enter naked, empty-handed, and alone into that dark light.

Without intellect, without a preconceived identity or even existence; unknowing, unseeing, guided only by a faith in Truth and the longing of a pure heart, we may enter into the silence of that all-knowing Light. There, no questions rise to separate the knower from the known. There, the Knower is alone—with a Knowledge beyond knowledge, won only by the brave, who soar on wings of love, beyond the knowing mind.

NOTES:

1. Vidyanarany, *Panchadashi*, 6:16; Shastri (trans.), London, Shanti Sadan, 1965, p. 97.
2. In the revelation of that absolute Self, the separate ego-identity is revealed to be illusory, and it is revealed that the duality of 'I' and 'Thou', of body and soul, as well as all other dualities, is also illusory. The duality of matter and spirit, body and soul, arises, as do all dualities, from the establishment of an individual identity separate from God. With the existence of an 'I' (the ego), the 'other' also comes into existence; that is how duality is produced. That separate identity, or individual ego, the producer of duality, is an extremely subtle thing, masking the nondual reality; and it is dispelled only by the grace of God. This ego is a veil separating us from the awareness of our true Self, our Godhood; and *it is a veil only He, the Divine Mind, can lift*.

What, then, is this ego that stands to block our view of eternity? How can we comprehend it? It can't be grasped or dispelled or even held up to the light of knowledge. It seems that it is an imposed ignorance that automatically accompanies embodiment. In effect, it is our Lord who casts this dust in our eyes and blinds us to our true eternal Self; and He alone has the power to dispel it. No matter how we try to escape its limiting perspective, we are steadfastly caught in its grip. It separates us out from our limitless being, squeezing us into a narrow individuality, hiding from us God's face and our own divinity in Him. We can only raise our eyes to Him in love and longing, praying that He will soon return us home once again to His all-inclusive awareness.

3. Kena Upanishad, II:1.
4. *Ibid.*, I:5.
5. Kaushitaki Upanishad, 3:8.
6. Katha Upanishad, II:24.
7. *Ibid.*, II:23; Mundaka Upanishad, II:3.
8. Nicholas of Cusa, *De venatione sapientiae*, Ch. xii; Beck, Lewis W., *Early German Philosophy*; Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press, 1969, p. 64.
9. Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, I:3; Heron, Germain (trans.), *On Learned Ignorance*; New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954, p.
10. Nicholas of Cusa, *De sapientia*, I; Dolan, John P. (ed.), *Unity And Reform: Selected Writings of Nicholas of Cusa*; Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1962, p. 107.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

What Does Mystical Experience Teach Us?

Though mystical experience frequently occurs to those who are members of a particular 'religion,' mystical experience is not to be associated with or attributed to any man-made religious organization. Mystical experience comes from God, and is the same for all, regardless of religious affiliation. Therefore, there is no phenomena such as 'Christian Mysticism', 'Islamic Mysticism', or 'Hindu Mysticism'. These are conceptual categories only and have no actual basis in existential fact. The mystical experience is independent of theological or philosophical dogma; it is a *spiritual* revelation, independent of conceptual convictions or psychological propensities. It is trans-mental, occurring at a more fundamental soul-level, and is a result, not of one's individual volition, but of the inscrutable grace of God.

The great Psychologist, William James (1842-1910), author of *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), indicated a number of types of mystical experience, but, it should be noted that when I speak of ‘mystical experience,’ I am not talking about the common preliminary experience of divine Love which many report having known during a brief opening of their consciousness; I am referring solely to the unitive experience in which the soul, or ego-identity, of the individual is absorbed in and by the one all-inclusive Spirit, so that the soul experiences its identity no longer as an individualized soul but as the one Self of the universe and beyond.

Whether we investigate the mystical experiences of the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims, or the Hindus, we find that they each experience a similar progression of phenomena: Initially, there is the transmission of spiritual energy or ‘grace’, either directly from God during prayer or meditation, or from an advanced teacher or ‘guru’ who, having received grace at an earlier time, has accumulated an abundant and transferable fund of spiritual energy by which he is able to activate the latent energy in the new recipient. This is followed by certain symptoms that manifest physically, mentally, and spiritually.

One of the most common physical manifestations is a sensation that originates somewhere in the spine and rises upward through the spine and into the cranium. It is an electrical type of energy that is experienced in a way similar to the kind of thrill one receives from the touch of an unseen spirit, causing the body to experience a pleasant shivering sensation. Mentally, one is led to some profound realizations concerning the divine nature of existence. Spiritually, there is a blissful attraction to prayer and solitary reflection and a yearning to join oneself to God. The transmission and manifestation of this spiritual energy is common to the lore of all religions, though each has its own name for it.

This spiritual energy seems to be inherent in everyone in its latent, inactivated state, and becomes activated when grace—interior or extraneous—is brought to bear. The recipient embarks then on his or her spiritual journey. This journey may be accompanied by some involuntary bodily movements; it may be accompanied by unusual visual experiences, such as lights or deities appearing to the inner eye while in meditation. There may also be increased intellectual activity and subtle intuitions regarding the nature of physical and spiritual reality. Eventually, the spiritual aspirant is brought to a state of quiet attention, as the breath also becomes quiet and concentrated, and the individual’s mind dissolves into a greater Mind, knowing its oneness with the eternal Source of all existence.

In that ineffable experience, the previous sense of identity as an individual

person in a world of distinct individual persons and things is gone. You find yourself suddenly in another dimension of consciousness, in which there is only one undivided existence—and you know that you are all-pervading, the one all-inclusive Self of everyone and everything. You are the unmanifest Void, and you are the creative force that brings everything into being. You can see the breath-like ebbing and flowing of the entire universe as it comes and goes. And yet you are above it—witnessing it from a timeless perspective, uninvolved. In yourself you know that all is within you, that everything is you; and all the bonds of your heart are released because you realize that, since there is nothing but your Self, there is “nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish, nothing to pride oneself on. All is accomplished in an instant.”

You May Wonder

You may wonder why the representatives of science and learning refuse to take into account the many documented experiences of mystical union with the Divine Mind. I believe their unwillingness to consider these worldwide experiences in their formulations of reality is based on the long pre-scientific history of religious thought in which many contradictory and fantastic claims were made by religious fanatics whose stories often turned out to be based, not on reality, but on psychological aberrations or on scriptural mythologies. This is why learned scientists tend to remain so skeptical of mystics and mystical experience.

Scientists see themselves and their empirical discipline as a bulwark against the return to such a time when there was no distinguishable criterion for determining the truth or falsehood of any given precept. It is feared that, without the framework of empirical proofs, based on an exclusively materialistic view of reality, we would inevitably slide back into a hazy realm where all things are possible, and nothing is demonstrably certain. It is a justified fear, and one which must be respected. But how then can we return the spiritual reality based on direct mystical experience to the honorable place in the contemporary worldview that it deserves?

I have pondered this question for a long time, and yet I have failed to find a useful solution. This is because the understanding of our spiritual nature always has been and always will be a matter of the experience and evolution of each individual soul. Some few will be able to grasp the all-pervasive presence of the divine in the world and in themselves; others will not. Each one's ability or inability to recognize the presence of God is no doubt in accordance with their temporal place in the divine scheme. I believe that

each of us is destined to eventually realize our existence in God and our dependence on God, but we will not all necessarily realize it concurrently in time. And, while my urgings and the urgings of other seers of Truth wield some efficacy in swaying hearts and minds if God so wills, there is no certain way to bring God-knowledge to every heart. It is enough to know that our spiritual understanding and the progress of our souls is most assuredly in His almighty hands, as are the activities and final outcomes of all our earthly endeavors.

The Gift of Spiritual Vision

For the *bhakta*, the soul in the throes of love for God, there arises a love-longing for the union with God. And prior to the dawning of that unitive experience, there is much singing and prayers, and copious tears. But then, at the inception of the experience of revelation, there is an end to the emotion, and the soul falls into a calm that is also intensely awake. The pupils of her eyes become extraordinarily open wide, and her breathing slows and subsides to a very shallow rise and fall, as though it were approaching the balance point, where breathing would be entirely stilled. The relationship of soul to God is nearly vanished, and there is only the fine awareness focused upon its own incredible clarity, its own being; and then the prayer that bursts forth from the finally naked and surrendered soul: “O God, let me be one with Thee—not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory for the benefit of all Thy children”. And then comes the sudden awakening, as though from a dream, and this soul suddenly sees with the eyes of the eternal One, who is the Self it has always been—the Self *you* have always been.

You, who have been crying for His embrace; you, who have been awaiting the arrival of the King; you, *yourself*, are the only Existence, the Lord, the Father; and all along you have been living in an illusory separation from yourself, in a dream-world of your own making. But now, there are no longer two. *Even now, I speak the word, ‘Thou’, and create duality.* There is no one else, and never has been. You are the omnipresent Mind—you! The personification you had adopted was but a fantasy; and now you see the truth. You live eternally, showering forth this huge universal display. You are the life in every creature:

I am the pulse of the turtle; I am the clanging bells of joy. I bring the dust of blindness; I am the fire of song. I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil; in pools of clear water my image is found. ...I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged and set in order once again.

A million worlds begin and end in every breath, and in this breathing, all things are sustained.

The prayer that precipitated this vision was the prayer of a soul, still caught in the illusion of a separate identity; yet the desire to praise God was God's desire speaking through the soul, and in this life, she has no other purpose but to honor that prayerful desire. It permeates this soul, and constitutes her task in this life, her only joy. It may be that she was given no mandate from God to teach; and it was she who asked to be united with Him in order that she might speak out truly in His praise and to His glory. And yet, that desire sprang from the deepest place in that soul, a soul which is itself fountained forth from God. And so that desire was truly His desire in her. His granting of that desire for intimacy constituted His mandate. When she looks at the lives and missions of others before her, like the Egyptian author of the Hermetic teachings, like the Buddha, Jesus, Plotinus, Eckhart, etc., she associates strongly with the sense of mission each possessed, having been graciously lifted up to intimacy with God, and filled with the desire to praise Him. What a singular grace, and what responsibility it confers! Yet, despite the gift of this advantageous vision, all who received it were mere mortals, with the limitations that implies. All had to endure the earthly life of bodily provision, sickness and death; and all had to endure the doubt and malevolence of the community of other men and women. Yet still they communicated their vision as best they could. Their lifelong desire to see and to give expression to the truth of God is God's enduring gift to us, His wondrous, thrillingly beautiful, gift of overwhelming joy to all of us.

And once the larger, subtler, eternal reality is known, the soul, returned to awareness of this world as a limited self, can scarcely see the phenomenal reality in the same way as before. During the visionary experience of the Eternal, she is identical with the Eternal, and blissfully content to remain in that state. However, that state wanes and gives way to the return in consciousness to this temporal and phenomenal reality. This is truly an unwelcome eviction. Having known the bliss of her all-pervading Self, she is at first greatly shocked and dismayed at finding herself back in this little world of separable images in time and space. But after her initial dismay, she reflects on her current state, and quickly realizes that she is still the eternal Self, and that the world to which she has returned consists solely of the bright Energy breathed forth from her Divinely transcendent Self. She recognizes that now she is in a dream-movie, but it is the dream-movie of God, who is indeed her very Self; and even this body in which she moves about is woven of that Divine fabric.

She realizes that, even in this projected image which God puts forth, she

remains enveloped in His blissful Being, and realizes that she could never be anything but safe at home in Him. That is the great gift of Spiritual vision: for now, she sees this transient world of images as suffused with ethereal light and splayed with dazzling beauty. Joyful contentment fills the air she breathes, and adoration fills her heart. This is the translation of divine vision into the world of phenomenal awareness. This is the carryover from the transcendent vision to the sensory vision here on earth.

She carries over from that higher realm no intellectual understanding of how a photon operates as both a particle and a wave, or how the force of gravity interacts with the moving earth. Let physicists puzzle over these dusty details; she is content to see her beauteous God in evidence all about her and within her. To abandon that untold treasure of joy to pick and peck amidst the crumbs of reason's paltry scrapings would be but the conduct of a fool. You can have it, you mathematicians and quantum mechanics! You biochemists and cosmo-theoreticians! It's all been settled and displayed to her utmost satisfaction: Beauty beauty beauty everywhere, and the wine of intoxicating nectar in her cup! What needs she more?

And yet, having seen so clearly that all the beings who exist on earth are truly embodiments of the one Divine Self, the desire to share this wondrous knowledge remains an insistent urge deep within her soul. But, also, she is aware that each soul follows an evolutionary path unique to itself and is able to comprehend the omnipresence of God only in the proper time, and only by the gracious gift of God. And so, her words have relevance now, and in the future, only to those whose eyes are already opened, to those on whom God's grace has already shone. Then rejoice with her, all ye fortunate souls! And be merciful to those whose temporary blindness is also His gift. He will lift that blindness in His time, and release all from the darkness in which they now live. He will open to their eyes, as He did to hers, the light and warmth, the wonder and delight, the beauty and the joy, of His immeasurable life-giving Love. Praise God!

* * *

2. MY MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

(Excerpted from *The Supreme Self* by Swami Abhayananda.
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1. The Awakening

Everyone has a spiritual awakening somewhere along the way. For me, it was sudden and unexpected. It was 1966; I was twenty-eight, and it was a very special time in my world. Laura and I had moved from San Francisco to Los Gatos, California, in the mountains south of San Jose. We had rented a beautiful house with a knotty-pine interior and a huge porch overlooking a bubbling brook. I worked nearby at the Post Office on a split-shift that gave me time in the afternoons to sit on my beautiful private porch and drink coffee and read or work on the great American novel I was writing.

In June of 1966, I was fascinated with the symbology of myths, and was reading Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, both of whom were speaking repeatedly about “Vedanta,” the mysterious philosophy of India. And so, when I saw in a local bookstore a copy of a book called *Vedanta For The Western World*, I bought a copy. This book, edited by Christopher Isherwood, consisted of a series of articles by such figures as Swami Prabhavananda and Aldous Huxley, and spelled out in very easy-to-understand terms the philosophy of Vedanta.

Vedanta, I soon learned, refers to the philosophy expressed in the *Upanishads*, considered to be the final appendages to the Vedas. It is a nondualist philosophy; that is to say, a monistic one. It admits to an *apparent* duality between God and the world, between Consciousness and matter, but this duality, says Vedanta, is apparent only. In the “mystical vision” they are experienced as one.

According to Vedanta, when a person becomes enlightened—in other words, when he realizes the ultimate Truth, or God, in mystical vision—he experiences an absolute Unity, wherein everything is seen to be a manifestation of one universal Self. He knows for certain: “I and the Father are one.” This is not a mere aberration of consciousness, nor an illusory “union” of the soul and God; it is a glimpse into the nature of the underlying Reality of one’s existence. It is the revelation of one’s true and eternal Self. This, says Vedanta, is the perennial teaching of all the sages and saints of all times. For the experience of Unity, whether called *samadhi*, *satori*, or “union with God,” is the same for all, and is the basis for all the various religions.

Reading of this, I suddenly understood what the religious mystics had been talking about. The teachings of Jesus, the Buddha, and all the saints of all religions were seen to be based upon this same experiential knowledge.

Everything I had ever puzzled over became clear; everything fell into place. I had scarcely finished with the Introduction to this book, and I knew that I had acquired a new and profound vision, which brought everything together for me and answered all my questions forever. I knew my life would never be the same. I knew I had found the key to an extraordinary wealth of understanding about myself and the nature of reality.

It was as though a veil that I had previously been unaware of had suddenly been drawn away, revealing a world I had heretofore been looking at as through a hazy fog. It was not so much an intellectual revelation as a spiritual one, for suddenly I saw everything bathed in light, and from deep within me there welled up a happiness, a clear, bright joyfulness, that testified to its truth, its rightness, more convincingly than any reason or merely intellectual conviction could do.

As I continued reading this amazing book, I was introduced to the 19th century mystic, Sri Ramakrishna, who was mad with fervor for “the vision of God” from an early age, and who became so one-pointed in mind through devotional love that he became entirely lost to the world of forms, aware only of the all-pervasive Reality. Reading of the life of Sri Ramakrishna and other such saints, I felt I had entered into an elite society of delirious madmen, madmen who called themselves, “the lovers Of God,” who, turning away from the normal transitory pursuits of man, sought to become intimate with the very fountainhead of the universe. Somehow, I had never understood before that such a thing was really possible.

Reading the inspiring words of Sri Ramakrishna, who had clearly known the unitive Reality, I experienced a wave of such happiness that I could scarcely bear it. Sitting on my porch, becoming aware of these things for the first time, I experienced a shower of golden light pouring down upon me, as though raining on the back of my neck, and awaking a deep and delicious chill in my body that ran up my spine and caused my scalp to tingle.

For the first time, I understood what drew men to religion. I had previously attributed it to weakness of mind. How much grander was the heritage of man than I had supposed. I had viewed all this talk of “God” through the ages as the superstitious babbling of fools. But I had been the fool. There *was* a God—but it was not what I had supposed men meant by the term. “God” meant not some ethereal being with a white beard, etc.; God was Being

itself—the eternal substratum of Existence. And the proof of it was that God could be experienced, actually realized, seen with the inner eye of unleashed awareness. For the first time, I could fathom it; I understood the method in the madness of the saints. My mind was dazzled, ecstatic.

I was really extraordinarily happy. Of course, all my friends thought I had suddenly gone mad. Their faces betrayed their uneasiness when I began talking about God and the mystics who had known Him. I began to realize that I had touched on something that not everyone could, or was willing to, understand. I read about “Grace,” the amazing descent of Grace; and it seemed to me that just such a thing was happening to me. By some process of awakening, to which I was an unwitting spectator, I was seeing with an entirely new and different pair of eyes. My old friends were unable to understand or to share in any way the intensity of my fervor, my excitement; and I realized that I would have to go on this journey alone.

I had read, in one of the chapters of *Vedanta For the Western World*, a story of a man whose wife told him that their neighbor had decided to renounce the world of petty distractions to focus on the realization of God. When the man asked his wife how the neighbor was going about this renunciation, she said, “Well, he’s renouncing a few things today, and then tomorrow he’ll renounce a few more things, and so on, until he’s entirely free to meditate solely on God.” The man said, “That’s not the way to renounce the world!” And the wife retorted, “Well, how then would you do it?” And the man, by way of answering her, tore the shirt from his body, turned around and walked out the door of his home, never to return.

Impressed with the stark simplicity and decisiveness of this approach to the renunciation of all restricting conditions, I decided to follow the example of the man in the story. Within only a few days, my life took a startling and unalterable turn. I sent a note to my employer stating that I would not be in on Monday “...for reasons beyond my control”; I then gave what I owned to Laura, and went off into the mountains of Santa Cruz, into solitude, to give my life to the quest for knowledge of God.

Walking along a tree-shrouded mountain road, I came across an empty cabin nestled down in the woods a little off the road, and, exploring it, I discovered that it had been long uninhabited, except for the mice who had left abundant evidence of their assumed occupancy. I decided to take shelter there until I could talk to the owners, and so I cleaned the place up, and then went into Santa Cruz to look up the owner at the County Records office. I wrote to the two men who were the present owners and awaited their contact while I made myself at home in the rustic cabin.

The building had been left unfinished and was really just a shell with a concrete floor and a kitchen sink that drained directly out onto the ground outside. There was no running water, but a beautiful pure stream of water flowed just a few feet from the back door of the cabin in the form of a babbling spring-fed brook. There was a large picnic-type table in the main room and a mattressless cot in one of the two adjoining bedrooms. In the kitchen was an old unconnected refrigerator for storing food, a cast-iron cooking stove, and next to it a canvas director's chair, along with a fold-up card table. That was the extent of the furniture.

There was no electricity, but just out back, a previous tenant had stacked a good cord of seasoned oak to warm me through the winter and provide me with cooking heat as well. Candles did the job of providing me with light. Out front, just beyond the old, dilapidated garage, was a wooden outhouse, and so, although I lacked what some might consider the necessities of modern life, I truly lacked for nothing, and I came to love the simple life my situation required.

The two men who owned the property showed up one day, and after I explained my intentions and my willingness to safeguard their property against hunters and trespassers, they readily agreed to let me stay in the unused cabin. In fact, we became good friends, and they frequently came to the woods on weekends with their chainsaws to cut some live oak trees for their own firewood and for me as well. They owned about 300 acres of beautiful redwood groves, green meadows, rocky cliffs and scenic plateaus; this was surrounded by another 1000 acres of similar woodland owned and preserved as wilderness by the University of California. And, for the next nearly five years, all this magnificent country was my own private garden of meditation.

How romantic it was! I felt that I was a Francis of Assisi. I was Rumi, the Sufi poet. I was Basho, the Zen hermit. Walking on the country roads in the early morning with my freshly baked honey-bread in my brown canvas bag on my shoulder, I'd walk the long winding mountain road to town to sell my loaves to the owner of a coffee shop. And on the way, I'd sit myself down in the grass by the roadside and write Zen poems to the poppies in the fields, or to the cottontails that went suddenly hopping through the dewy morning grass. Walking along, I would see the curving road suddenly turn and open wide a breathtaking expanse of sky and green slopes and blue ocean rising up to meet the sky—and a tearful joy would well up in me and drown me in a rapturous sweetness I'd never before known.

There were places where the dense pine and redwood forests formed a canopy over the narrow twisting mountain roads, and the light would stream in green sprays and twinkling raindrops of beauty through the trees; and I'd stoop by the bubbling stream to sink my cupped palm into the pebbly cold water and drink. And again, that sensation of chill that caused the hairs of my neck to rise, and the sweet delirious bliss of dissolving into an all- pervading light!

I was just a poor hermit of the woods, singing the name of God. I had learned that, in the Indian tradition, one of the names for God was "Hari," meaning 'the stealer of hearts.' It was that name I called: "Hari! Hari! Hari!" as I walked along in my clumsy rags. I was a sweet, bearded monk of the forest and the world was in my eyes the beautifully glorious form of the Divine; all about me the playful sport of God.

2. The Common Vision

I had come into the mountains to realize God, to know Him as Sri Ramakrishna and others had done. But I also had an insatiable hunger to know about those saints of the past who had succeeded in their attempt to know Him, and to know how they had lived and how they had spoken.

The University of California was only a few miles away, and the University library was very complete. So, nearly every morning, I'd pack some bread in my sack and set out for the University, where I'd read for the whole day, or bring home some books to study. Though I was already familiar with many philosophers, both ancient and modern, I voraciously read or reread every major philosopher and every saint in the Religion & Philosophy section of the University library, from the Greeks and early Christian Fathers to the Hindu, Sikh, Moslem, Taoist and Buddhist saints and sages. I read of Catholic monastic disciplines and Christian Science; I poured over the classics of medieval Indian and Sufi literature; I burrowed into the remote past through the long-lost writings of the Dead Sea scrolls and the Gnostic apocryphal books; I re-examined Heraclitus, Epictetus, Philo and Plotinus; and discovered the writings of Swami Vivekananda, al-Ghazali, Vidyaranya, Rumi and Shankara. It was a glorious time of wild excitement and uncontainable exhilaration.

The *Upanishads* were a revelation to me. These scriptures of the ancient Hindus were as old as the Jewish scriptures, but their conception of God was quite different from the jealous tyrant the Jews had invented. He was knowable as the one all-inclusive Reality, the one Self of the universe. I could not help feeling that there had been a tacit conspiracy in the Western world by

the church, the state, and academia to conceal from me the fact that God could be “seen” and known. But, of course, the truth of the matter is that the knowledge was always there; only I was simply not ready to grasp these ideas until this moment, and it was only now that I was able to comprehend what the *Upanishads* had to tell:

He is beyond time and space, and yet He is the God of infinite forms who dwells in our inmost thoughts, and who is seen by those who love Him.¹

He cannot be seen by the eye, and words cannot reveal Him. He cannot be reached by the senses, or by austerity or sacred actions. By the grace of wisdom and purity of mind, He can be seen indivisible in the silence of contemplation. ²

He is the Eternal among things that pass away, pure Consciousness of conscious beings, the One who fulfills the prayers of many. Only the wise who see Him in their souls attain the peace eternal. ³

Reading through the collection of writings known as the *Upanishads*, I had a sense of recognition, a recollection of truths I had known before. “Of course, of course,” I kept repeating as I devoured the words of the sages.

Nothing in the Western cultural tradition came close to the penetrating subtlety and clarity of the writings of these ancient Indian seers who had penned these immortal scriptures.

But the West *did* have its seers—though they do not appear as early or as abundantly as their Eastern counterparts. In the West, the experience of Unity, “the vision of God,” is only vaguely implied by the early Greek philosophers such as Heraclitus, Pythagoras, and Socrates (by way of Plato). The later Stoics and Philo of Alexandria in the 1st century C.E. also refer only vaguely to such an experience, without any real attempt to offer a convincing account. In fact, it is not until Plotinus (204-270 C.E.) that an explicit and unequivocal account of “the vision of God” is offered in the West. Here is Plotinus’ description of his own experience in an extensive passage from his *Enneads*:

The soul naturally loves God and yearns to be one with Him, just as a noble daughter naturally loves her noble father... And suddenly, [she] is uplifted and sees, without ever knowing how; ... the Supreme has come to her, or rather has revealed Its presence. She has turned away from everything around her and has readied herself, having made herself as beautiful as possible and fashioned herself in likeness with the Divine by those

preparations and adornments which come unsought to those who grow ready for the vision. And she has seen that Divine presence suddenly manifesting within herself, for now there is nothing between herself and the Divine. There is now no longer a duality, but a two-in-one; for, so long as that presence continues, all distinction between them is dissolved. The longing of a lover to unite with his [human] beloved is a longing for a mere imitation of that Divine and perfect union.

...In this state of absorbed contemplation, there is no longer a relationship between a subject and an object; the vision itself is the one continuous Being, so that seeing and seen are one thing; the object and the act of vision have become identical.

...It is a knowing of the Self restored to its original purity. No doubt we should not speak of *seeing*; but we cannot help speaking in terms of duality, such as “the seer” and “the seen,” instead of asserting boldly that it is the attainment of absolute Unity. In this *seeing*, we neither regard an object nor perceive distinctions; for there are not two. The man is altered, no longer himself nor belonging to himself; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into It, one with It. ...Duality exists only in separation; by our holding ourselves apart from It, the Supreme is set outside of us. This is why the vision cannot be described; we cannot separate the Supreme from ourselves to speak of It, for if we have seen something separate and distinct, we have fallen short of the Supreme, which can be known only as one with oneself.

... [In this vision] there are not two; beholder is one with the beheld ... The man who has experienced this mingling with the Supreme must—if he but recalls It—carry the memory of Divinity impressed upon his soul. He is become the Unity, and nothing within him or without can create any diversity. Nor is there any movement now, or passion, or outreaching desire, once this ascent is attained. Reasoning is suspended and all intellection as well, and even—to dare the word—the very *self* is gone. Filled with God, he has in perfect stillness attained isolation, aloneness.

... This is the life of the gods and of the godlike and blessed among men, ...the passing of the alone to the Alone.⁴

After Plotinus, perhaps the most lucid and explicit description of the

experience of Unity comes from the 13th century German mystic, the Dominican Prior of Erfurt, Meister Eckhart (1260-1327). Eckhart's Sermons and other writings were "condemned" by the Catholic Church in 1329; nonetheless, his writings have carried the torch of mystical experience over the centuries by which the way of many later mystics has been lighted. Speaking of his own experience of Unity, Meister Eckhart declares:

In this breaking through [of consciousness], I find that God and I are both the same. Then I am what I [always] was; I neither wax nor wane, for I am the motionless Cause that is moving all things. ⁵

I am converted into Him in such a way that He makes me one being with Himself—not a *similar* being. By the living God, it is true that there is no distinction. ⁶

The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one and the same—one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving. ⁷

Here, one cannot speak of the soul anymore, for she has lost her nature yonder in the oneness of divine essence. There, she is no longer called soul, but is called *immeasurable Being*. ⁸

I found in me all things forgotten, my own self forgotten and awareness of Thee, alone, O God. I found myself with Thee, being Thy being and speaking the Word and breathing the spirit. ⁹

Here and there, I found other seers scattered along the shores of time, from legendary eras to the present: early Greek philosophers, sages from the Vedic period of India, Moslem Sufis, Christians, Chinese Taoists and Buddhists; each telling the experience of Unity in terms that reflect the time and tradition in which he or she wrote. The women, in most cases, tended to color their accounts with emotion and allegory, but it was clear that the experience had occurred in them, and obviously showed no sexual bias. In fact, it appeared that all sorts of people had experienced the vision of Unity; not only those who could express it in philosophical or poetical terms, but also simple good-hearted people who have left us no record of their experience.

Of those who wrote, who recorded for posterity some of the insights gained in that vision of truth, were many who said little or nothing of the experience itself but confined themselves to presenting a systematic philosophy based on

that experience; others, like the prophets of early Judaism, wrote or spoke as “holy” men, feeling that they were chosen to be spokesmen for God. And some, like the Buddha and the yogis, in an effort to stem a tide of futile intellectual speculation, declined to speak at all of the traditional notions of God, soul, and the nature of reality, but stressed instead the need to practice those disciplines which would lead to the direct experience of Truth, wherein all doubts and speculations would be resolved.

Naturally, each of these great beings spoke in his own language, his own restricted terminology, and the consequence is that today we regard each of these efforts to reveal the nature of reality as disparate and unrelated “philosophies” or “religions.” But the experience of Reality is the same for all, of course; and in all the declarations of the many prophets and Messiahs one can hear the attempt to convey a common knowledge based on that common vision.

It was thus I passed my days in the forest, devouring the writings of the sages and saints of the world in whose company I found great comfort and happiness. During the day I read, and in the evenings, I sat quietly, happily, in the presence of God. The growing clarity of my understanding seemed to open my heart to His ever-present reality, and little by little, I grew more aware of and filled by His Love. My intellectual curiosity had been satisfied; and now there remained only the simple directing of all my attention, all my thought, to the God whom I desired with all my heart.



The Author, Spring 1966



My cabin in the woods

3. ENLIGHTENMENT

My little cabin in the redwoods was cool in the summer, but damp in the winter, as I discovered that first winter in '66. The little babbling brook swelled to a cascading Colorado river in my backyard, and I had to catch water coming down the slope from the road in little waterfalls to get clear water for drinking or cooking. Each night I sat close to the cast-iron cooking stove, with the little side door open so I could watch the dancing blue and gold flames sizzle the oak logs and turn them to glowing ash.

Day and night, during the California winter, the rain drizzled outside the window in a steady, gray, time-dissolving continuum. In the mornings, I'd prepare oatmeal and a bath by the stove; I'd pour hot water from a pitcher over my body onto the concrete floor, and then sweep it outside. The rain would stop sometimes during the day, and then I would go out and walk the once dusty logging roads through the woods and up through the meadows in the high ground. "Hari! Hari! Hari!" was my continual call.

The dark skies kept my energies subdued, and my mind indrawn. My days passed uneventfully. It was in the night that the embers of my heart began to glow keenly as I sat in the dark, watching the fire contained in the stove. A stillness—sharp-edged and intense—filled my cabin and I spoke very closely, very intimately, with the God who had drawn me there. And He would sometimes speak to me in the stillness of the night, while I wrote down His words.

Hari became my only thought, my only love. And while the days and nights became endless stretches of grayness, wetness, my mind became brighter and brighter with an intense light that displayed every wandering thought that arose as a compelling drama in bold Technicolor and Panavision; and then I would pull my mind back with "Hari!" I had realized that I could have or become whatever I settled for in my mind; and I was determined to refuse every inspiration that was not God Himself. I was steadfastly resolved to refuse all visualizations, all mental wanderings, holding my mind in continual remembrance and longing for Hari alone.

In the evening twilight, I'd sing to Him, to the tune of *Danny Boy*:

O Adonai, at last the day is dying.
 My heart is stilled as darkness floods the land.
 I've tried and tried, but now I'm through with tryin'.
 It's You, it's You, must take me by the hand,
 And lead me home where all my tears and laughter
 Fade into bliss on Freedom's boundless shore.
 And I'll be dead and gone forever after.
 O Adonai, just You, just You alone, forevermore.

Or, sometimes, I'd sing this song, to the tune of *Across The Wide Missouri*:

O Adonai, I long to see you!
 All the day, my heart is achin'.
 O Adonai, my heart is achin'.
 O where, O where are you?
 Don't leave me here forsaken.
 O Adonai, the day is over.
 Adonai, I'm tired and lonely.
 My tears have dried, and I'm awaitin'
 You; O Adonai,
 You know I love you only.

Sometimes, to focus my mind on Him, to bring devotion to my sometimes dry and empty heart, I'd read from Thomas á Kempis' *Imitation Of Christ*—a version which I had pared down from the original; and this had the invariable effect of lifting my heart to love of God, and brought me, as though by sympathetic resonance, to the same sweet simple devotion and purity of heart evidenced by that sweet monk of the 15th century. I felt so much kinship with him, so much identification with him, that I came to love his little book above all other works for its sweet effect on me.

Then, deep into the night, I'd sit in silent prayer; my wakefulness burning like a laser of intensely focused yearning, a penetrating, searching lighthouse of hope in the black interior of the cabin, as I witnessed the play of the flickering flames dying out in the stove's interior. On one such night, filled with Divine love, the understanding came to me that it was just this Love that was drawing me to Itself within me. It was this Love that was the Soul of my soul, calling me to live in Its constant light. I lit a candle; a song was being written in my notebook, and I was understanding very clearly, very vividly, just what it was that I loved, what it was that I was pledging my life to:

Thou art Love, and I shall follow all Thy ways.
 I shall have no care, for Love cares only to love.
 I shall have no fear, for Love is fearless.
 Nor shall I frighten any, for Love comes sweetly and meek.
 I shall keep no violence within me,
 Neither in thought nor in deed, for Love comes peacefully.
 I shall bear no shield or sword,
 For the defense of Love is love.
 I shall seek Thee in the eyes of men,
 For love seeks Thee always.
 I shall keep silence before Thine enemies,
 And lift to them Thy countenance,
 For all are powerless before Thee.
 I shall keep Thee in my heart with precious care,
 Lest Thy light be extinguished by the winds.
 For without Thy light, I am in darkness.
 I shall go free in the world with Thee—
 Free of all bondage to anything but Thee—
 For Thou art my God, the sole Father of my being,
 The sweet breath of Love that lives in my heart,
 And I shall follow Thee, and live with Thee,
 And lean on Thee till the end of my days.

November 18, 1966:

This was the night I was to experience God. This was the night I learned who I am eternally. All day long the rain had been dripping outside my cabin window. And now the silent night hovered around me. I sat motionless, watching the dying coals in the stove. “Hari!” my mind called in the wakeful silence of my interior. During the whole day, I had felt my piteous plight so sorrowfully, so maddeningly; “Dear Lord, all I want is to die in Thee,” I cried within myself. “I have nothing, no desire, no pleasure in this life—but in Thee. Won’t you come and take this worthless scrap, this feeble worm of a soul, back into Thyself!”

“O Father,” I cried, “listen to my prayer! I am Thine alone. Do come and take me into Thy heart. I have no other goal, but Thee and Thee alone.”

Then I became very quiet. I sat emptied, but very awake, listening to God's silence. I balanced gingerly, quakingly, on the still clarity of nothingness. I became aware that I was scarcely breathing. My breath was very shallow, nearly imperceptible—close to the balance point, where it would become non-existent. And my eyes peered into the darkness with a wide-eyed intensity that amazed me. I knew my pupils must be very large. I felt on the brink of a meeting with absolute clearness of mind. I hovered there, waiting. And then, from somewhere in me, from a place deeper than I even knew existed, a prayer came forth that, I sensed, must have been installed in my heart at the moment of my soul-birth in the mind of God: "Dear God, let me be one with Thee, not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory for the benefit of all Thy children."

It was then, in that very moment, that the veil fell away. Something in me changed. Suddenly I *knew*; I experienced infinite Unity. And I thought, "Of course; it's been me all the time! Who else could I possibly be!" I lit a candle, and by the light of the flickering flame, while seated at the card table in my little cabin, I transmitted to paper what I was experiencing in eternity. Here is the "Song" that was written during that experience (the commentaries in parentheses which follow each verse were added much later):

O my God, even this body is Thine own!

(Suddenly I knew that this entity which I call my body was God's own, was not separate from God, but was part of the continuous ocean of Consciousness; and I exclaimed in my heart, "O my God, even this body is Thine own!" There was no longer any me distinct from that one Consciousness; for that illusion was now dispelled.)

**Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
Even I who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy waters—
Even I am Thine own.**

(Heretofore, I had called to God in the chaos of a multitude of thoughts, a multitude of voices and motions of mind—the very chaos of hell. And in my calling, I was as though standing apart from God; I felt myself to be an unclean pitcher immersed in the ocean of God, dividing the waters within from the water without. Though God was in me and God was without, there had still remained this illusion of

'me'. But now the idea of a separating 'ego' was gone. And I was aware that I—this whole conglomerate of body, mind, consciousness, which I call "I"—am none else but that One, and belong to that One, besides whom there is nothing.)

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?

(A wave is only a form that arises out of the ocean and is nothing but ocean. In the same way, my form was as a wave of pure Consciousness, of pure God. How had I imagined it to be something else? And yet it was that very ignorance that had previously prevented me from seeing the truth.)

Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the earth?

(Mountains and valleys in relation to the earth, like waves in relation to the ocean, seem to have an independent existence, an independent identity; yet they are only irregularities, diverse forms, of the earth itself.)

Or does a pebble cease to be stone?

(A pebble is, of course, nothing but stone—just as I now realized in growing clarity that I was none else but the one 'stuff' of Existence. Even though I seemed to be a unique entity separate from the rest of the universe, I was really a piece of the universal Reality, as a pebble is really a piece of stone.)

How can I escape Thee?

Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

(Thought too is a wave on the ocean of God. The thought of separation—can that be anything but God? The very tiniest motion of the mind is like the leaping of the waves on the ocean of Consciousness, and the fear of leaping clear of the ocean is a vain one for the wave. That which thinks of separation is that very Consciousness from which there can never ever be any separation. That One contains everything within It. So, what else could I, the thinker, be?)

Even now, I speak the word, “Thou,” and create duality.

(Here, now, as I write, as I think of God and speak to Him as “Thou,” I am creating a duality between myself and God where no duality exists in truth. It is the creation of the mind. Having habituated itself to separation, the mind creates an “I” and a “Thou,” and thus experiences duality.)

I love and create hatred.

(Just as for every peak there’s a valley, so the thought of love that arises in the mind has, as its valley, as its opposite, hatred. The impulse of the one creates the other, as the creation of a north pole automatically creates a south pole, or as “beauty” necessitates “ugliness,” or as “up” brings along with it “down,” or as “ahead” gives birth to “behind.” The nature of the mind is such that it creates a world of duality where only the One actually is.)

I am in peace and am fashioning chaos.

(The very nature of God’s phenomenal creation is also dual; His cosmic creation alternates from dormant to dynamic, while He, Himself, remains forever unchanging. In the same way, while our consciousness remains unmoved, the mind is in constant alternation. For example, when it is stilled, it is like a spring compressed, representing potential dynamic release. The mind’s peace, therefore, is itself the very mother of its activity.)

Standing on the peak, I necessitate the depths.

(Just as the peak of the wave necessitates the trough of the wave [since you can’t have one without the other], wakefulness necessitates sleep, good necessitates its opposite. Exultation in joy is paid for with despair; they are an inseparable pair.)

**But now, weeping and laughing are gone.
Night is become day.**

(But now I am experiencing the transcendent “stillness” of the One, where this alternation, this duality, of which creation is made, is no

more. It is a clear awareness that all opposites are derived from the same ONE and are therefore dissolved. Laughing and its opposite, weeping, are the peak and the trough which have become leveled in the stillness of the calmed ocean, the rippleless surface of the waters of Consciousness. Night and day have no meaning here: All is eternity.)

Music and silence are heard as one.

(Sound, silence—both are contained in the eternal Consciousness which cannot be called silent, which cannot be called sound; It produces all sounds, yet, as their source, It is silence. Both are united in the One of which they consist.)

My ears are all the universe.

(There is only Me. Even the listening is Me.)

**All motion has ceased,
Everything continues.**

(The activity of the universe does not exist for Me, yet everything is still in motion as before. It is only that I am beyond both motion and non-motion. For I am the Whole; all motion is contained in Me, yet I Myself am unmoving.)

Life and death no longer stand apart.

(From where I am, the life and death of individual beings is less than a dream—so swiftly generations rise and fall, rise and fall! Whole eons of creation pass like a dream in an instant. Where then are life and death? How do they differ? They too are but an artificial duality that is resolved in the One timeless Self.)

**No I, no Thou;
No now, or then.**

(There is no longer a reference “I” that refers to a separate individual entity; there is no longer anything separate to refer to as “Thou.” This one knowing Consciousness, which is I, is all that exists

or ever existed. Likewise, there is no “now” or “then”, for time pertains only to the dream and has no meaning here beyond all manifestation.)

Unless I move, there is no stillness.

(Stillness, too, is but a part of duality, bringing into existence motion. Motion and stillness, the ever-recurring change, are the dream constituents in the dream of duality! Stillness without motion cannot be. Where I am, neither of these exists.)

Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish.

(Lament? In the pure sky of infinity, who is there to lament? What is there to doubt? Where there is no other, but only this One, what error or obstacle could there be? What is there to stand in the way of infinity? What is there other than Me?)

**Nothing to pride oneself on—
All is accomplished in an instant.**

(Pride belongs only to man, that tiny doll, that figment of imagination who, engrossed in the challenge of conflict with other men, prides himself on his petty accomplishments. Here, whole universes are created in an instant and destroyed, and everything that is accomplished is accomplished by the One. Where, then, is pride?)

All may now be told without effort.

(Here am I, with a view to the Eternal, and my hand writing in the world of creation, in the world of men. What a wonderful opportunity to tell all to eager humanity! Everything is known without the least effort. Let me tell it, let me share it, let me reveal it!)

Where is there a question?

(But see! Where everything is very simply and obviously Myself, what question could there be? Here, the possibility of a question cannot arise. Who could imagine a more humorous situation?)

Where is the temple?

(What about explaining the secrets of the soul, and how it is encased in that temple of God called 'the body?' That secret does not exist; for, when all is seen and experienced as one Being, where is that which may be regarded as the receptacle, the temple?)

Which the Imperishable?

Which the abode?

(Which may I call the imperishable God, the Eternal? And which may I call the vessel in which God exists and lives? Consciousness does not perish. The Energy of which this body consists does not perish. All is eternal; there is no differentiation here.)

I am the pulse of the turtle.

I am the clanging bells of joy.

(I am everywhere! I am life! I am the very heartbeat of even the lowliest of creatures. It is I who surge in the heart as joy, as surging joy like the ecstatic abandonment of clanging bells.)

I bring the dust of blindness.

I am the fire of song.

(I am the cause of man's ignorance of Me, yet it is I who leap in his breast as the exultation of song.)

I am in the clouds and I am in the gritty soil.

In pools of clear water my image is found.

(I am that billowing beauty in the sky; I play in all these forms! And the gritty soil which produces the verdure of the earth—I am that soil, that black dirt. I am every tiny pebble of grit, cool and moist. And when, as man, I lean over the water, I discover My image, and see Myself shining in My own eyes.)

I am the dust on the feet of the wretched,

The toothless beggars of every land.

(I live in the dust that covers the calloused feet of those thin, ragged holy men who grin happily at you as you pass them by.)

**I have given sweets that decay to those who crave them.
I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.**

(Each of my manifestations, according to their understanding, receives whatever they wish of the transitory pleasures of the world; but the wealth of My peace, My freedom, My joy, I give to those who seek no other wealth, who seek no other joy, but Me.)

My hands are open—nothing is concealed.

(I have displayed all My wealth; according to his evolution, his wisdom, each chooses what he will have in this life.)

**All things move together of one accord.
Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.**

(All is one concerted whole; everything works together, down to the tiniest detail, in the flower-like unfoldment of this world. All is the doing of the One.)

**The Sun stirs the waters of My heart,
And the vapor of My love flies to the four corners of the world.**

(Like a thousand-rayed sunburst of joy, My love showers forth as the universe of stars and planets and men. And then, this day of manifestation gives way to the night of dissolution ...)

The Moon stills Me, and the cold darkness is My bed.

(And the universe withdraws into My utter darkness of stillness and rest.)

**I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged,
And set in order once again.**

(The expansion and contraction of this entire universe is merely an out-breath and an in-breath; a mere sigh.)

A million worlds begin and end in every breath,

(And, flung out into the endless reaches of infinity, worlds upon worlds evolve, enact their tumultuous dramas, and then withdraw from the stage once more. This cycle repeats itself again and again; the universe explodes from a single mass, expands as gas, and elements form. Eventually they become living organisms, which evolve into intelligent creatures, culminating in man. And one by one each learns the secret that puts an end to their game. And again, the stars reach the fullness of their course; again, everything is drawn back to its source....)

And in this breathing, all things are sustained.

* * *

After this, I collapsed in bed, exhausted by the sheer strain of holding my mind on so keen an edge. When I awoke, it was morning. Immediately, I recalled the experience of the night before, and arose. I went outside to the sunlight, dazed and disoriented. I bent, and took up a handful of gravel, letting it slip slowly through my fingers. "I am in this?" I asked dumbfoundedly.

I felt as though I had been thrust back into a dream from which I had no power to awaken. My only thought was to return to that state I had known the night before. I rushed up the twisted road and scrambled up the hill to the cliff on top of the world, above the forest and ocean, where I had often conversed with God; and I sat there, out of breath, praying, with tears running down my cheeks, for Him to take me back into Himself. Before long, a chill blanket of gray fog, which had risen up from the ocean below, swept over me, engulfing me in a misty cloud. And after a few moments, I reluctantly went back, down the mountain.

NOTES:

1. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*: 6; Mascaro, Juan, 1965; p. 95
2. *Mundaka Upanishad*: 3.1; *Ibid.*, p. 80
3. *Katha Upanishad*: 5; *Ibid.*, p. 64

4. Plotinus, *Enneads*: VI:7.34, 36; VI: 9.5-11
5. de B. Evans, C., *Eckhart*, Vol. I., p. 221
6. Blackney, R.B., *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation*,
7. *Ibid.*, p. 206
8. Huxley, Aldous, 1944; p. 12
9. de B. Evans, C., *op. cit.*, *Sermon XXI*.

4. The Kingdom of God

That magical night, while sitting there before the fire in my dark cabin, I had entered into “the kingdom of God.” I had been privileged to *see* into the real nature of my Self and all existence. When the veil of ignorance, which constitutes the ego, was lifted, it was revealed that my true, underlying identity is, and had always been, the one all-pervading Consciousness that is the Source and substratum of all that exists.

When God reveals Himself, He is not seen as something or someone apart. The soul is lifted up to identity with God, so that there is no longer a soul, but God Himself is revealed as one’s own Self. That Self is eternal, beyond all manifestation, never affected by the ongoing drama of worldly experience. It masquerades as every being, all the while remaining purely Consciousness and perfect Bliss. When my mind reached the highest state of contemplation, all opposites disappeared, resolved into that one Existence. Weeping and laughing, night and day, sound and silence, motion and stillness, life and death, I and Thou, past and future—none of these exist in that Unity. Only the one eternal Consciousness, containing all, exists alone as the supreme Self of all.

This revelatory experience revealed that I am, and, by extension, everyone is, the one Soul of the universe. The slightest movement of the mind would initiate the recreation of duality; but, held singly on its concentrated focus, the mind remains immersed in the Eternal. Raised to that eternal Consciousness, I saw that all creation is one coordinated whole, that every movement of every tiny grain of sand is in perfect harmony with the coordinated unfolding of the universe. My physical existence was then seen to have no separate identity but was part of a unified continuum of creative energy.

The individualized soul, though it feels separate and disconnected from God, is never actually separated from its source and substratum any more than a wave is separate from the ocean. Nothing, not even thought, is other than God; for nothing exists outside of the One. This one eternal Consciousness, experienced as oneself, knows that It is the life pulsing in every creature; It is the joy of exhilaration; It is the urge to song, and It is the producer of the obscuration of ignorance. It exists as clouds, water, and earth, and It appears as every man, woman and child. It is the dust on the feet of the saints. It gives worldly rewards and pleasures to those who seek them; but It reveals Itself only to those who have no other desire but to know the Eternal, to those who, abandoning all, go deliberately and alone to the meeting with God. These are the two paths it openly presents before us.

The energy of the Sun stirs the mind and heart to activity; and, in the dark of night, the heart and mind are drawn to rest. For the Eternal, likewise, there is a period of creation, and a period of rest. Though, from the vantage point of man in time, the existence of the universe lasts for billions of earth years, from the vantage point of Eternity, the universal manifestation is seen to be created, sustained, and withdrawn in the short space of a breath. Like the exhalation and inhalation of a breath, this cyclic beginning and ending of time's array goes on recurrently, while the eternal Conscious-ness remains blissfully unchanged.

At the highest level of consciousness, all is one existence; but the ego-mind, by its choices, creates the duality of 'I' and 'Thou', good and bad, likes and dislikes. Only by learning to see everything as God, does one approach the true vision of Reality, and the state of equanimity. In this rare state, the ego is vanished, and it is seen that all is perfect. Neither pride, nor assertion, nor regret can arise, for all is seen to be accomplished by the One. No questions arise in that perfect clarity. There is no longer a distinction between the created body and the uncreated Consciousness; all existence is seen to be one undifferentiated continuum. Body and soul, matter and spirit, like ice and water, are made of the same substance.

I had seen clearly that *I* was the Life in all life, the one Existence manifest in all forms; and yet, that clarity had been all too brief, and I was now once again separate and isolated, no longer aware of my greater Self, but projected back into a world of time and space, a world of separable forms.

After some time, I adjusted to the fact that I would have to live out my life in this dream-like world and would need to learn to hold to the awareness of my eternal identity, my real Self, while living in this divinely projected body. I was as though born anew; I was free to live as I chose, without fear, without concern. And since that time, I have continued to live in a bright world glowing with nectarean light and shining with God's beauty.

(This brief account is excerpted from my book, The Supreme Self, Fallsburg, N.Y., Atma Books, 1984. I encourage all to read this book in its entirety. The Supreme Self is freely downloadable along with many of my more recent books and articles at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.)

* * *

3. WHO ARE YOU?

**A Collection of Articles from *The Mystic's Vision*
by Swami Abhayananda
Dedicated to the Public Domain 2-25-18
(last revised, 9-11-21)**

If I Told You

If I told you that you are the one source of this universe and all beings in it, what knowledge would you have gained?

If I told you that you are the divine Self of the entire universe, you would be no wiser than before.

Words cannot reveal the truth to you; Self-knowledge is not made of words. You will know the truth when it is revealed within, when the Self reveals itself, and not before.

All my words can do is encourage you to look, to search, to examine who you are at your subtlest core.

If the truth is to be found, it will be found in quietude at the highest reaches of your heart and soul.

When you have surrendered yourself to the Self of all and received the blessing of God,

Then you will know the truth of who you are. Then alone will you know the truth of who you are.

On The Existence of God

No matter how far back in history we probe, we find that there have always been people who have asserted the existence of a spiritual reality underlying the apparent reality, and an equally insistent number of people who assert that the physical appearance is all there is. They who assert the existence of a Divine Mind of whom we all consist say that, while we each appear to be a singular body and mind located temporarily in this particular historic place and time, we are actually evolving manifestations of one all-pervading Spirit or Mind, and that is ultimately who we are; That is our true Identity. It is a question of whether we identify with the Form or the Substance: Your physical form is the changing, evolving you; your substance is the one

Spiritual reality. We might compare our situation to that of the ocean (the substance) and its waves (the forms). The distinction between the ocean and its waves is a distinction of appearance, because, in actuality, the ocean and its waves are not ultimately different. Likewise, the difference between the eternal Spiritual reality that constitutes your being, and the apparent 'you' that is a singular individual form is a mere distinction of appearance.

As in the case of the ocean and the waves, your form will continue to change and eventually decompose, while the substance—which is God's Energy, along with His pure, eternal Consciousness—will remain. That substance is who you are eternally, while the singular form is a transient appearance. What shall we call this eternal substance, this eternal you? We can call It God, the Divine Mind, the Self, or any number of other names. And regardless of what we call It, both the eternal substance and the transient appearance, like the ocean and its waves, are both the same stuff. The one reality is both the substance and the form, the real and the apparent, the eternal and the transient. They are different in appearance, but, ultimately, they are the same. The only real difference is that the substance is forever, while the form is but a fleeting appearance.

But how do we know that such an indivisible underlying Spirit actually exists? Many honest and intelligent people have claimed to have seen and experienced It while lifted to an elevated level of consciousness. Many others have not experienced It and can find no reason to believe that such a Spiritual reality exists. Ultimately, the answer to the question of the existence of an eternal spiritual reality underlying our individual identity lies in the content of our own intellectual experience. Many have not consciously experienced the reality of God during their lifetimes and remain unconvinced. Many others *have* experienced the presence of God to varying degrees through what they describe as a transcendent experience of divine Grace. Some have even experienced a clear and indubitable awareness of their eternal Identity. Ultimately, the truth becomes known, not through reason or logic, but by one's own personal experience. And that is determined, not by our own will, but by the will of the merciful One. May He grant that experience to you.

The Divine Self

We do not see the transcendent God, and yet we see His handiwork. It is only natural, therefore, that we think of God as being somewhere else, far above us, as a king is above his subjects. Since ancient times, when primitive men roamed the earth, God, the Supreme Being, has been regarded as a transcendent overlord, separate from this world and its creatures, who dwells in some distant yet ever-present heavenly realm. But what marvelous news! When He finally lifts the veil and reveals Himself to His devotee, God is seen to be all-pervasive! He is seen to be the very fabric of one's being, the sole Identity of everyone. It is this knowledge that illumined Jesus, prompting him to declare 'I and the Father are one!' This was not the result of Jesus having a unique paternity, nor was it some wild fantasy by which Jesus was deluded; it was the realization of the hidden truth by which Jesus became enlightened!

To a devoted person who calls out lovingly to His God, it is not immediately apparent that he himself is a manifestation of God; but when God reveals Himself within, that person knows his own deathless Self, his own oneness with God, and knows that nothing else exists in this world but that One. God has spread Himself out as this vast universe, and He is immediately present as our own selves, accessible through our own conscious minds. God is the life that lives you; He flows through that life in every breath. He is the joy that thrills your soul, and He is the sweet awareness of being that fills you. Remember Him and praise Him in every thought and word and know every moment that He is manifest as you, that you are nothing else but that one divine Self.

My Two I's

My present name is Swami Abhayananda, though I was given the name Stanley Ross Trout at birth. Both of these names refer to who I am as an individualized person temporarily existing in the grand illusion of time and space. But there is another 'I' that I claim as my *permanent* identity. That other *I* (what Vedantins call the *Atman* or Self) is the universal Consciousness that is the eternal foundation and support of all I's. If I refer to my temporal phenomenal self, 'I' means one thing; if I refer to my eternal Self, 'I' means something else. So, as long as *I* exist in both the eternal and the temporal realm, it appears that there are two I's. But that is only an

appearance.

It is only those who have become consciously aware of the eternal *I* who are able to recognize this apparent double-identity, and to distinguish between the two I's. Jesus, for example, on whom the religious organization of Christianity was founded, spoke frequently from the individualized temporal identity, identifying with the personal being who was born as a Jew, and lived in the community of Nazareth; but he had known his eternal 'I', and he occasionally spoke from that universal Consciousness identity as well, such as when he said, "I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there." ¹

Many of those who do not recognize the existence of two I's in themselves are confused by the words uttered by Jesus. 'Well, which is he?' they ask, 'man or God?' And, of course, the answer is 'He is both!' They are the two aspects of his dual identity, as he hinted in his statement, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me."² I and the Father are one."³ The same is true of you—except that you are as yet unaware of your greater identity. When you do become aware of that greater Self, you will declare, as Jesus did, "Before Abraham was, *I* am."⁴

The dual identity of Jesus as man and God was much discussed by the early Church Fathers, but they did not understand that Jesus was disclosing, not just his own personal reality, but the divine nature of all men. Though he was treated as a common preacher, Jesus was a mystic, privy to the mysteries of the divine reality, and he was revealing a metaphysical truth universally applicable to everyone.

When I reflect back on my own "mystical experience," I am inclined to say that the words I put to paper during that experience did not originate with me, were not uttered by me, but by a Divine Self. But then, that brings up the question 'how is it that there are two beings speaking through this one individual?' The answer is that there are not two beings, but rather two perspectives: one being the perspective of this time-bound individual, and the other perspective—from the one who spoke through my pen on that fateful night—was the perspective of the all-inclusive One, the universal Consciousness that we refer to as 'God.' They are both 'I'. It is just that 'I' am experienced as both this individual consciousness and as the universal,

omnipresent, Consciousness.

It was that universal, omnipresent, Consciousness that somehow overrode my individual consciousness on that November night in 1966 (by a miracle called ‘Grace’), and it was the words of that universal Consciousness that sounded in my brain and was put to paper. “I am in the clouds, and I am in the gritty soil. In pools of clear water, my image is seen.” And again, “All things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.” These are not *my* words; they are the words of the universal *I*.

At that moment, I was keenly aware that, even on the floor of the oceans, the current that moved the tumbling grains of sand was intimately connected to every other force and particle existing in the universe. As though by the functioning of one all-inclusive Mind, everything that occurred was seen to be connected to, and related to, everything else in the universe in an organic manner.

The only thing close to a rational explanation of this appears in the words of the twentieth century physicist, David Bohm:

“The world which we perceive cannot properly be analyzed into independently existent parts with fixed and determinate dynamical relationships between each of the parts. Rather, the ‘parts’ are seen to be in immediate connection, in which their dynamical relationships depend, in an irreducible way, on the state of the whole system (and indeed on that of broader systems in which they are contained, extending ultimately and in principle to the entire universe). Thus, one is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existent parts. We have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent ‘elementary parts’ of the world are the fundamental reality, and that the various systems are merely particular contingent forms and arrangements of these parts. Rather, we say that inseparable quantum inter-connectedness of the whole universe is the fundamental reality, and that relatively independently behaving parts are merely particular and contingent forms within this whole.”⁵

It would appear that “the unbroken whole” has Its own conscious Identity and perspective, and that each of the “particular contingent forms” also has

its own conscious identity and perspective. The particular contingent forms are *contained within* the whole, but both the particular form and the whole each has its own conscious awareness. They are two, but they are one. This is why the universal Consciousness experienced in the mystical vision seems to be ‘other’ than oneself, though It is in fact one’s own greater Identity, one’s universal Self.

The above statement of David Bohm also explains how, from the perspective of the unbroken whole, all things move together of one accord, while from the perspective of each of the particular contingent forms, each one’s movement occurs individually in accordance with its own spontaneous and unaided will.

From the perspective of the unbroken whole, causality is replaced by the “inseparable quantum inter-connectedness of the whole universe.” But from the perspective of the particular contingent forms (you and I), we appear to be entirely free to choose our own actions as we will.

The fact is, there are never really *two* I’s; every soul is a manifestation of the one universal Consciousness and has no other permanent identity. That One is the only true ‘I’. But, from the time we are born into this world, we begin fashioning a false separate personal self that exists only in our minds. At birth, each of us is given a name to distinguish each of us as a unique being, with a distinct parentage. We each bear distinctive characteristics and distinctive histories, which in turn contributes to our distinctive personalities. In this way, a soul is established, giving us a strong sense of personal individuality and uniqueness. But the fact is that we are all manifestations of the one Self, the one Consciousness, from whom and in whom all beings exist, and to whom we all owe our being.

That one Being is everyone’s true Self, but in order to become aware of that universal Self, it is necessary to give some time to meditation in which you can quiet the mental urging and clamoring of your fabricated personal identity. It will help if you can focus your mind instead on a phrase or mantra that brings silence and peace to your conscious awareness. Let the breath too be calmed, and devoutly invoke the Lord of all being. When you become aware of His presence, approach Him reverently. If He is favorable to you, He will merge your awareness into His own; all remnants of your limited personal being will fade away, and you will know yourself as the one illimitable Self of all.

NOTES:

1. *Thomas, Gospel of*, 114; (trans. by Thomas O. Lambdin), from Robinson, James M., ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, E.J. Brill and Harper & Row, 1977, p. 135.
2. *John, Gospel of*, 17:25, from the New Testament of the King James Bible.
3. *Ibid.*, 8:54.
4. *Ibid.*, 8:58.
5. Bohm, David and Hiley, Basil, “On The Intuitive Understanding of Non-Locality as Implied By Quantum Theory”, London, Foundations of Physics journal, Vol. V, 1975; pp. 96, 102.

* * *

The Only One

The false ‘I’—the individual person we think we are—doesn’t really exist! It’s merely a mental phenomenon, an imaginary being. The true ‘I’—the only one who really exists—is the all-pervading Spirit. That is your only true Self, your true identity. You are That. I am That. We imagine that we have a separate and distinct identity, but it is the one Spirit alone who is living as you and as me. So—can you grasp it? When the sage asks you to inquire “Who am I?” he’s asking you to become aware of the divine Reality who is the true and everlasting identity of everyone.¹

Though you are unable at this time to know your Self as all-pervading, the truth is that you are in the clouds, and you are in the gritty soil. You are the pulse of the turtle; you are the clanging bells of joy that thrill the hearts of all who know joy. It is you that stirs in the heart as a rising song; it is your love that flows throughout the world. Here, there, everywhere, it is you alone who exists.

Whether you objectify that all-pervading Divinity as other—as ‘He’—or know that divine Self as ‘I’ within, the divine Reality is all there is in this world and beyond. ‘He’ and ‘I’ are the same. It’s true: ‘I’ and ‘the Father’

are one. Say it in your heart, and know it is true. Whatever name stirs you to remembrance of the one divine Spirit—sing that name in your heart and let the blissful awareness of His endless presence continually fill your soul.

NOTE:

1. It's true that we come into this world individualized as separate and distinct souls. But all souls are composed of the one underlying Divinity, the all-pervading Spirit. And, in the unitive experience of the mystic, the veil of separateness is lifted, the distinct individuality of the soul is transcended, and the soul awakens to the awareness that its true and everlasting identity is the one all-pervading Divine Reality.

The I Between Us

When I first learned that God was within me, and that everything in the world around me was also God, it still seemed to me that, between the God within and the God without, there was an 'I', a 'me', that stood in the way of my vision of unity. I felt as though I was a pitcher of water in an ocean of water: there was water within and water without, but *I*, the pitcher, was there as a separate thing preventing my awareness of God. And I prayed that God would take away this *I* that veiled His omnipresence and let me know oneness in Him. And suddenly I was graced by God with the revelation that even this body, and even this *I*, is God's own. It had been my owning of this *I* that prevented my realization that there is nothing anywhere but God. He creates the forms of this world, and He constitutes our awareness of this world. It is we who make the mistake of thinking that this body and this awareness of *I* belongs exclusively to ourselves, thus wrongly separating our perception of *I* from God.

This obscured perception is a blindness within us that tends us toward self-preference; we call it the *ego*, or 'I'. It is a blindness that is built-in for self-protection, for self-preservation. But it blinds us to the vision of God's all-encompassing presence, and it can only be healed with the help of God's Grace. He reveals through divine vision that the One constitutes both *I* and God, both past and future, both life and death; and that all things move together of one accord, coordinated in God. It is this vision, born of His Grace, that rids us of the blindness under which we suffered for so long.

But beware! For this blindness—this ego—will continue to rise up in its attempt to corrupt your sight once again. At every corner, it awaits the opportunity to subtly reassert itself and leave you once again in darkness and confusion. Your only weapons against this enemy are silence and humility, and a constant diligence to remember the One in whom and by whom you are fashioned. Sing His name in your heart to remind you and rely on His help in your need. He will illumine your blindness, and restore you to sight, and eventually He will uplift you to wholeness in the sweetness of His eternal Light. There, no ego will threaten; there, you'll need not struggle to remember. His peace and yours will be the same, all duality put behind.

As A Man Thinks

Anyone who is a student of religion is aware that, here in the West, we tend to *externalize* the Spirit, regarding God almost exclusively as 'Thou', a Being separate from and external to ourselves. But in the Eastern world, specifically in the ancient land of India, the Spirit is recognized to be the Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss that constitutes and sustains the being of every living soul; and while the Divine is often regarded in the popular Indian culture as an external Deity, and referred to as Brahman, Vishnu, or Shiva—or, generically, as *Bhagavan* (Lord), it is just as common to see the Divine *internalized* and referred to in Indian spiritual literature as the *Atman*, or the Self. This understanding of the Divine as one's deepest Self brings into clarity the necessity for the inner conformity of a man's heart and mind to that Divine Self within him and points the way to the actual spiritual realization of God as one's eternal Self.

The great Greek philosopher and mystic, Heraclitus, who lived over 500 years before the Current Era, expressed a profound truth in just three words. He said: "Character is destiny." The meaning, of course, is that we become what we become because of our good or bad qualities. Our lives are simply manifestations of our inner soul and reflect either the beauty or the ugliness of our character. In other words, we are what we think. This is a truth that has been expressed throughout the centuries; and it is a truth that has been elaborately treated in one particular Upanishad: the *Maitri Upanishad*. This Upanishad deals very thoroughly with this subject, and it explains also the nature of the soul and the means of its progress toward Self-realization. I'd like to share with you a few excerpts from this Upanishad in order to shed some light on the teachings of the

ancient sages of India regarding these issues.

The *Maitri Upanishad*, like many others, is composed in the form of a dialogue. Now it should be clear that, if you're going to have a didactic dialogue, there must be one participant who is ignorant, and asks all the questions; and there must be one who is wise, to give all the answers to the questions. This dialogue is no different; it is between the wise god, Prajapati, and the ignorant, though sincere, angels who ask Prajapati:

"O Master, this body, without consciousness, is but a chariot without a driver. Who, then, is the Spirit by whose power it becomes conscious? Who, in other words, is the driver of the chariot?"

And Prajapati answers:

"There is a Spirit who exists within the things of the world, and yet who is beyond the things of this world. He is pure Consciousness; He dwells in serenity as the Infinite, the Eternal. He is beyond the life of the body and the mind. He was never born, He never dies; He is everlasting, ever one, and self-sustaining. *He* is the Spirit whose power gives consciousness to the body. *He* is the driver of the chariot."

Prajapati continues:

"That infinite Consciousness becomes the finite consciousness of [each] man, possessing the power of discrimination and understanding, and also erroneous conceptions. He is, in truth, the great Lord, the Source of all creation, and the universal Self of all. This Spirit is Consciousness and gives consciousness to the body. *He* is the driver of the chariot."

What Prajapati says in answer to the questioning angels is not at all apparent to everyone. There are so many questions that arise in one's mind about the nature of existence, consciousness, the hereafter, etc., and where is one to find the answers? The Spirit is invisible, so how can one know that It even exists? By what means did the author of this Upanishad come by his knowledge? The Spirit cannot be seen, but It can be known by one who seeks It within his own consciousness. Prajapati explains to

his listeners:

"Those sages who have known Him say that it is He who wanders on this earth from body to body, free from the good and bad effects of actions. He is free because He is free from the sense of *I*, and He is invisible, incomprehensible, concealed in His own mystery.

"He seems to act, but He does not act. He seems not even to exist; but He is Existence itself. He exists in His own being, pure, never changing, never moving, unstainable; and, in peace, beyond desires, He watches the drama of the universe. He is hidden behind the veil of the universal appearance; but He is ever One in His own Bliss.

"The supreme Spirit is immeasurable, inapprehensible, beyond conception, never born, beyond reasoning, beyond thought. His vastness is the vastness of space. At the end of the worlds, while all things sleep, He alone is awake in eternity. Then, from His infinity, new worlds arise and awake, a universe which is an immensity of thought. The universe exists in the Consciousness of Brahman, and unto Him it returns."

This is an authentic representation of the Truth as It is seen in the mystical vision. All that Prajapati says here is correct and absolutely true; I add my verification to these declarations, for whatever it's worth, as one who has also realized their truth for himself. In the mystical experience of unity, the universal manifestation flows out from the Self and returns to the Self in a recurring cycle. It is similar to the inhalation and exhalation of a breath, which we, as humans, experience. This is the truth. One may search through all the accounts of all the mystics and find this same description given.

Apparently, the angels were completely satisfied with what Prajapati said about the supreme Spirit, for now they changed the subject, and questioned him about the individualized soul. "Master," the angel-spokesman said,

"You have spoken to us of the greatness of the Self (*Atman*), but what is the soul (*jiva*) who is bound by the good or bad

effects of actions (*karmas*), and who, born again from these good or bad actions, rises or falls in its wanderings, under the sway of duality?"

Prajapati replies:

"Yes, there is indeed a soul, influenced by the elements¹, who is bound by the good or bad effects of actions, and who, born again from these good or bad effects, rises or falls in its wanderings under the sway of duality. This human soul [who is truly the eternal Self] falls under the influence of Nature (*Prakrti*) and its conditions, and thus it falls into confusion. Because of this confusion, the soul is not aware of its own Divine nature which enables it to exist and to act. The soul is thus whirled along the rushing, muddy, stream of Nature, and becomes unsteady and uncertain. It is filled with confusion and full of desires, without concentration, and agitated with pride. Whenever the soul has thoughts of "I" and "mine," it binds itself to a limited sense of selfhood, a limited identity, just as a bird is bound in the net of a snare."

Prajapati is saying that, in truth, the Self alone exists; It is the absolute Reality. However, the Self has projected an imagined, illusory, reality ("an immensity of thought") known as *Maya* or *Prakrti*, in which the human *soul* exists. And, as the one Spirit is self-limited as an individual soul-form in this mirage, It loses the sense of Its all-pervasiveness, Its infinity, and becomes identified with the world of manifested forms. Swayed by the conditions of Nature in which It finds Itself immersed, It imagines needs and desires, and becomes lost in imaginary justifications for Its actions. Having lost all sense of Its unlimited Divinity, It feels enslaved and bound by Nature, which is truly Its own manifestation. Prajapati goes on to say:

"The mind of man is of two kinds: pure and impure. It is impure when in the bondage of desire, and pure when free from [worldly] desire... This entire world-illusion (*samsara*) takes place in one's own mind. Let one therefore keep the mind pure, for *as a man thinks, so he becomes*. This is the eternal mystery."

There is a very old story, which is meant to illustrate this proclivity of the Divine Self to place Itself in such an imaginary bondage; it involves the god, Indra, and the god, Shiva. According to this story, one day, Indra became bored with all the pleasures afforded him in heaven, and he decided to experience life on earth in the body of a pig. He found a large mud-hole, and he began snorting and cavorting in the mud as a pig. And he found so much pleasure in this pig-life that he mated with a sow, and he fathered a large litter of piglets. His life was very happy; he had his cool mud to lie in, and he had a mate and a lot of squealing piglets to fondly care for, and he was quite content.

Now, the other gods became upset when they learned that Indra had let all the affairs of heaven fall by the wayside while he enjoyed life as a pig on earth. So, they sent Shiva to persuade Indra to return to his rightful place in heaven. Indra refused, however; and told Shiva to mind his own business, that he was very happy where he was, thank you. Shiva tried again and again, with the same result. Finally, Shiva, in desperation, took his trident and split the pig-body of Indra from one end to the other, releasing Indra from his pitiful delusion. Immediately, Indra let out a sigh of joyful relief that he had been freed from bondage to the simple desires and satisfactions of his pig-life; and he expressed his gratitude to Shiva and the other gods too for bringing him out of that pitiable state.

We too, Prajapati is telling us, are God; we are the Divine Self of the universe. But, through becoming deluded by *Maya*, we have come to believe that we are poor, limited, finite forms whose only satisfaction is in the pitiable pleasures of the flesh. We are in the same condition as Indra in the story. Our minds keep on having dreams and fantasies without end. No matter how many times a desire is fulfilled, the mind goes on increasing desires instead of diminishing them. The mind causes you to forget your true nature, and makes you think you're something else; but you must not be fooled. The mind may go on creating universes upon universes; So, what? Let it! Continue to remain in serenity, witnessing it. For those who have no understanding, it is the devil. But, for one who understands the nature of the mind, it is only the creative effulgence, the unceasing play, of the Divine Energy. This is what Prajapati says:

"The mind is indeed the source of bondage; but it is also the source of liberation. To be bound to the things of this world: this is bondage. To be free from them: this is liberation.

Indeed, if men thought of God as much as they think of the world, who would not attain liberation?"

After this, Prajapati explained to the angels how to meditate on the one divine Self:

"When a wise man has withdrawn his mind from all external things, and when he is no longer attentive even to inner sensations, let him rest in peace, free from the movements of will and desire. Since the soul has come from That which is greater than itself, let it surrender to its Source. For it has been said, 'There is something beyond our mind which abides in silence within our mind. It is the supreme Mystery beyond thought.' Let one's mind and one's subtle body rest upon that and not rest on anything else.

"When the mind is silent, beyond weakness or distraction, then it can enter into a world, which is far beyond the mind; that is the highest state. ... As a fire without fuel finds peace in its source, when thoughts become silent, the soul finds peace in its own Source. And when a mind, which longs for Truth finds the peace of its own Source, then those false inclinations cease which were the result of former actions done in the delusion of the senses. A quiet mind overcomes both good and evil actions; in quietude, the soul is one with the Self. Then one knows the joy of eternity. As water becomes one with water, fire with fire, and air with air, so the mind becomes one with the infinite Mind, and thus attains final freedom."

This is the teaching of all the ancient scriptures and all the seers of God. See how similar, for example, is the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita* on this subject:

"When all desires are in peace, and the mind, gathering all the wayward senses, turns them within, then, with reason armed with a strong will, let the seeker quietly lead the mind into the Self, and let all his thoughts be stilled.

"And whenever the unsteady and restless mind strays away from the Self, let him always lead it again and again to the Self.

Supreme joy thereby comes to the yogi whose heart is stilled, whose passions are quieted, who is pure from sin; for he becomes one with Brahman." ²

Prajapati says:

"Words cannot describe the joy of the soul whose impurities are cleansed away in deep contemplation, who is one with the *Atman*, his own Self. Only those who experience this joy know what it is."

That is the end of Prajapati's speech, and the end of the *Maitri Upanishad*. Its message, though, has continued through the centuries, and is reflected in countless scriptures and scriptural treatises. Listen, for example, to this affirmation of its message from the *Ashtavakra samhita*, in which Ashtavakra tells his disciple, king Janaka:

"You are neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor ether; these are but the elements of which all created forms are made. In order to attain liberation, know the Self as the witness of all these; you are Consciousness itself. If you detach your identification from the body, and rest in Consciousness, you will at once be happy, peaceful and free from bondage. You are the one observer of all, and you are always liberated. In fact, it is only your imagining yourself to be other than the one observer that constitutes your bondage. One who considers himself free is, in fact, free; and one who considers himself bound remains bound. "*As one thinks, so one becomes*" is a popular saying in this world—and it is very true. The Self is all pervading, perfect, pure Consciousness; It is One, free, actionless, unattached, desireless and quiet. It is the Witness. It is only through delusion [*Maya*] that it appears to be an individual soul-entity." ³

NOTES:

1. Before the advent of science, and the discovery of atomic structure, learned men of both East and West believed that everything was made of a combination of five primary elements: earth, air, fire, water, and ether. But today we know, of course, that none of these are truly elemental, but

each so-called ‘element’ consists of a combination of various elementary chemical molecules which are comprised of various sub-atomic particles. These, in turn, are composed of electrical impulses, which are manifestations of the energy of God’s Thought.

2. *Bhagavad Gita*, 6:24-31.

3. *Ashtavakra Samhita*

The Appearance of Duality

It is well known that the Self of man and the ultimate and transcendent Reality known as God are not two. This is the perennially acceptable view of “Nonduality”. But it must also be acknowledged that there is an *apparent* duality which has a certain phenomenal reality to it as well. For, during the “mystical experience” one experiences a noumenal and eternal ‘I’ who manifests this universe in which lives a phenomenal and temporal ‘I’. The ‘I’ is the same, yet different. The difference between the two ‘I’s is that the eternal one projected Himself as the temporal one into this world of time and space; the temporal one did not project himself into eternity.

So, God by His very *projection* of this temporal universe, establishes an *apparent* duality for those living within this projection. This is not difficult to understand: If there is a dreamer and his dream, there *appears* to be two. But are there really two? The truth is that there is still only one; the other is only an imagination, and though the consciousness in the dream seems to be ‘other’ than the dreamer, it is in fact the consciousness of the dreamer. But some would argue that ‘Nonetheless, the other *exists* as a phenomenon, and therefore constitutes a second.’ It is a question of perspective, is it not? At least we may be certain that, once the dreamer awakes and the dream is no more, then only one remains. The Nondualist would no doubt remark that there was *always* only one.

We dream-images enclosed within this illusory universe of time and space, are similarly “phenomena”, and therefore *appear* to exist. And so, as *images* of God (who is our *true* Self), we regard God as separate, ‘other’. For, while *we* are enclosed within the world of time and space which is His projection made of His Consciousness, *He* is nonetheless entirely beyond it. He is the eternal Mind that projects this space/time continuum, this form-filled world, as a construct of thought. He is indeed the Consciousness which animates us, and which lends us consciousness. He is our very Self; He is the one and

only Reality. But it is not wrong to acknowledge the *apparent* duality which He brings to pass in the act of projecting this world of beings within Himself.

Ultimately, when we pass from space-time to the unlimited Reality, we shall recognize the eternally inseparable oneness of God and our Self; nonetheless, while living as separate beings within this worldly illusion, it is quite understandable if we call out to Him as though He were separate, or ‘other’, just as dream figures might call out within themselves in an effort to contact the dreamer, who is indeed their own essence, a one who becomes an *apparent* two.

Some hold exclusively to the eternal truth of unity, declaring their single and only identity to be ‘the One’; these are the *jnanis* (or “knowers”). Others, acknowledging the *apparent* duality between themselves and God, worship the One as other than themselves, as the Exemplar of which they are mere images. These are the *bhaktas* (or “lovers”). And both are perfectly correct and valid pathways to the *realization* of God, the direct knowledge of the eternal Self. The *jnani* says, “I am That”; the *bhakta* says, “O Lord, Thou alone art!”. And both arrive at the selfsame realization of the Real.

‘And what of the apparent duality of body and spirit?’ we may wonder. We all know what Descartes thought about it. But I would ask, ‘Have you ever seen ice cubes floating in water? Are they two things or one?’ There seems to be two different substances, since each is clearly separate from the other; but no, it is one substance in two different states. When I was immersed in the unitive vision, I wondered “Where is the temple (of the body)? Which the imperishable, which the abode?” For there was to be seen no separate body-temple with an imperishable soul within! There was no division to be found at all. All is Consciousness-Energy in this dream! And all of it is imperishable. It is only the various shapes that are so changeable, so very perishable; but their Source and Essence is one.

Think of your own dream-creations! Is your dream-character divided into a consciousness and a body-form? No. It is one thing: the form and its limited self-consciousness are one projected creative mind-stuff. Likewise, for us here on earth. We live and move and have our being within the Mind-stuff of God. It is His drama, and He is the Self-consciousness of each of us. When we ultimately awake, we shall know the Source of all selves, the Source of all forms; we shall know that we were, are, and ever shall be, the

One who lives in eternal bliss.

But what of the separation between the ‘soul’ and the body at death? It seems quite certain that consciousness withdraws from the body when the heart stops beating, that consciousness and the solidified energy that is our body then go their separate ways. And that seems to imply a real, absolute, duality. But it is just the magic of the One. Think of what happens when you wake from a dream: Your own consciousness of Self remains even when the dream vanishes. Who you thought you were in the dream is seen to have been an illusory identity; but even after you awake, *You* remain. The dream scenery also vanishes when you awake. Where did it go? It never really was. It too was only your own consciousness, *appearing* as form. Likewise, in this universe, matter is consciousness appearing as energy, which in turn appears as form.

The universe itself is occurring *as a whole* within the one Consciousness. It is an integral dream-like phenomenon. He is always One, even while projecting the universal dream with His Consciousness-Energy. When each of the dream-like images awakes, they awake to the One. Then, at the end of the universal ‘dream’, all forms revert to Energy, which ceases its transformations and merges into the one Consciousness. Consciousness ceases its play, resolving quietly into Itself. Consciousness and Energy were never two; they are merely twin aspects of His projective Power. The Supreme Consciousness will rest now, prior to projecting once again an apparent universe of conscious forms, another seeming duality upon His oneness.

Keeping in mind this unity-in-duality, or duality-in-unity, please reconsider the remarkable text from the Gnostic seer, Simon Magus (*fl. ca. 40 C.E.*), entitled *The Great Exposition*, which so ably explains the apparent duality within the Nondual reality:

***The Great Exposition
of Simon Magus***

There are *two* aspects of the One: The first of these is the Higher, the Divine Mind of the universe, which governs all things, and is masculine. The other is the lower, the Thought (*epinoia*) which produces all things, and is feminine. As a pair united, they comprise all that exists.

The Divine Mind is the Father who sustains all things and nourishes all that begins and ends. He is the One who eternally stands, without beginning or end. He exists entirely alone; for, while the Thought arising from Unity, and coming forth from the Divine Mind, creates [the appearance of] duality, the Father remains a Unity. The Thought is in Himself, and so He is alone. Made manifest to Himself from Himself, He appears to be two. He becomes “Father” by virtue of being called so by His own Thought.

Since He, Himself, brought forward Himself, by means of Himself, manifesting to Himself His own Thought, it is not correct to attribute creation to the Thought alone. For She (the Thought) conceals the Father within Herself; the Divine Mind and the Thought are intertwined. Thus, though [they appear] to be a pair, one opposite the other, the Divine Mind is in no way different from the Thought, inasmuch as they are one.

Though there appears to be a Higher, the Mind, and a lower, the Thought, truly, It is a Unity, just as what is manifested from these two [i.e., the universe] is a unity, while appearing to be a duality. The Divine Mind and the Thought are discernible, one from the other, but they are one, though they appear to be two.

[Thus,] ... there is one Divine Reality, [apparently] divided as Higher and lower; generating Itself, nourishing Itself, seeking Itself, finding Itself, being mother of Itself, father of Itself, sister of Itself, spouse of Itself, daughter of Itself, son of Itself. It is both Mother and Father, a Unity, being the Root of the entire circle of existence.¹

NOTES:

1. Simon Magus, *Apophysis Megale* (“The Great Exposition”), quoted by Hippolytus of Rome, in *Refutatio Omnium Heresium* (“The Refutation of All Heresies”), VI. 8; adapted from Roberts, Rev. A. & Donaldson, J. (eds), *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Vol. VI; Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1892; pp. 208-210.

As this text is one of my favorites, it has been cited by me previously in Abhayananda, Swami, *History of Mysticism*, Olympia, Washington, Atma Books, 1987, 2000; p. 132; and again, with commentary, in Abhayananda, Swami, *Mysticism And Science*, Winchester, U.K., O Books, 2007; pp. 66-72.

Why We Are Here

Are we each responsible for our own decisions, and therefore responsible for the course of our own lives, with no one to blame but ourselves? Or is the good Lord who dreams up all these souls, and places us into this world with our individual proclivities, the ultimately responsible one? Well, I think you can see the answer to this question at once: Both of us are responsible. God is the ultimate cause, and we are the effective causes, being instrumental in bringing about the resultant effects. But of course, we and God are not separate. We souls are mere figments of His imagination; we exist in Him and are entirely governed by Him.

And, since ultimately there is only God, why do you suppose He continues to produce these apparent worlds and souls and all this hubbub? What does it really matter how each manifested soul passes the time in this essentially unreal tapestry of space and time? It matters to each of us, of course; but why does it matter to Him? Is He keeping score? Does He have some stake in the game? Perhaps He's simply making the most of His lonely omnipotence; He has certainly produced a magnificent show! No one would suggest that it would be better if He did nothing. Still, we can't help wondering what justifies for Him the putting on of this extravagant pageant? Perhaps, like us, He's simply susceptible to the appeal and satisfaction of artistic creation.

But, if you ask me, from a mystic's point of view, there's really nothing in it for Him. He remains blissfully the same, no matter what. So, what's His motivation? Could it be He's simply demonstrating by example the epitome of a perfectly selfless act? Is He giving tirelessly of His blessings, radiating mercy to every creature, in order to show us the path of blessedness and joy? His own glory is mirrored in millions of Suns throughout the cosmos, and we, in imitation, reflect His intrinsic love in our lives; and we pray: Mercy, Mother, on all Thy children. Mercy, Mother, give mercy to all.

Of course, our Mother/Father loves His/Her mind-born children and wishes them well; for, after all, they're not truly *other* than Himself. But more than that, His very nature is love. And that love is expressed within us, His Mind-born creations, *compelling* us to His service. We have no other course; no one is able to escape Him. His love binds us in its tender grip, and we desire no other love. It is this love that leads us to selflessness, to the dissolution of the petty ego. This is His purpose and His motivation: to transform us into Himself, to return us to our original purity. Who knows why? It's simply what He does. And, therefore, I also know my *own* purpose, my journey's end: I live to do His will, to tell all I know of Him, to sing His praise. Clearly, I'm at His mercy. Like you, I receive only what He gives, and I give only what He enables me to give.

The Hindus call this creation, this repeated universal manifestation, "God's *lila*, His play". From the invisible *Unum*, a tangible *Pluribus* bursts forth. And each new manifestation culminates at last in the unification of opposites. Repeatedly, the illusion of chaotic multiplicity is happily burst! Suddenly, He and I are one—the same One! And then, after some inactivity, the game begins once again! Those who haven't seen it cannot appreciate the incredible wonder of it. And those who have seen it cannot tell of it, for, once seen, there's no one left to hear or tell. When all is said and done, there's nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish, nothing to pride oneself on; all is accomplished in an instant.

Karma

When someone says, "That's just your karma," what do they mean? *Karma* is a Sanskrit word, meaning "actions" or "the result of actions." And so, we can translate the above statement to "The present condition of your life is just the result of your previous actions." And if the statement seemed vague at first, it is now perfectly clear and acceptable. The current state of our lives *is* the result of our karma. The sum of all those decisions and actions throughout our lives has resulted in our current life situation. It may also be assumed that our present karma determines what we are to become in a subsequent lifetime. In my own case, I see that my commitment to service in praise of God has focused my life in a particular direction, eliminating those commitments that appeared to conflict with that paramount commitment, and bringing me to a particular life situation: though my life is a solitary and somewhat penurious one, it is a life of great satisfaction, freedom, and

contentment. All those conditions are karmic, i.e., they are, without a doubt, the results of *my own* actions.

However, we must delve a little deeper, and also ask ‘What is the underlying *cause* or *source* of the predominant life decisions that resulted in those actions that constitute our karma?’ In my own case, my overriding commitment to service in praise of God derived solely from the Grace of God that so strongly influenced—and can truly be said to have *caused*—my desire to praise Him. The point is that, although my actions are my own, and can be said to constitute *my* karma, all that has occurred in my life, including the sum of my decisions and my actions, is in fact the result of the actions of God. As the Godhead, He is the transcendent Absolute, the One without a second, completely unaffected by all the many activities occurring throughout the universe and remaining indivisible throughout eternity. But He is also the active Mind, the Creator, who is the source and initiator of our own activities and all the activities that make up our evolving universe. He cannot be limited to transcendence, for He is also immanent within our world of time and space, inspiring us, and guiding each of us in His wisdom.

The truth is: all that we do is *His* doing; He is responsible for everything, for we live *in* Him, and are constituted of His being. *He* is not only inspiring our actions, but He is performing all the actions in this world through these many bodies and minds; and so, in truth, our karma is *His* karma, though we, as individuals, appear to receive the results of our actions. We are recognized as independent individuals, but, at the same time, we are manifestations or incarnations of *His* being. All is He, and all that is done is done by Him. Know that He is your true being, your life and all existence, that nothing else exists but God. Know that He is your Creator and ever-present Benefactor, and continually praise Him in your heart of joy.

A Sense of Me

We know that we are grounded in and supported by God; we know
That He is the eternal Reality underlying our very existence,
And yet, in our minds we seem to be something other:
An individual being with a sense of ‘me’
Who walks this earth in multitudes with its own separate will.
And even though we know that God is our own higher Self, and not
Separate from us, each ‘me’ is filled with an innate love for Him,

As though He were something other than our own Self.
 We long to be enfolded in His embrace, to unite our awareness
 With His far greater awareness, but we can't do it without His grace.
 And so, day and night we lament that He so seldom reveals Himself,
 Though He knows full well that our only delight and desire is to know Him,
 To see the light of His eternal day and merge into His all-revealing light.

But be assured: He will not always remain hidden!
 One not too distant day or night He will still your breath,
 And your mind will become absorbed in Him alone;
 And whatever this thing called 'me' is will disappear in one
 Unending conscious light, and we will know in fullest clarity
 That, all along, it was only Him, the one never-ending Light,
 Who walked this earth pretending to be a 'me.'

They Ask Me

They ask me, "How can man and God be one?
 It makes no sense; it can't be understood."
 I answer, "He is all, and all are He!
 No other exists but Him; so, who are you?"

Becoming one with God is just the realization
 Of what is and has always been true.
 The self you think you are, is only a mirage;
 The Self you've always been, is that eternal One.

We go about in our illusory shells,
 Identifying with the dance of atoms,
 A mere framework of form and ideas.
 But only when He opens wide our inner eye
 Is it revealed that we are Him and He is us.

This truth is not so easily perceived;
 It's hidden by the power He wields.
 And even when it's once revealed,
 It's hard to hold; it slips away.

We pray, we concentrate our minds on Him,

And search our inner sky for that all-revealing Sun.
 We shut out all distracting thoughts,
 And open up our souls to Him.
 Yet rarely does the clear light dawn
 That shows our own eternal face.

More often we rely on thoughts inspired
 That come to us as wisdom from on high.
 Our prayers, our yearning hearts, uplift us
 To that place where thought runs pure and clear;
 And, in this way, we come to know His presence deep within.

But those who've gained His favor know a higher vision still;
 His Grace reveals the truth of truths:
 The Self of all is I!

They ask me, "How can man and God be one?"
 I ask them, "In the Unity that is His all-inclusive Self,
 How can you imagine there are two?
 If nothing else exists but God,
 Then who, on earth, are you?"

Look, the Source is one and all that is;
 But It has imaged forth within Itself a second: this cosmic array.
 Eternally the one great Mind exists alone;
 Its universal picture-show comes and goes,
 An image on the screen of time.

Eternally, even as the stars play out their birth and death,
 The One is undiminished, undivided, undismayed.
 For, since the universal drama exists within the one great Mind,
 There is no separation, no duality at all.

And yet, while we live and dance in time and space,
 We inhabit an imaginary bubble of non-eternity,
 Of transient bodies and volitional activities,
 A secondary world, unreal.

For "real", by definition, refers only to the Permanent,
 The Eternal, the Mind unmanifest and clear.

So, what is this unseemly show, this conjured art,
 This Mind-dreamt castle-in-the-air
 In which we're sentenced to abide?

Alas, it's smoke and mirrors, a magic show,
 Of no account, unworthy of note.
 For the fact is we've never left our eternal realm;
 We delight there even now.

The timeless Self we know as "we" was never
 Imprisoned in a bodily shell;
 That's but an illusion, a paltry spell that binds us
 To the dream of separate personality.

Once freed of duality's deception,
 We realize we've never left eternity's bliss.
 We're one unparcelled Self, unbound, unsnared forever,
 Complete in the completion of the boundless One,
 A "we", an "I" that stands triumphantly free, beyond imagined time.

None Else

When you're drawn up to the One,
 You'll find yourself alone.
 There's no female at His side,
 No attending angels round about.
 There's no Son sitting nearby,
 And no congregation of saints standing there.
 Even "He" is not there.
 Only You are there.

Not this little form of you,
 But You as you never knew you were,
 A nothing Mind, containing all.
 Nothing else is there but You.
 There is no Shakti there but You.
 There is no Shiva there but You.
 Purusha as well as Prakriti are You.
 The throngs of souls are You.

The powers that be are You.
Wherever You look,
You see none else but You.

“Alone at last!” You sigh.
If there is to be an ‘other,’
You must imagine him or her.
The universe you project is You,
And all the people in it are You.
There’s only ONE, and You are it.

The devotees who chant the name are You,
The universal choir of angels, You.
Whatever *is* is You, conjured by You.
There’s none else but You anywhere.
In such a lonely timeless life,
What else is there to do but dream
Up worlds and populate them
With imaginative forms caught up
In crazy, impossible plots and toils?

What else would You do
When there’s none else but You?

Look Around You

Without any doubts, this world, this vast universe, is made *by* God, *of* God, and resides *in* God. For there is no other Reality but Him. God is the one all-inclusive Spirit, or Mind, in whom everything and everyone has its being. This truth has been clearly revealed through Grace to countless individual souls in an enlightening inner vision. If there was something else—something other than Him, it is in that divine inner vision that we would learn of it. But it is there, in that divine revelation, that we learn that we are made of God-stuff, that there is nothing else! We learn that it is the One Great Mind who brings all to light, and that it is He in whom everything resides and of whom everything consists. There, by His Grace, we learn our oneness with Him. There, two-ness cannot even arise as an imagination.

You will be happy to know that, by searching for Him within, you too can

experience His Grace. You too can know Him as the one and only Reality and solve this great riddle of Nonduality conclusively for yourself. Look around you! Do you not see that every blade of grass is bursting with Consciousness? Do you not see that every chunk of gravel is alive with Consciousness? Do you not see how perfectly timed the planets move, how the Sun and moon tell the unveiling of the moments in your life?

O what good fortune is this—to see with the eyes of the Divine, to bathe in the bliss of His living presence, to delight in the heavenly breezes wafting in the summer light! Look around you!

* * *

4. THE GRACE OF GOD

A Collection of Articles from *The Mystic's Vision*

by Swami Abhayananda

Dedicated to the Public Domain; last revised 2-26-2020

Amazing Grace

I recently watched with millions of other viewers as President Barack Obama sang “Amazing Grace” on nationwide TV while attending the funeral of a friend and colleague. It is a well-known song that was written by John Newton, an English Christian clergyman, in 1773, and has been popular in American Churches and culture ever since. The popularity of this song over the years is due to the fact that it is a song to which everyone can relate, for we have all known the merciful touch of God in our lives. God’s Grace is not limited to members of any single sectarian orientation; it is universal and touches every human being on earth.

God comes into our lives of His own accord and wakens us to His ever-presence. For each of us, it is a unique experience, an experience that leaves its lasting imprint on our souls, providing inspiration for courage in our lives and solace in our troubles by reminding us of God’s mercy and of our true home in His heart. Every instance of God’s Grace is a great and valuable gift to the soul who receives it, but I would ask you to consider the special merits of a very special Grace with which only a relatively few fortunate souls are familiar, and yet which I feel is uncommonly worthy to be regarded as *amazing*:

It is the gracious revelation of one’s divine Identity, the soul’s sudden realization that it is in God, is made of God, and is nothing else but God. It

is this revelatory Grace which was visited on Heraclitus and Lao Tze; and it is the experience of that Grace that enlightened the Buddha, causing him to exclaim “I am Father of myself”. It is that interior Grace that revealed to the Upanishadic *rishis* the truth that “Thou art That!” And it is the experience of that Grace that illumined Jesus when he was baptized by the Spirit in the river Jordan, leading him to declare, “I and the Father are one!” It is the Grace that awakened Plotinus to the unitive vision of God, and also revealed to Meister Eckhart his oneness with God; it was also that “amazing” Grace that revealed to the Sufi mystic, Ibn Arabi, his own eternal Self; and there are those of us who experience this very special Grace even in these present days.

Here, please listen for yourself to the words of these various representatives of diverse religious and philosophical traditions as they tell of their own experience of that ‘amazing Grace’:

1. **VEDANTA/HINDUISM:** *Here are some words about that Divine revelation from various authors of the **Upanishads** (ca. 1200 B.C.E.):*

“He cannot be seen by the eye, and words cannot reveal Him. He cannot be reached by the senses, or by austerity or sacred actions. By the grace of wisdom and purity of mind, He can be seen indivisible in the silence of contemplation.”¹

“What cannot be thought with the mind, but That whereby the mind thinks: know That alone to be Brahman.It is not what is thought that we should wish to know; we should know the thinker. ‘He is my Self!’ This one should know. ‘He is my Self!’ This one should know.”²

“When a sage sees this great Unity, and realizes that his Self has become all beings, what delusion and what sorrow could ever approach him?”³

“When awake to the vision of one’s own Self, when a man in truth can say: “I am He,” what desires could lead him to grieve in fever for the body? When a man sees the *Atman*, his own Self, the one God, the Lord of what was and of what shall be, then he fears no more.”⁴

“When a man has seen the truth of the Spirit, he is one with Him; the aim of his life is fulfilled, and he is ever beyond sorrow..... When a man knows God, he is free; his sorrows have an end, and birth and death are no more. When in inner union he is beyond the world of the body, then the third world, the world of the Spirit, is found, where man possesses all—for he is one with the ONE.” ⁵

(And from the author of the *Bhagavad Gita* (ca. 500 B.C.E.):

“When the mind of the yogi is in peace, focused on the Self within, and beyond all restless desires, then he experiences Unity. His mind becomes still, like the flame of a lamp sheltered from the winds. When the mind rests in the prayerful stillness of yoga, by the grace of the One, he knows the One, and attains fulfillment. Then he knows the joy of Eternity; he sees beyond the intellect and the senses. He becomes the Unmoving, the Eternal.” ⁶

“... In this experience of Unity, the yogi is liberated, delivered from all suffering forever The yogi whose heart is still, whose passions are dissolved, and who is pure of sin, experiences this supreme bliss and knows his oneness with Brahman.” ⁷

2. **BUDDHISM:** *Here is the way that revelation was spoken of by the Buddha* (ca. 500 B.C.):

“Monks, there is an Unborn, Unoriginated, Unmade and Unconditioned. Were there not the Unborn, Unoriginated, Unmade and Unconditioned, there would be no escape from the born, originated, made and conditioned. Since there is the Unborn, Unoriginated, Unmade and Unconditioned, there *is* escape from the born, originated, made and conditioned.” ⁸

“... There is, O monks, a state where there is neither this world nor any other world, nor is there any Sun or moon. There is neither a coming nor going, nor remaining, nor passing away,

nor arising. Without support, without movement, It is the Foundation of everything.”⁹

And this from a later Chinese Buddhist:

“In learning to be a Buddha, ...man should purify his mind and allow his spirit to penetrate the depths. Thus, he will be able to wander silently within himself during contemplation, and he will see the Origin of all things, obscured by nothing.... His mind becomes boundless and formless,... all-illuminating and bright, like moonlight pervading the darkness. During that absolute moment, the mind experiences illumination without darkness, clarity without stain. It becomes what it really is, absolutely tranquil, absolutely illuminating. Though this all-pervading Mind is tranquil, the world of cause and effect does not cease; though It illumines the world, the world is but Its reflection. It is pure Light and perfect Quiescence, which continues through endless time. It is motionless, and free from all activity; It is silent, and self-aware That brilliant Light permeates every corner of the world. It is This we should become aware of and know.”¹⁰

3. CHRISTIANITY: *Here are some words attributed to Jesus* (ca. 30 C.E.) regarding the realization of his unity with God:

“Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.”¹¹

“Jesus said, ‘I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there.’”¹²

Meister Eckhart (1260-1328), a Christian prelate, said this about his own unitive experience:

“As the soul becomes more pure and bare and poor, and possesses less of created things, and is emptied of all things that are not God, it receives God more purely, and is more completely in Him; and it truly becomes one with God, and it

looks into God and God into it, face to face as it were; two images transformed into one.”¹³

“I am converted into Him in such a way that He makes me one being with Himself—not a *similar* being. By the living God, it is true that there is no distinction.”¹⁴

“In this breaking through [of consciousness], I find that God and I are both the same. Then I am what I [always] was; I neither wax nor wane, for I am the motionless Cause that is moving all things.”¹⁵

“I found in me all things forgotten, my own self forgotten and awareness of Thee, alone, O God. I found myself with Thee, being Thy being and speaking the Word and breathing the spirit.”¹⁶

“Here, one cannot speak of the soul anymore, for she has lost her nature yonder in the oneness of divine essence. There, she is no longer called soul, but is called *immeasurable Being*.¹⁷

“...Some people think that they will see God as if He were standing there and they here. It is not so. God and I, we are one.”¹⁸

“The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. My eye and God’s eye are one and the same—one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving.”¹⁹

4. **NEOPLATONISM:** *Here’s a little of what the great Egyptian sage, Plotinus (205-270 C.E.), said about the experience of unity:*

“The soul naturally loves God and yearns to be one with Him, just as a noble daughter naturally loves her noble father....And suddenly, [she] is uplifted and sees, without ever knowing how; ... the Supreme has come to her, or rather has revealed Its presence. She has turned away from everything around her and has readied herself, having made herself as beautiful as possible and fashioned herself in likeness with the Divine by those preparations and adornments which come unsought to those

who grow ready for the vision. And she has seen that Divine presence suddenly manifesting within herself, for now there is nothing between herself and the Divine. There is now no longer a duality, but a two-in-one; for, so long as that presence continues, all distinction between them is dissolved. The longing of a lover to unite with his [human] beloved is a longing for a mere imitation of that Divine and perfect union.

“...In this state of absorbed contemplation, there is no longer a relationship between a subject and an object; the vision itself is the one continuous Being, so that seeing and seen are one thing; the object and the act of vision have become identical.

“...It is a knowing of the [eternal] Self restored to its original purity. No doubt we should not speak of *seeing*; but we cannot help speaking in terms of duality, such as “the seer” and “the seen,” instead of asserting boldly that it is the attainment of absolute Unity. In this *seeing*, we neither regard an object nor perceive distinctions; for there are not two. The man is altered, no longer himself nor belonging to himself; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into It, one with It. ...Duality exists only in separation; by our holding ourselves apart from It, the Supreme is set outside of us. This is why the vision cannot be described; we cannot separate the Supreme from ourselves to speak of It, for if we have seen something separate and distinct, we have fallen short of the Supreme, which can be known only as one with oneself.

“... [In this vision] there are not two; beholder is one with the beheld ... The man who has experienced this mingling with the Supreme must—if he but recalls It —carry the memory of Divinity impressed upon his soul. He is become the Unity, and nothing within him or without can create any diversity. Nor is there any movement now, or passion, or outreaching desire, once this ascent is attained. Reasoning is suspended and all intellection as well, and even—to dare the word—the very *self* is gone. Filled with God, he has in perfect stillness attained isolation, aloneness.

“... This is the life of the gods and of the godlike and blessed among men, ...the passing of the alone to the Alone.” ²⁰

5. **ISLAM:** *And here are some words from the Sufi sage, Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), on the unitive experience:*

“When the mystery of the oneness of the soul and the Divine is revealed to you, you will understand that you are no other than God..... Then you will see all your actions to be His actions and all your attributes to be His attributes and your essence to be His essenceThus, instead of [your own] essence, there is the essence of God and in place of [your own] attributes, there are the attributes of God. He who knows himself sees his whole existence to be the Divine existence but does not experience that any change has taken place in his own nature or qualities. For when you know yourself, your sense of a limited identity vanishes, and you know that you and God are one and the same.” ²¹

“...There is no existence save His existenceThis means that the existence of the beggar is His existence and the existence of the sick is His existence. Now, when this is admitted, it is acknowledged that all existence is His existence; and that the existence of all created things, both accidents and substances, is His existence; and when the secret of one particle of the atoms is clear, the secret of all created things, both outward and inward, is clear; and you do not see in this world or the next, anything except God.” ²²

“On Him alone we depend for everything; our dependence on other things is in reality dependence on Him, for they are nothing but His appearances.” ²³

“The eye perceives nothing but Him; only He is to be known. We are His; by Him we exist, and by Him we are governed; and we are, at all times and in all states, in His presence.” ²⁴

“Nothing but the Reality is; there is no separate being, no arriving and no being far away. This is seen in true vision;

when I experienced it, I saw nothing but Him. When my Beloved appears, with what eye do I see Him? With His eye, not with mine; for no one sees Him except Himself.”²⁵

“It is none other than He who progresses or journeys as you. There is nothing to be known but He; and since He is Being itself, He is therefore also the journeyer. There is no knower but He; so, who are you? Know your true Reality. He is the essential Self of all. But He conceals it by [the appearance of] otherness, which is “you.”²⁶

“If you hold to multiplicity, you are with the world; and if you hold to the Unity, you are with the Truth. Our names are but names for God; at the same time our individual selves are His shadow. He is at once our identity and not our identity... Consider!”²⁷ In one sense the Reality is creatures; in another sense, It is not Whether you assert that It is undivided or divided, the Self is alone. The manifold [universe] exists and yet it does not exist.”²⁸ “Therefore, know your Self, who you are, what is your identity...”²⁹ “He who knows himself knows his Lord; ...indeed, He is his very identity and reality.”³⁰

“If men knew themselves, they would know God; and if they really knew God, they would be satisfied with Him and would think of Him alone.”³¹

These are the testaments of a few of those to whom God has revealed Himself; perhaps He'll reveal Himself to you as well. It's all about your heart, you know: He's no fool; you must truly come to know that without Him you are nothing, and wholeheartedly offer Him your life and work. If all conditions are just right—if it is your time and place, and He has brought you to His love and Grace, perhaps He'll draw you into His heart and give you a taste of eternal bliss. It's worth a try! Have a talk with Him tonight.³²

NOTES:

1. *Mundaka Upanishad*, III.1; Juan Mascaro, *The Upanishads*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1965.
2. *Kaushitaki Upanishad*, III.8; Juan Mascaro, *The Upanishads*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1965.

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32. Anyone interested in reading my own account of the unitive experience, simply go to my website: www.themysticsvision.com, and click on the “Read or Download Books” page. There, you will find a listing for my book, *The Supreme Self*. It is in that book that I describe my own experience of “amazing grace”, and this book, as well as my other books, may be downloaded at no charge in a PDF format. Enjoy.

The Gift of Spiritual Vision

For the *bhakta*, the soul in the throes of love for God, there arises a love-longing for the union with God. And prior to the dawning of that unitive experience, there is much singing and prayers, and copious tears. But then, at the inception of the experience of revelation, there is an end to the emotion, and the soul falls into a calm that is also intensely awake. The pupils of her eyes become extraordinarily open wide, and her breathing slows and subsides to a very shallow rise and fall, as though it were approaching the balance point, where breathing would be entirely stilled.

The relationship of soul to God is nearly vanished, and there is only the fine awareness focused upon its own incredible clarity, its own being; and then the prayer that bursts forth from the finally naked and surrendered soul: “O God, let me be one with Thee—not that I might glory in Thy love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory for the benefit of all Thy children”. And then comes the sudden awakening, as though from a dream, and this soul suddenly sees with the eyes of the eternal One, who is the Self it has always been—the Self *you* have always been.

You, who have been crying for His embrace; you, who have been awaiting the arrival of the King; you, *yourself*, are the only Existence, the Lord, the Father; and all along you have been living in an illusory separation from yourself, in a dream-world of your own making. But now, there are no longer two. *Even now, I speak the word, 'Thou', and create duality.* There is no one else, and never had been. You are the omnipresent Mind—you! The personification you had adopted was but a fantasy; and now you see the truth.

You live eternally, showering forth this huge universal display. You are the life in every creature: *I am the pulse of the turtle; I am the clanging bells of joy. I bring the dust of blindness; I am the fire of song. I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil; in pools of clear water my image is found. ...I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged and set in order once again. A million worlds begin and end in every breath, and in this breathing, all things are sustained.*

The prayer that precipitated this vision was the prayer of a soul, still caught in the illusion of a separate identity; yet the desire to praise God was God's desire speaking through the soul, and in this life, she has no other purpose but to honor that prayerful desire. It permeates this soul, and constitutes her task in this life, her only joy. It may be that she was given no mandate from God to teach; and it was she who asked to be united with Him in order that she might speak out truly in His praise and to His glory. And yet, that desire sprang from the deepest place in that soul, a soul which is itself fountained forth from God. And so that desire was truly His desire in her. His granting of that desire for intimacy constituted His mandate. When she looks at the lives and missions of others before her, like the Egyptian author of the Hermetic teachings, like the Buddha, Jesus, Plotinus, Eckhart, etc., she associates strongly with the sense of mission each possessed, having been graciously lifted up to intimacy with God, and filled with the desire to praise Him. What a singular grace, and what responsibility it confers! Yet, despite the gift of this advantageous vision, all who received it were mere mortals, with the limitations that implies. All had to endure the earthly life of bodily provision, sickness and death; and all had to endure the doubt and malevolence of the community of other men and women. Yet still they communicated their vision as best they could. Their lifelong desire to see and to give expression to the truth of God is God's enduring gift to us, His wondrous, thrillingly beautiful, gift of overwhelming joy to all of us.

And once the larger, subtler, eternal reality is known, the soul, returned to awareness of this world, can scarcely see the phenomenal reality in the same

way as before. During the visionary experience of the Eternal, she is identical with the Eternal, and blissfully content to remain in that state. However, that state wanes and gives way to the return in consciousness to this temporal and phenomenal reality. This is truly an unwelcome eviction. Having known the bliss of her all-pervading Self, she is at first greatly shocked and dismayed at finding herself back in this little world of separable images in time and space. But after her initial dismay, she reflects on her current state, and quickly realizes that she is still the eternal Self, and that the world to which she has returned consists solely of the bright Energy breathed forth from her Divinely transcendent Self. She recognizes that now she is in a dream-movie, but it is the dream-movie of God, who is indeed her very Self; and even this body in which she moves about is woven of that Divine fabric.

She realizes that, even in this projected image which God puts forth, she remains enveloped in His blissful Being, and realizes that she could never be anything but safe at home in Him. That is the great gift of Spiritual vision: that now she sees this transient world of images as suffused with ethereal light and splayed with dazzling beauty. Joyful contentment fills the air she breathes, and adoration fills her heart. This is the translation of divine vision into the world of phenomenal awareness. This is the carryover from the transcendent vision to the sensory vision here on earth.

She carries over from that higher realm no intellectual understanding of how a photon operates as both a particle and a wave, or how the force of gravity interacts with the moving earth. Let physicists puzzle over these dusty details; she is content to see her beauteous God in evidence all about her and within her. To abandon that untold treasure of joy to pick and peck amidst the crumbs of reason's paltry scrapings would be but the conduct of a fool. You can have it, you mathematicians and quantum mechanicians! You biochemists and cosmo-theoreticians! It's all been settled and displayed to her utmost satisfaction: Beauty beauty beauty everywhere, and the wine of intoxicating nectar in her cup! What needs she more?

And yet, having seen so clearly that all the beings who exist on earth are truly embodiments of the one Divine Self, the desire to share this wondrous knowledge remains an insistent urge deep within her soul. But, also, she is aware that each soul follows an evolutionary path unique to itself and is able to comprehend the omnipresence of God only in the proper time, and only by the gracious gift of God. And so, her words have relevance now, and in

the future, only to those whose eyes are already opened, to those on whom God's grace has already shone. Then rejoice with her, all ye fortunate souls! And be merciful to those whose temporary blindness is also His gift. He will lift that blindness in His time, and release all from the darkness in which they now live. He will open to their eyes, as He did to hers, the light and warmth, the wonder and delight, the beauty and the joy, of His immeasurable life-giving Love. Praise God!

Mystical Experience

Nearly everyone comes to the conclusion that there is a divine Reality that is our Source and Father, the Ground of our being, an all-embracing One, Lord and Ruler over all that permeates and coordinates all. One may arrive at this conclusion through the exercise of one's logical intelligence, or one may *experience* this reality directly as a 'mystical' experience or revelation. The intellectual formulation of this knowledge through logical analysis is capable of providing a basis for a reasonable certainty of the basic premise outlined above, but the direct 'mystical' experience of the One brings a person to the conscious *awareness* of that One as the immediate reality of one's own being, one's ultimate identity.

The question that many feel it is necessary to ask is, 'How does one attain to that direct 'mystical' experience of the One?' And I have had to confess that I have no idea how to answer that question—except to say that the one thing you can be absolutely certain of is that *you* can't make it happen. Only the eternal Lord of all can make it happen. Therefore, learn to rely upon His unfailing will. If He wishes to draw you to Him, He will reveal it as a divine urge, an implacable yearning, guiding you from within your heart. So be true to your own heart, and you can't go wrong. A guru or teacher may serve as the instrument by which the knowledge of God's presence is awakened in you, but it is God Himself who kindles the flame of heavenly desire within you, and who leads you to union. We may be able to reduce all multiplicity to two: I and Thou; but only He can reduce the two to one. And so, it is not to a human teacher that you must turn, but it is to Him within yourself that you must turn.

It seems He has unique plans for each of us, and He brings each of us along the journey's path according to His own design. No one can know how or when He will lead a person to His presence. You must make your intimate acquaintance with Him entirely by your own efforts within your own consciousness. Needless to say, even your own efforts are prompted by His Grace. So, just follow His inner promptings. Know that He is aware of your desire—in fact, He has initiated it; and He will eagerly meet you in the still of your heart when the time is right. Keep your mind on Him and He will continue to be mindful of you. And, when the time comes, when He has brought you to the purity of heart that is required, then He will bring you into His pure land, and you will be filled with His presence and know unlimited Being.

This is without doubt the greatest attainment possible in this life, providing complete and unremitting inner fulfillment. To be sure, it will not bring you wealth or worldly success; in fact, it is much more likely that you will experience economic privation and social isolation. But it is the greatest attainment possible in this life, and it will fill you with gratitude and provide you with unending peace and abundant happiness.

From the Conclusion To *History of Mysticism*¹

It should be abundantly evident that throughout the ages men and women have come face to face with God, the absolute Source and Ground of all existence; and that it is this very experience which constitutes the one common thread that binds together in unity all the great religious and philosophical traditions which have existed since time began, and all that shall exist in the future. Each of the great mystics spoke in his own language, his own restricted terminology, and the consequence is that today many individuals regard each of these efforts to reveal the nature of reality as disparate and unrelated “philosophies” or “religions.” But the *experience* of the one Reality is the same for all, of course; and in all the declarations of the many prophets, saints, and messiahs, we can hear the attempt to convey a common knowledge based on that common visionary experience.

When that experience is about to happen to a person, that person's mind becomes irresistibly withdrawn from worldly concerns, and becomes centered instead upon one all-consuming love, a singular sort of love, for the

very source of love within. And in the process of consummating this love, solitude is procured, giving the mind the opportunity to become detached from the pull of distracting thoughts and sense-impressions; and the mind is then focused with great intensity upon its aim. Consciousness, like an unflickering flame in a windless room, becomes pure and clear. And then suddenly it knows who it has always been.

It is God's grace which manifests in us as that divine love that draws us so compellingly toward the experience of unity. This love is not the ordinary kind of love between a subject and an object, however; for in this case the subject and the object, and the love itself are one. Nor is this love the result of a conclusion based on a rational premise; it is an inner experience. It is something quite real—breathtakingly and intoxicatingly real. It stirs from within, and centers on itself within. It is not a rationally thought-out construction based on philosophical principles, but a sweetness that is itself the object of devotion. It is this Love that bhaktas love. It has no location but the human heart, yet its source is the universal Being. It is His gracious gift, and only those who have experienced it know what it is.

It is of this love that Ramakrishna sang:

“How are you trying, O my mind, to know the nature of God?
 You are groping like a madman locked in a dark room.
 He is grasped through ecstatic love.
 How can you fathom Him without it?
 When that love awakes, the Lord, like a magnet, draws to Him the soul.”²

Such longing for God always precedes the experience of enlightenment, because it is the natural expression, the unfailing indicator, of a shift in consciousness toward the transcendent Unity. All of the outer events as well as the inner ones will conspire to bring one's life to that point where enlightenment is experienced. When it is time for it to come, it will produce itself, and it will announce its coming by a great wave of love that steers the heart irresistibly to the source of that love, and eventually reveals itself unaided from within.

Consider the great Shankara's final message to the disciple in his *Vivekachudamani* (“The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination”):

“Gurus and scriptures can stimulate spiritual awareness, but one crosses the ocean of ignorance only by direct illumination, *through the grace of God.*”³

No one has ever realized God except those to whom He has revealed Himself. On this point all Self-realized beings are unanimously agreed. As one commentator says in the *Malini Vijaya Vartika*: “The learned men of all times always hold that the descent of grace does not have any cause or condition but depends entirely on the free will of the Lord.” If it were dependent upon conditions, it would not be absolute and independent grace. According to yet another Tantric scripture, the *Tantraloka*, “Divine grace leads the individual to the path of spiritual realization. It is the only cause of Self-realization and is independent of human effort.”

The experience of Self-realization occurs when the mind is concentrated to a fine laser-point and focused in contemplation of God; but this happens only by the power of the universal Self, of God Himself. This is not a denial of the efficacy of self-effort, but merely an assertion that every effort or desire to remember Him, every intensification of concentration on Him, is instigated by Himself, for He is our own inner Self, the inner Controller. It is He who inspires, enacts, and consummates all our efforts.

Among the Christian mystics, we find complete agreement on this issue. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, for example, says: “You would not seek Him at all, O soul, nor love Him at all, if you had not been first sought and first loved.” Meister Eckhart also acknowledges this truth, saying: “It is He that prays in us and not we ourselves.” And the Blessed Jan Ruysbroeck concurs:

“Contemplation places us in a purity and radiance which is far above our understanding, ...and no one can attain to it by knowledge, by subtlety, or by any exercise whatsoever; but he whom God chooses to unite to Himself, he and no other can contemplate God.”⁴

We find the same agreement among the Sufi mystics, the Hindus and the Buddhists. It is always so—always. And though the attempt is often made by charlatans to translate the description of the mental state of the mystic at the time of his experience of unity into a sort of “method” or “scientific technique” for the attainment of God, no one has ever claimed that such a

technique has actually produced the advertised result. For, by themselves, the practices of shallow breathing, fixed stares, and cessation of thought, will never produce the experience of unity. This experience comes only by the will of God. Nanak, the great Guru of the Sikh tradition, stated the matter plainly when he said, "Liberation from bondage depends upon Thy will; there is no one to gainsay it. Should a fool wish to, suffering will teach him wisdom." ⁵

When He draws the mind to Himself, the mind becomes still automatically. It is not necessary to attempt to still the mind by austere practices or artificial methods. The body becomes still, and the mind becomes still, when the heart is yearning sincerely for Him alone. Everything happens very naturally by His grace: One begins to begrudge the mind any thought other than the thought directed to God; and, with the aim of centering the mind continually on Him, one begins to sing His name in the inner recesses of the mind. It doesn't matter what name is used; Christians call Him "Father"; Muslims call Him "Allah," or "Karim"; Jews call Him "Adonai"; and Hindus call Him "Hari" or "Ram." Love responds to whatever name is called with love. To one who loves, His name is nectar; it is like a cold drink of water to a thirsty man. It is no discipline, nor is it an austerity. It is the refreshment of life. It is the sweetness of peace, and the delight of delights.

Since there is really nothing else but that infinite Being wherever one may look, that awareness dawns, as one begins to sing the name of God within the heart; and the bliss of recognizing one's own Self both without and within begins to well up. The more one sings His name, the more one revels in that bliss, and the more clearly one perceives His continual presence. Inherent in that perception is all mercy, all right judgment, all tenderness, all loving-kindness. It is the natural devotion by which a man's heart is transformed, and by which he becomes fit for the vision of God.

Therefore, say the mystics, we must forge our link with God, and He will lead us to Himself. He will draw us to love Him, for He Himself is that Love that awakens in us as love for God. He will draw us to seek Him in prayer and in silent longing, for He is our own heart. Follow, and you will reach Him. Draw near to Him in the silence of the night and He will reveal Himself to you as your very deepest Self, your eternal Identity. Keep on loving Him, keep on trusting in Him to guide you, and keep on praying to Him. When He puts into your heart the desire to know Him, He will lift

aside the veil and reveal that, all along, it was Him who prayed, who sought, who sorrowed, as you; and that, all along, it was you who forever lives beyond all sorrow, as God—forever blissful, forever free.

NOTES:

1. Reprinted from Abhayananda, Swami., *History of Mysticism*, Fallsburg, N.Y., Atma Books, 1987.
2. Nikhilananda, Swami (trans.), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, N.Y., Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1942; p. 607
3. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*, Prabhavananda, Swami, *The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947, p. 131.
4. Jan Ruysbroeck, *The Sparkling Stone*, IV
5. Nanak, Singh, Trilochan, et al, *Selections from The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1960, p. 42.

Excerpt from Seeing Is Believing

When God reveals Himself in man, the illusory duality of body and soul vanishes. Like all dualities, this one exists only in the spatio-temporal reality produced by God's projected Light. When the individual mind (soul) ascends to the Eternal, it then sees from the unitive perspective of the Eternal, wherein body and soul are both contained. Here, all dualities vanish, and only the undivided Mind remains. Here, the division between I and Thou is no more; now and then both vanish in the Timeless; life and death no longer stand apart. Only the One and Its Creative Power shines eternally.¹ This experience is the revelation from which all religion derives. It is this mystical experience that provides the irrefutable evidence for the Divine identity of the soul. Those who have not experienced that 'mystical' union may argue the question of the immortality of the soul, but for those who have been graced with that unitive experience, no question remains. The Divine Mind is an experiential reality that is a thousand times more impressive than mere thought or sense experience. It is an experience more indubitable than the light of day.

God's creative Light is eternal, though the forms it takes are temporal and transient. Likewise, Soul is eternal; the forms it takes are temporal and transient and are stamped with the pattern of the heavens at the time of their

embodiment. As limited souls, we journey through time from body to body in quest of the perfect joy and satisfaction that already exists in its fullness within us. Our souls are limited rays of the one Sun, droplets of the one ocean of Joy; and when we are ripe for seeing, He opens our eyes: He reveals our true nature, showing us that we are His own Beauty, His own unlimited Vastness, His own sweet Joy. He shows us who we have always been.

It is this experience that prompted the authors of the Upanishads to proclaim, “That thou art”; it is this experience that prompted Jesus to declare “I and the Father are one”, and al-Hallaj to declare, *an al Haqq*, “I am the transcendent Reality”. It is this experience that provides the self-evident proof of our Divine Ground and ultimate Identity. It is an experience that is accessible, by the Grace of God, through contemplative introspection.

The soul experiences its “union” with God when He reveals His eternal presence in the soul. This vision is the greatest attainment possible to man, and yet it is not an attainment that can be taught. The reason is that it is not something that can be accomplished by man. A man can only make himself receptive to it, but it is accomplished by God Himself. It is a gift. I am not speaking of the mere intellectual recognition of the fact that the one all-pervading Spirit is the only one who exists; the *experience* of union entails the actual upliftment of the soul to its divine Source, so that it is no longer aware of its separate existence on this earth, but knows itself, for as long as that experience lasts, as God—transcendent to the cosmos and yet the life and conscious Spirit pervading the cosmos. It is a going-out of the limited soul-identity and an awakening to the consciousness of an unlimited, eternal and all-inclusive Identity. All questions are answered in this altered awareness—or rather, they are dissolved away in the sweetness of eternity, an eternity that is realized to be one’s own indubitable Self. Truly, there are no words to describe this ‘awakening’; but it is the foundation of all religion and all philosophy, and the bedrock of all certainty and satisfaction.

Those who have experienced that ‘awakening’ tend to espouse the metaphysical view, the mystical theology, that is commonly referred to as ‘the Perennial Philosophy’. It is the perennial expression of the revealed knowledge of the one eternal Spirit. Yet such reasoned arguments for the Divine creation of our world and the existence of our Divine soul are oftentimes utterly impotent to convince the determined advocates of a Godless and materialistic worldview. The materialist worldview is based

entirely on the material sciences, and does not even give consideration to a metaphysics, insofar as “metaphysics” implies a non-physical reality creating, underlying and controlling the physical reality. The materialist worldview acknowledges the insubstantiality of matter at the quantum level, but it does not recognize a supernatural cause, a noumenal Source and Ruler of the phenomenal world of matter.

The proponents of materialism say that, ‘when the body dies, the consciousness associated with it dies as well; there is no second entity such as an enduring soul.’ ‘Life and consciousness’, they say, ‘are merely transient properties of matter, and have no existence apart from individual material bodies.’ And without some inner experience of God, they remain skeptical of the spiritual view, and rely solely on what they perceive through sense experience.

Also, those who *have* known God have found no objectively rational way of convincing such people of the existence of the Spirit, though throughout history many have tried to do so. The Spirit must be experienced subjectively, and then only by God’s self-revelation. It would seem that He has retained control of this knowledge among humans by causing it to be unknowable by the senses or by rational thought, and realizable only through His grace. Once He reveals Himself within our soul, we realize that we are His creations, made of His substance, and that we are utterly dependent upon Him. Then we learn to surrender our own will to His will; and this, in turn, alleviates us of all our errors, and brings about our own highest good and happiness. Without that self-revelation, we remain blind to Him in ourselves and in the world. This, too, is His doing; as He says: “I bring the dust of blindness”. But He is also the remover of that blindness. He is not only the Light of the phenomenal world; He is also the inner Light that reveals His presence as our own Soul, our own divine Self.

This being the case, how can we enjoin others to awaken to the knowledge of God when such knowledge is only obtained through the Grace of God? Even the desire to know God arises through the workings of His Grace! What, then, can we do? It has been said that ‘The breeze of His grace is always blowing; but it is we who must set our sails to receive that breeze’. I reply that it is only by His Grace that we are inspired to set our sails to receive Him. The truth is that He is doing everything, whether we are aware of it or not. “We” are *His* manifestations, and we live and move within His omnipresent Spirit.

However, as His manifestations, we possess the abilities that He has granted us; and one of those abilities is the power to exercise our individual wills. We are able to choose, and we are responsible for our choices; and it is we, as individual souls, who receive the consequences of those choices. Every moment, He offers us the choice of turning our intention to Him or to the illusory world:

*I have given sweets that decay to those that crave them,
I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
My hands are open—nothing is concealed.²*

We choose, ultimately, not from reason's arguments or empirical proofs, but from the yearning that arises from the loving kinship of the soul to God. And the rationale for expounding rational arguments that tell of His presence and the possibility of knowing Him is that such reasonings are on rare occasions capable of prompting a recognition and a yearning in those who are readied for it, leading them to seek His revelation in their own hearts. And that too is His doing, as His presence in our hearts inspires both the expounding and the recognition.

Nonetheless, I fear that the great majority of souls living on earth today have yet to see beyond immediate appearances, have yet to experience God in their lives, have yet to experience the joy of the soul upon being uplifted to union with the Creator. They cannot therefore be expected to give credence to such a mystical worldview. They are bewitched by a fascination with and desire for the things of creation, and fail to recognize their Creator, or even their own souls. I have not the slightest doubt that these people will eventually come to recognize the Divine in themselves and in the world; but for the time being, they are blind, and therefore suffer many miseries. It is certain, however, that the Lord, in His justice and mercy, will bring them, in the course of time, to awaken from their slumbers, and will make Himself known to them, leading them to comfort and joy in His bosom.

NOTES:

1. This 'coincidence of opposites' in the unitive experience was first noted by Heraclitus. In fact, Heraclitus touched on nearly all of the elements

of mystical experience, and yet his valuable insights have never been fully acknowledged or appreciated.

2. From Swami Abhayananda, "The Song of The Self" in *The Supreme Self*, Atma Books, Fallsburg, New York, 1984.

* * *

The Only Means of Attaining Enlightenment

If an enlightened person could convey or transmit his enlightenment to another, all of the Buddha's disciples would have been enlightened, all of Jesus' disciples would have been enlightened, all of Meister Eckhart's congregation would have been enlightened. How many became enlightened by reading the words of Lao Tze? How many have become enlightened by reading the words of Ibn Arabi, of Sri Ramakrishna, of Sri Ramana Maharshi? None! Why, then, should I imagine that my words will produce a different result? Enlightenment is clearly an untransmittable condition! My words, like those of countless other enlightened persons, can only awake others to the necessity of forging an intimate relationship with God Himself within their own souls. For it is He alone who is able to confer enlightenment on His children. It is He alone who holds that Power in His hands.

I have spent many years telling everyone that the direct experience of God is available to them—and yet no one has stepped forward to say that they were visited by God in the way I was. Is it possible that I am singularly favored? That I am one in a billion? That, for some unknown reason, God chose to reveal Himself only to me? That, out of all the multitude of human beings on earth at this time, He selected me and me alone to share His secrets with? There have been many others, of course: Heraclitus, Plotinus, Jesus, Meister Eckhart, al-Hallaj, Ibn Arabi, Jnaneshvar, Ramakrishna, and others—but they have been only one or two each century! That's certainly an exclusive club!

Why me? Why do you suppose He chose me? I can't help thinking that it is because He made this soul with an innate desire and ability to speak to all of you about Him, to sing His praise for your benefit. And so, He showed Himself to me, and inspired me from within to go on speaking of Him. I

believed then, and I sincerely believe now that you too can know Him as I have known Him. I believe it is His purpose to illumine every soul. He has been generous to me; why wouldn't He be just as generous to you? I don't know why He has not yet revealed Himself to you; I only know that I continue to pray with all my heart that He will reveal to all of you the liberating truth that you and the surrounding universe exist in Him and consist entirely of His all-pervasive Being. In knowing Him as your own eternal Self, you will know eternal freedom and joy, and you will gladly join me in sharing that delight with all your brothers and sisters.

But, clearly, my words describing my experience of God's Grace have absolutely no efficacy in bringing about this experience in others. My words only inform others of the existence of such an experience and the possibility of its recurrence. When I asked the Lord to make me one with Him so that I might speak out in His praise and to His glory for the benefit of all His children, I had hoped that my words of praise might lead others to Him, but my words have only provided evidence for the existence of the nondual mystical experience, and nothing more. I have been unable to stimulate or bring about His Grace either in myself or in others. Grace is not the result of any human thought, word, or act. God's Grace is given of His own free and inscrutable will and to whom He will. I can only pray that He will bestow His wondrously amazing Grace on you!

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5. PRAISING GOD

**A Compilation of Articles from *The Mystic's Vision*)
by Swami Abhayananda
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Praising God

Hardly anyone believes in the tyrannical God that the ancient Greeks invented and called Zeus, nor does hardly anyone believe in the tyrannical God the Jews invented and called Jahveh. Those who have actually *experienced* God within themselves have told us that the Divinity underlying all Reality is a Spirit—a Spirit that lives as the Consciousness of every sentient being. That Spirit is also the Creator of form: It periodically radiates from Itself a Light that easily transmutes into various forms, constituting all the individual beings and objects that fill the universe. That Divine Spirit is very different from what we used to think of as a “God.” It is not a being among beings but is rather the sole Existence that contains everything that exists. It is ubiquitous Consciousness, but It also has the Power to create innumerable worlds with Its expanding form-producing Light. In this way, in every instance, It is both the background and the foreground, both the absolute Existence and the divine Creative Energy, both Soul and body.

We are naturally reluctant to call this dual-faceted Spirit a “God” since It does not fit the old mold created by the Greeks or the Jews. But, since It is a unique and all-inclusive category unto Itself, we may call It whatever we like. We may call It “God,” we may call It “Brahman,” we may call It “Allah,” we may call It “the Void,” we may call It “the One,” or we may call It “our Father.” In fact, every imaginable word ultimately signifies that Divine Presence, as everything is contained in and constituted of It.

Just remember that He is within you, as the ocean is in the wave; that you are within Him, as the wave is within the ocean; and that you and the Father are one, just as the wave and the ocean are one. Our God is very wonderful. He is the very epitome of Good. He fulfills the desires and inner longings of every soul, and as a loving Father leads his children home, He leads us to our blissful rest in Him. When souls come to know Him in themselves, their

love awakes, and their happiness knows no bounds. And then they sing His praise and experience His joy in their hearts. This is His wondrous gift for which we lift our voices in song to praise our God, our Father, the One who is alone the summit of all sweetness and joy!

Speaking of God

Since human language was first invented, its purpose has been to facilitate the description of things and events in a world of sense, that is to say, within a spatio-temporal environment. Language is structured, therefore, on the perceived relationship between a subject (the seer) and an object (the seen). That subject-object based language is inapplicable, however, when we attempt to speak of God, our spiritual Source. Man—whose individual soul is within and inclusive to God, and whose body is within and inclusive to God's Creative Power—may not appropriately designate the Creator as 'other' since the two are essentially one, beyond the designation of either 'subject' or 'object'. In this case, the subject *is* the object, and the object is the subject. And, for this reason, we humans have such great difficulty in thinking and speaking meaningfully about God.

In fact, it is that very subject-predicate-noun structure of language that precludes the possibility of meaningfully expressing the relationship of creature to Creator, of man to God. For, since God, the all-inclusive Spirit, is the substratum in which we ourselves are contained, He is never something 'other' to which we can relate as a subject to an objective noun. And though we may occasionally speak of God as an objective reality, in fact, the subject, "I," and the object, "Thou," are eternally one—even though, in the common usage of our subject/object-based language, that fact is seldom noted. Yet, despite this great inadequacy of language, we have no alternative but to speak of God however we may, as He is omnipresent and is invariably involved in every occurrence in the universe and beyond.

Human language is inappropriate for speaking of God for another reason as well, as our language requires gender-specific pronouns to represent sentient beings, and God, the source of all sentience, is neither male nor female, but contains, or rather is the source of, both genders. That all-inclusive One cannot therefore be realistically designated as either "He" or "She". The alternate pronoun, "It", is ordinarily reserved as a designate of inanimate things, and God, the source of all animate life, cannot be relegated to that narrow linguistic category either. Our language simply does not

accommodate the possibility of accurately referring to God. And so, we have no choice but to use whatever pronoun best appeals to us at the time, even while knowing that there is, in our language, no possible means of referring to [Him] that is truly appropriate.

And so, I ask you to please excuse my unavoidable linguistic blunders, while I do my best to tell what I know of [Him]: He is not known by the intellect, and He is not captured in our human words; He may be known only through love and the bestowal of His merciful Grace.

The Sole Object of Our Love

Everyone knows that the form is transient and impermanent, while the essence is unchanging and everlasting. We see this clearly as we note the inevitable changes in our own bodies and note as well, the constancy of our inner divinity as we age. And yet, it seems that in our popular culture we tend to value the individual over the universal essence of which the individual is but a form. We proudly announce our love for this or that particular person, though the truth is that who we are in love with is God, manifest in the form of a human being. It is only God's beauty that attracts us and fills us with love and longing. If we attribute that lovability to the individual person, we are soon disillusioned and disappointed, as the beauty and perfection of which we have become enamored sadly turns out to be marred by human imperfection and is subject to old age, death and dissolution. Therefore, we must acknowledge that it is God's eternal beauty that we have fallen in love with, for He alone is capable of inspiring our love and He alone is worthy of being the object of our love.

In our popular culture, we sing false and ludicrous love songs to this or that individual person; yet how quickly the song of 'I love you' turns into a song of 'goodbye'! Every individual person and every person's heart is subject to infidelity and change, while God, whose beauty and goodness inspires our love, remains always perfect and unchanged. So, we must not be fooled by appearances; the love that God's beauty has inspired in us cannot be satisfied with the possession of any of His transient human forms. For it is only in His eternal Being, unformed and unmanifest, that His beauty and His perfection remain forever, and it is only in His unformed and eternal Being that He can be eternally possessed and loved. Then, let us continually sing aloud His praise, for He is in fact the beloved, the lover, and the love as

well. Filling all, and beguiling all, He remains the one constant source and object of love in every heart.

God's Love

Love is born of God and may rest in nothing less than God.
 For we see that all worldly love is but one half of an inseparable pair,
 And we recall with gladness that God's love has no contrary;
 For He is the One in whom all opposites merge,
 The One whose love never wanes.

Search this earth and through all the galaxies, you'll find
 Nothing truly worthy of love but God. For all else is lovable
 Only to the degree that it is reflective of Him.
 Let not your love, therefore, settle on anything or anyone but Him.
 For He alone is the source of joy,
 The Giver of wisdom and satisfaction,
 The final destination of all the heart's desires,
 And the source and resting place of every wandering soul.

My Love Affair

I have enjoyed a life-long love affair with God. Though He is always within me and I am always within Him, I pretend to be separate from Him in order to carry on this relationship. One day soon I shall shed this separateness and shall once again live everywhere as all-pervading Spirit; but, for now, I'm confined to operating exclusively in conjunction with this tired aging body and brain. I know that it is He who gives me life and thought and movement, and without Him no I exists. And so, when at last He leaves this body, it is I who shall leave it as well; it is I who shall shed these bodily limitations, and the happy culmination of our love affair will result in the dissolution of our pretended relationship. Then, I and Thou shall melt into one inclusive awareness and no longer exist as two separate identities.

'Thou' art my beloved, my father, my master, my larger self. Within me, Thou art the voice of both the seeker and the sought. Yet neither I nor Thou is ultimately real; only the one awareness into which these two imaginations must eventually dissolve is ultimately real. And yet, dear Father, how mysterious is this grand illusion in which an imaginary I seeks an imaginary

Thou! How amazing is this love affair with all its yearning and desire that takes place wholly within one undivided awareness! Do you create this imaginary division within yourself only to enjoy the exciting drama of a loving relationship? Or does your only satisfaction come from bringing this imaginary I and Thou together at last in joyful union?

Help me to know Thy purposes, dear Father, and whatever is Thy will, may it bring Thee all possible joy and satisfaction. Let my will be the same as Thine, for Thy will alone is truly unfailing. I am grateful, dear Father, for all Thy many gifts and blessings throughout these many years, and I pray that all my errors and failures may eventually be corrected, and that I will at last be made whole and perfect in Thee. Till this earthly illusion of separation is fully cast away and I experience once again our inseparable unity, I remain Thy child, Thy lover, Thy servant.

Let All Voices Be Silenced

Let all voices be silenced, and do Thou only, Lord, speak to me in my soul. Let all the clamor of thoughts, stirred up in my restless mind, be stilled; and let my anxious heart find rest in surrender at Thy feet. Do with me, Lord, as it pleases Thee to do, and let no care for my own well-being arise to trouble my heart; for Thy wisdom and Thy love shall always suffice to guide me day by day.

Dear God, bestower of Grace, lift up my mind to Thee—above all worldly thoughts and concerns, above all reservations and doubts, and let my heart pour forth loving praise in showers of golden song to Thee. Thy will has always led me in times past through all my troubles, and why should I turn now to my own devices?

Let Thy joy fill my heart and my soul, and lift me, Lord, on wings of longing, buoyed by the breeze of Thy Grace, into Thy perfect stillness, into Thy fatherly embrace.

Let Me Be Thy Instrument

Teach me, Lord, to look with love upon Thee and all Thy doings; for Thy love is my only delight and my only good. Teach me, Lord, to correct my

wayward mind whenever it falls from remembrance of Thy goodness and the presence of Thy omnipotent hand in all that occurs here on earth. Lift me into Thy Light, O Lord, for without Thy grace, I am but a burden on the earth. Teach me to become perfect in wisdom, perfect in knowledge, perfect in contentment, perfect in love.

Let me by Thy instrument, Lord, in spreading Thy perfect joy to Thy children in whatever measure is ordained by Thee. Father, remove from me all darkness of ignorance, and all self-serving motivations, that I may truly serve as an instrument of Thy truth and Thy grace on earth; and I shall give adoration to Thee in my heart, and sing Thy praise throughout all the days of my life.

What May I Give Thee, Lord?

What may I give Thee, O my Lord, who hast given to me so greatly of Thyself? What, indeed, do I have to give that is not already Thine? And who is this upstart 'I' who speaks of serving 'Thee', whom everyone knows art both the server and the served?

It is this very sense of 'I', this false ego that I offer, Father, as my gift to Thee. For there is nothing that is not Thine own: this body, mind and intellect, all belong to Thee and serve Thy purposes in reflecting Thy Wisdom and Thy Truth. It is only this mistaken sense of 'I', this 'me and mine', that stands like an interlocutor before Thee, obscuring the clarity of Thy inherent Light and the sweetness of Thy perfect Peace.

Then let this 'I' be always prostrate at Thy feet in adoration, silenced in surrender, awed and voiceless in anticipation of Thy touch. And let these eyes turn ever-upward unto Thee, though blinded by Thy brilliant Light, until, transparent as a polished pane of glass, this soul becomes the pure conduit of Thy Truth, Thy Will, Thy Love, Thy Self, who art the only 'I' that truly lives.

Meditation

What does it mean to remember God? It means to awaken in yourself the awareness of His presence within you and all around you. It is to transform the sense of selfhood into the sense of the universal Spirit, and to transform

the vision of “others” into the vision of God’s multi-formed beauty.

He is the Source of all that exists, and He is your inner Guide and Teacher. He is the majesty and greatness of your own soul. Remember Him with every breath, and thus keep alive the flame of His unconditional Love in your heart.

Say to Him: “Father, do Thou guide my life and my every thought, for I have no other joy but Thee. Thou art the strength of my soul, my only confidant and source of guidance. When I have forgotten Thee, I have forgotten my very heart’s blood, and I have left aside the very fiber and backbone of my life.

“What I live for, Thou art. My only desire, Thou art. The sole fulfillment of all my dreams, the treasure for which my soul yearns, Thou art. O God of my soul, blood of my heart, let me not forget Thee for a single moment! O God of gods, grant me this boon that I may ever remember Thee who art my soul’s support and strength, and let me love Thee and praise Thee ever in my heart.”

How May I praise Thee, Father?

Thou art the ocean on which this wave rolls.
 Thou art the wind on which this leaf rides.
 Thou art the loam in which this plant grows.
 Thou art my Creator, my bone and my flesh.
 Thou art the Life that pulses in my blood.
 Great Father of the universe! Begetter of all!
 Thy blessing is on me, and my love looks to Thee.
 I seek Thee to love Thee, but Thou art within me,
 Invisible to my eye or my mind. How amazing
 That Thou dost reach out in me to Thyself in Thee!
 It is Thy doing that divides Thy creature from Thyself,
 And it is Thou who dost embrace me as one in Thyself.
 Lord God, my kind Father and beloved Self,
 If I am to see, I will see with Thy sight.
 If I am to know, I will know by Thy gift.
 On Thee I depend, O my Fountain, my Source.
 Thou art my soul and my world, Thou the Breath of my breath.

Do with me, Father, whatsoever Thou wilt.

How May I Praise Thee II

Though my soul yearns to flood the world with Thy praise, when I open my mouth to speak, there are no words to say. My heart leaps up to sing, but the sound is stillborn in bewildered silence. My arms lift up thousands of bouquets of multi-hued flowers to lay at Thy feet but fall helpless at the realization that these flowers already belong to Thee, are indeed Thy glory and Thy gift.

How then may I praise Thee, Lord, who art the singer, the praise, and the instigator of the desire to praise? What words are worthy to speak of Thee? What gift is not Thine own? What song is not Thy sound? O God, who dost fill my heart with the desire to praise Thee, let Thy song of love cascade from this heart which is also Thine own, and enchant the world with its joyful melody. Let all hearts be awakened to see Thy spreading Light. Let knowledge of Thee spring up like a clear spring of water to quench the thirst of every mind and satisfy every soul with certainty and peace.

O God Thou dost praise Thy own self in the countless hearts of countless creatures fountained forth from Thy own effulgent will. If it be Thy will, let this life which Thou has imagined into being become an instrument of Thy praise, whether in song or in silence. Let Thy Love, Thy Grace, Thy boundless Joy release itself and flow through this projected form of Thine to flood the world with Thy own Light and Thy own Song to lift all souls to Thee.

Born of His Light

Don't you know that we are born of His light—that every elementary particle of matter began as a photon of light?
 Every electron, every quark in the interior of every proton or neutron
 Came into being and acquired its properties
 In the transformation of those high-energy photons of light
 Streaming out from the Creator's breath.

This world and all worlds sparkling throughout the cosmos are made of the
 radiance of God's power,
 A dancing array of His light's many ephemeral forms.
 And we, evolved from His light, are endowed with the presence of His
 eternal Self, and live by His life,
 And love with His love and know with His wisdom.
 We are conscious by His marvelous all-pervading awareness.
 We see by His loving grace, and we sing His praise by His gift of song.

Then sing, ye God-born angels of light!
 Raise up your voices to Him whose fabric forms your being and appearance,
 Whose life-pulse fires your heart and breath.
 Remember Him whose goodness molded you, whose love enfolds you,
 Whose existence is the life-stream of your being, and whose
 out-flowing Bliss provides the everlasting joy of your soul.
 Until we wend our way back into His eternal light, sing forth His praise.

Song of Thanksgiving

Hari, my love, I wish to sing to Thee a song of Thanksgiving,
 Yet, O how I dread the futile search for meaningful words to offer Thee!
 My heart is full of thanks and praise for each breath that is granted me,
 But to speak reveals the lie of pretended two-ness that I must tell,
 For Thou art my breath, my voice, the Real; and I am but the image.
 I live by Thy uncommon Life, imaged in Thy dream of me;
 And yet my gratitude to Thee upwells, as an image in a mirror
 Might admire its own source, its real and original Face,
 Or as a dream character might call out praise to its dreaming Self.

Though we are one, not two, I'll speak as though we're separate and apart;
 For how else might I truly speak to Thee?
 O Hari, Thou art alone, undiminished by the clatter and glitter
 Of a billion billion images, mere reflections in a house of mirrors,
 For Thou art alike the house, the mirrors, and the flitting images as well.
 This speaking too is like the barking of a dog in an empty field,
 For, though it may be heard, the silence of the cosmos remains unbroken.
 Yet I, this imagined form, am present—at least in appearance.
 And because I'm here, please let me speak to Thee in loving thanks.

O Hari look how wonderful is this story Thou dost tell!
 Look how beautiful is this body and the life ensouled.
 Though all too quickly it will turn to dust, this form is Thine
 And holds Thy greatness and Thy holy light and breath of life.
 Thou, this brightly glowing wakeful knowing.
 Thou, this deep and endlessly creative song of light and love,
 Bubbles up from Thy unfathomable depths
 Within the soul of me to greet each day with joyful thanks.

O Hari, from Thy eternal Goodness and unknowable Repose,
 Thou hast issued forth this universe of man and beast,
 With purpose known only to Thy own delight.
 And Thou hast given Thy own thoughts to guide us from within
 To bring us happily through adventures great and small,
 To our eventual end in Thy boundlessly blissful Self.
 O Hari, it is a most wonderful and admirable drama
 Thou hast produced, full of harrowing dilemmas,
 Frightful predicaments, and uproarious denouements!

Yet, in the end, we all awake to know one eternal Self.
 The Dreamer of this dream, our ever-undisturbed Reality.
 Always unperturbed, Thou art forever untouched by time,
 As the patient sky is ever untouched by the passing clouds.
 We are where we have always been in truth, never separated
 From our constantly unfolding, ever undivided Self,
 Where all the fervent lives o'erpassed, like dreams,
 Once left behind in waking, hastily retreat from view,
 Revealed as the flimsiest of transient illusions.

In waking, we are one in Thee, O Hari!
 And in Thee, *as* Thee, we have always been.
 Never imprisoned as we thought in separate forms,
 Once reawakened from our dreams, we know our
 Ever undivided and eternal Identity as Thee.
 In blissful folds of snow-white radiant Eternity
 We rest as Thee in peaceful oneness and joy.
 But while I live in pretended separation from Thyself,
 Let me now offer my song of grateful thanks to Thee,
 Who art the Life that lives me, my secret pride and joy.
 For it is Thou who hast made Thyself as me.

Dear Father, all that Thou hast made is good,
 And all Thy beauteous forms sing praise and thanks to Thee.
 Then, let me uplift my voice in song as well,
 To glorify in praise my gracious Lord:
 O Hari, all praise be to Thee in Thy heavenly glory!
 All praise be to Thee in Thy universal pageantry of form!
 My head is bowed in loving thanks and worship,
 Knowing Thou art all and more than all.
 Thy grace to me is beyond what my voice can tell.
 I can but offer thanks, with hands held high, to Thee,
 My ever kind and gracious Lord.

Praise God

I'm here to sing the praise of God, and so I shall.
 And let no one think belief's the basis of my song,
 Or words I've read in high-flown works.
 The subject of my song is what I've seen,
 What He's revealed to my most meager sight
 In holy quiet night's retreat.

Though many have praised His creation —
 Its beauties, and its grandeur,
 I would praise Him in His unborn formless Essence,
 Where He lives unmoved, and happily serene.

Though He breathes forth the immense and tumultuous cosmos,
 Enjoying the drama of its unfolding activity,
 He remains clearly indivisible,
 And perfectly unmoved within Himself,
 Continually aware that He alone exists.
 There is no other; so, all's contained in Him.

Serene, yet keenly awake, He spreads
 His outflowing radiance in every direction.
 Delight, unbounded and uninterrupted,
 Permeates Him and all that He proffers.
 In one breath, He flashes forth the universal array,

And then withdraws it all again,
 Only to breathe once more and fling the stars
 And galaxies wheeling on their rounds again.

For creatures, it's an almost endless parade
 Of eon upon eon, unfathomably deep in time's recess.
 But for him, who knows no change or movement,
 It's but a moment's breath.

And yet the greatest wonder is that every soul breathed forth
 Is but a time-wrought image of Himself;
 And each one, being His by virtue of its life in Him,
 Is capable of finding at its core that One who fashioned it to life.

As a figure in a dream awakes to know he is the dreamer,
 Each soul, when it awakes, discovers it is none but Him.
 He appears as though in a house of many mirrors,
 Fragmented into a million images, yet all are Him.
 It's but a masquerade.

And when the soul awakes to know its deathless Self,
 Beyond imagined dreams of personhood,
 It knows that forever it has lived serene and blissful,
 Just beyond the dream.

It learns that all the devilish battles and tortuous travails
 Were but a thought-parade in which, for the briefest time,
 It marched, all unawares, to finally break away,
 And find its way to freedom from time's tumultuous play.

To find such freedom one must look within,
 And, gaining clarity of mind, discover who one really is.
 Who one really *is* is Him! For none exists but Him alone.
 It's true! He lives alone in high eternity.
 But He lives as well as you and me.

It's you and me who lives in that eternal sky,
 While playing out our destined roles below.
 Two selves, one vigilant while tossing out the stars,
 The other strutting on this stage of dreams,

Oblivious to the other, her subtler Self and Source.

The all-encompassing, all-sustaining Self of all
 Is quite alone, and quite contained
 Without a drama to behold,
 Until He beams Himself in outward radiance
 As particles and galaxies and separate living things
 In bright array,
 To people all these worlds with beings
 Conscious of their knowing selves.
 His game: to lead them all within themselves
 In stage by stage to knowledge of the ways of things,
 And, finally, to awareness of that deeper Self
 Who flung them forth to journey home,
 To know the ultimate Truth that they are Him.

Awaking to that joyful knowledge,
 The spell of separation falls away
 Along with fear and worry, woes and cares.
 And, lifted up in mind and spirit,
 The knower lives in peace and joy beyond this world
 Alone, eternal, as all in all.
 He knows the universal design to be his own.
 He walks in freedom. His soul is blest.
 Praise God!

In Praise of God

I

Let us now, for our own heart's joy, give praise to God. He is the Refuge of the troubled mind and the Bringer of peace to the troubled heart. As a cold drink of water to a thirsty man, so is the name of God to the wearied soul. He is the cool Cave of the heart, wherein the soul finds quiet sanctuary from the darting demons of egotistical thought. He makes the passionate will to be stilled in silence and dispels all the incriminations of the wounded heart. O let us rest in that silent, bliss-filled Cave, hidden away from the clamor of the world, and drink from the fountain of the nectar of His name.

O my mind, scratch His name on the cave-wall of your heart, and never let your eyes be without the sight of His name. Sing His name softly in that

heart-sanctuary, that your ears may never be without the sound. And give praise to Him who alone is worthy of praise; for all that is done is done by Him, and every gift that comes is a gift from His hand.

O my heart, praise Him with words, and praise Him in acts of love. No sin has ever touched so much as a hair on the head of one who is busied with the praise and remembrance of God. If you wish to do some good in this world, O my soul, never stray from His dwelling-place in the heart. For, as the moon sheds the light of the Sun only when its face is turned to the Sun, we also are bathed in and reflect His gentle Love only when we're turned in love to Him.

II

We gather to give praise to God, not that we might please Him with our devotion, nor to make a show to others of our holy ways. Why, then, should we find pleasure in singing His praise? Is it not out of a pure love that springs from God Himself and wells up to overflow within us? Is it not His own heart's Love that made us, and that fills our every fiber with a sweet desire? And is it not His inward flame of Love 'round which we, moth-like, dance, yearning to be extinguished in His unifying light?

He is the Love, and He is the Light that draws us to Himself. From His gentle Light we have emerged, and to Him we shall return. May we learn, in this fragile life, to walk always in His Love, and to keenly sense in every moment His all-pervading Light. May we breathe His joy, and taste His sweetness, and shed His mercy on everyone we meet.

It is this for which we gather, for which we give Him praise. For, as the summer flowers blossom forth the exuberant joy and beauty of God on earth, so do our hearts blossom forth His Love in songs of praise; and mercifully shower on ourselves the sweet fragrance of delight.

III

Lord, when I look within me, I see Thy light and I know Thy peace, and I am guided by Thy sweet words of wisdom. And when I look about me, I see only Thee in all Thy splendorous forms. It has been said that man is like a bottle floating in the sea of God; water flows within and water flows without; everywhere there is only the vast ocean of God. Thus, Lord, I am immersed in Thy ocean of Consciousness and Light, and I know Thee both within and without.

But, O God, what of this “bottle,” this “me,” which separates the within from the without? What is this “I” that stands apart and speaks to Thee of within and without? O my Lord, even this body is Thine own! It is a form composed of Consciousness and Light, composed of Thyself; it is a shimmering mass of Energy projected from Thee, and can never be separate from Thee.

Who, then, is this “I” that speaks of “I and Thou,” and thus sets up a division between my soul and Thee? Truly, there is no one else but Thee; there is none but the one Life that is manifest as all this vast cosmos in all its variety of color and form. And, though I sometimes imagine I am far from Thee, and I seek Thee in the darkness and turbulence of my mind, truly I can never be separate from Thee.

Therefore, let me ever remember my oneness, my identity, with Thee. For the lover, the Beloved, and the love itself, all are one. And I know: “I am the Soul of all; I am the Light that illumines the world. I am as pure and vast as the infinite blue sky. I am the Self of all. I am the Self of all.”

IV

I know, my Lord, that, in essence, I am Thy own and ever one with Thee. Yet, so long as there is in me this errant and rebellious mind, let it learn to be ever-ready at Thy service—for Thy service is the service of my own eternal Self. How, then, may I serve my greater Self, my God? Only by letting Thee live through me. By loving what Thou lovest. By desiring what Thou desirest. By seeing with Thine eye of equal vision and loving all as Thou dost love and sustain all.

Let me, then, be perfect in love, O God, as Thou art perfect, that I may be fit to serve as Thy instrument. All of us are helplessly driven to action in this world by the forces of Nature; therefore, let all my actions be done in the joyful remembrance of Thee, the divine Self who lives as me. And may the darkness of illusion be so dispelled in me that Thy light shines forth clearly in all I say or do.

Let me see no other in this world but the One whose dance of joy fills all this immense universe; let me offer my work as well as my heart’s love to Thee in all Thy many forms. And, lastly, may my heart’s good intent so move Thee that Thou dost consent to listen to my prayer, and lift up my mind to

greater likeness with Thyself, till I am merged and melted into Thee, and know first-hand my oneness with my Lord.

V

O my Lord, remove from me all confusion and dullness of mind and open my heart to the sweetness of Thy Love; for I have no other goal but Thee.

It is Thy most wondrous grace to me that, when I am sunk in the grayness of my own misery, Thou dost cast a sunbeam of Light into my heart to awaken in me Thy Love. O Lord, I have no other goal but Thee.

And so, I ask of Thee, O God, lift up my soul to Thee, that has so long been locked in a self-created dungeon of darkness and despair. Lift me into the clarity and freedom of Thy Light! For I have no other goal but Thee.

O Father, grant me this grace of Thine; light up my soul with the gladness of Thy joyful presence and fill my heart with song. For I have no other goal but Thee, O Lord.

Thy Love is the food I crave; increase in me Thy bounty and let me feast on Thy sweetness. For Thy grace of Love is my only treasure, my sole desire. I have no other goal but Thee, O Lord

Assuage, then, O God, the pain of darkness which I so often bear, and open my eyes and my heart to Thee. Reveal to me that Thou art all that appears before me, and that Thou art my very soul, my life, my light, my joy. Dear Lord, I have no other goal but Thee.

VI

Once, when this soul was meditating on her Lord, she became aware of the presence and nearness of God, and she earnestly entreated Him, saying, "Dear Lord, so many in this world of Thine suffer needlessly because of their ignorance of Thee and do not know the joy of devotion to Thee. What may I say or do to open their eyes to Thy truth and Thy joy?" And the Lord replied to her:

"My child, give your love to all, but give sparingly of your words. I am within others also, and I shall reveal Myself to them in My time. Therefore,

take no thought of others, how they might be shown the way to Me; for, if I would teach others through you, I will do so only after you have subdued yourself, so that I might shine freely from your eyes as a beacon for all. I am Love and am best taught by loving.”

This soul, receiving that inner revelation, suddenly realized that her God was the Soul of her soul, the heart of her heart, and manifested through her as the joy of Love. And then and there she vowed her allegiance to the God of her heart, proclaiming:

Thou art Love, and I shall follow all Thy ways.
 I shall have no care, for Love cares only to love.
 I shall have no fear, for Love is fearless.
 Nor shall I frighten any, for Love comes sweetly and meek.
 I shall keep no violence within me, neither in thought nor in deed,
 For Love comes peacefully.
 I shall bear no shield or sword, for the defense of Love is love.
 I shall seek Thee in the eyes of men, for Love seeks Thee always.
 I shall keep silence before Thine enemies,
 And lift to them Thy countenance, for all are powerless before Thee.
 I shall keep Thee in my heart with precious care,
 Lest thy Light be extinguished by the winds.
 For without Thy Light, I am in darkness.
 I shall go free in the world with Thee—
 Free of all bondage to anything but Thee—
 For Thou art my God, the sole father of my being,
 The sweet breath of Love that lives in my heart,
 And I shall follow Thee, and live with Thee,
 And lean on Thee ‘til the end of my days.

And, after pledging her life to God’s Love, this soul felt such inner rapture that her heart was overcome with sweetness and light from within; and with great humility she asked, “How, O Lord, may I subdue my own selfish desires so that Thy perfect Love may shine through me upon all Thy children?” And the Lord said to her:

Keep your mind on Me, and self shall be overcome. Your thoughts are with that which you love and lead you to the object of your desire. If you love the pleasures and favors of the world, your thoughts will be with the world, and you shall obtain your desire. But if you love Me, your thoughts will be with

Me and you shall live as My beloved child, and I shall lead you to your end in Me.

And this soul was so filled with love and gratitude that she cried out, “O Lord, Thou art my joy and my sole desire!” And, so saying, she lifted up her mind to God, and kept it there in focused concentration, till all the wispy clouds of thought dissolved away, leaving her mind clear, free, and full of light. And then, from the stillness deep within this soul, came the heavenly desire to be merged in and one with God. “Dear God,” she whispered, “let me be one with Thee—not that I might glory in Thy Love, but that I might speak out in Thy praise and to Thy glory, for the benefit of all Thy children!” And, in that very moment, the veil of separation fell away, and she exclaimed:

O my God, even this body is Thine own!
 Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
 Even I, who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy waters,
 Even I am Thine own.

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?
 Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the earth?
 Or does a pebble cease to be stone?
 How can I escape Thee?
 Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

Even now, I speak the word, “Thou,” and create duality.
 I love and create hatred.
 I am in peace and am fashioning chaos.
 Standing on the peak, I necessitate the depths.

But now, weeping and laughing are gone.
 Night is become day.
 Music and silence are heard as one.
 My ears are all the universe.

All motion has ceased.
 Everything continues.
 Life and death no longer stand apart.
 No I, no Thou;
 No now, or then.

Unless I move, there is no stillness.

Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish,
 Nothing to pride oneself on.
 All is accomplished in an instant.
 All may now be told without effort.
 Where is there a question?
 Where is the “temple?”
 Which the Imperishable, which the abode?

I am the pulse of the turtle.
 I am the clanging bells of joy.
 I bring the dust of blindness.
 I am the fire of song.
 I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil.
 In pools of clear water my image is found.
 I am the dust on the feet of the wretched,
 The toothless beggars of every land.
 I have given sweets that decay to those who crave them.
 I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
 My hands are open; nothing is concealed.

All things move together of one accord.
 Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.
 The Sun stirs the waters of my heart,
 And the vapor of my love flies to the four corners of the world.
 The moon stills me, and the cold darkness is my bed.

I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged,
 And set in order once again.
 A million worlds begin and end in every breath,
 And, in this breathing, all things are sustained.

Now, While There's Still Time

Now, while there's still time, call on God with a yearning heart!
 How swiftly passes this busy life of occupations and obligations.
 Too soon, the day is lost to inconsequential chores.
 Too soon the months, the years, are lost to scattered aims and fruitless

schemes.

Suddenly we awake one morning, and we're old and feeble, unable to make any effort at all.

And who knows when the end will come?

You may be certain it will come one day —

Perhaps without warning, unannounced,

Perhaps while you walk, or sleep, or play,

Or in between the syllables of a word you start to say.

And when it comes, will your heart leap up and cry,

“O glorious day!”?

Or will you beg for just a little time to set things right—the way you'd always hoped they'd be?

O friend, make now your heart to be as you would have it then.

O now, my friend, while there's still time, call on God with a yearning heart!

Lead your soul to Him who is your true and everlasting home.

He is your joy unlimited, your boundless satisfaction,

Your Lord, your Goal, your Life, your Self.

Song of Praise

O God let me sing a song to Thee.

I am just Thy foolish unworthy child, as Thou dost know,

But I beg Thee, let me honor Thee with my song of praise.

After all, I have no other reason for existing but to sing Thy praise.

O God Thou art so far beyond my vision that I do not know how to begin to praise Thee.

Thou art hidden beyond this world of my daily experience,
invisible to my eye.

But Thou hast shown Thyself to me when I was young.

I know Thy perfect aloneness, untouched by all that transpires
here below.

I know Thy timeless face, Thy incomparable peace.

Dear Lord, I can only stammer and write these miserably inadequate words;
for no words are there to speak of Thee.

All that flows from Thee bespeaks Thy bounty; but Thou art far greater than
the sparkling sky, the star-filled cosmos.

Thou art the emptiness from which all bounty flows.

An emptiness that contains nothing yet gives being to everything.

As winds arise from air, as waves arise from the sea, as dreams arise from the quieted mind, so does the universe arise from Thee.
 Thou art the bearer of happiness, the stirrer of devotion,
 the inventor of thought, surprise, and awe.
 Thou art the redeemer of error, the mother of love.
 Thou art the beauty of a summer's day.
 O God, whatever *is* is done by Thee.

But why should I remind Thee of Thy works?
 It's Thou, above all works, whom I adore.
 I, who am Thy errant child, whose soul is birthed by Thee, and who
 longs to return to Thy womb, am nothing else but Thine.

Displayed into this world, I am Thy own substance, Thy own imagined
 form. And as I'm from Thee, so to Thee shall I return.
 No longer image shall I be, but transformed into Thee,
 not something other, but Thee entire.
 One glowing I, unending, perfect beauty, perfect bliss, and consciousness
 absolute.

None of these words, of course, come close to saying what Thou art; though
 I searched, I could not find words that tell Thee truly.
 Down here, we have no words to describe what Thou art,
 and so, once more, my praise falls short.
 But we both know Thy true condition; we both know Thy unspeakable place
 of being, and we both know it is of that I speak.

Dear Father of my life, my thought, my love, please accept my pitiful
 attempt to praise Thee.
 Fault me not for my lack of words that tell Thee.
 Only grant that I may always love Thee, till I am once again at home with
 Thee.

O dear God of gods hear my prayer! You know my heart, my heart's desire:
 I long to rise above this worldly self to bathe in Thy untroubled Life.
 I cannot do it, but only Thou canst bring me there to live in Thee.

O Lord, who art alone, sole Source and Master of the world,

I beg Thee draw my mind and heart to Thee; let no other love distract me.
Let no dreams or other goals detain me from my journey home to Thee.

Do You Wish To Know God?

Do you wish to know God?
Then pray for His grace. But even that you cannot do,
Until the magnet of His Love draws forth your heart's desire.

Do you wish to know God?
That wish is God's own power alive within you, drawing you home;
But you must set your wings for flight and soar to heights unknown before,
Releasing all below.

A strong and focused mind will be the wings on which you'll climb to His domain,
Where you may offer up your soul to Him and beg for entrance to His heart.

If you are steady in your goal, His heart will open wide,
and draw you in to make you one with Him.
And then you'll know that you and He were never set apart.
You'll see the universe in you; in you, the universal Self.

Your calling lifts you toward Him, but He responds only in His time.
He will leave you yearning for His love, your heart an abject song.
For He tortures those who love Him with a longing unfulfilled,
And lures us on with sweetness, withholding His embrace.

What pathetic fools He makes of us who bargain all for Him,
Who fill our nights with lonely pleas that He might hear our song!
Addicts of His mercy, we pray He'll bring us home,
And fold us in His sweet embrace as a father does a son.

No doubt, His mercy keeps us there in longing for His touch.
Our hearts grow sweet, our love expands, as we call aloud His name,
And lift our minds and hearts to Him, desiring only Him.
This barb of sorrow, this aching love, upholds us in His grace,
And leads us upward, onward, till one day we shall see His face.

O, who will take me to my Lord? Who will give me wings?
 I grow older, Father, every day, and my mind is growing dim.
 My eyes are weak, my vision strains to penetrate the dark.
 My Lord, I have no other goal but Thee; have mercy on this soul!

Why We Were Born

The Jews are praising Thee, Lord.
 The Christians and Muslims are busy praising Thee as well.
 The Hindus and the Sikhs, the Platonists and the Taoists
 also sing Thy praise.
 The farmers tilling the land have no other goal but to give
 praise to Thee.

Even the men and women of science, who hope to ferret out
 Thy secrets,
 Are engaged unwittingly in praising Thee.
 For no one on this earth of Thine can find satisfaction
 In anything other than Thy praise.
 What other purpose might we have, O Lord?
 Why else were we born? Why else would we live
 But to joy in giving praise and glory to Thee?

Meditation

The great Sufi mystic and poet, Jalaluddin Rumi, said: “The religion of love is distinct from all others; the lovers of God have a religion and a faith all their own.”

What is this religion of love? It has no name. Neither does it have any nationality. It is beginningless, and without end. It originates in God’s own being within the heart and can only be mimicked in speech. It is the cry of the heart for God’s mercy and grace. Yet even this heartfelt pain is His grace; for this yearning is but the drawing of His comfort and solace.

Love calls, and Love responds. In both instances, that Love is accompanied by tears. Yet, even this calling, though painful, is sweet; for it is *His* Love that burns in the heart. And when He responds, the heart’s cup is filled with

much more than it can hold. No eyes have seen this filling; no words have ever told of its taste. Yet, in countless hearts, throughout the universe, this religion lives, and supplies the world with Love.

* * *

ENLIGHTENED CHRISTIANITY: THE STORY OF JESUS, THE MYSTIC (LAST REVISED: 10-19-23)

Two thousand years ago, a young Palestinian Jew by the name of Jesus had a profound Mystical Experience which led to the fostering of a lasting religious tradition. It is only now, in these present times, that we are beginning to recognize and acknowledge that Mystical Experience is the common denominator in each of the various worldwide religious traditions, the one common thread running through the universal fabric that constitutes each of our historical religious traditions. If you've ever wondered how another mystic perceives Jesus and Christianity, look no further. In the light of my own mystical experience, I have re-examined the life and teachings of Jesus, and have come to some surprising conclusions.

ENLIGHTENED CHRISTIANITY: THE STORY OF JESUS, THE MYSTIC

(Articles from *The Mystic's Vision* by Swami Abhayananda,
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Once in a great while, someone comes along who advances human knowledge by leaps and bounds. A little over two thousand years ago, such a man, named Jesus, brought a revolutionary, all-revealing knowledge to light, and he attempted to explain it to the people of his time. But the people were not advanced enough to comprehend what he was telling them, and thinking him deluded, they turned the civil authorities upon him who had him cruelly slain by crucifixion.

The amazing new knowledge that he attempted to impart to the people had been revealed to him in a rare interior vision that occurred during his participation in a spiritual ceremony that was held on the banks of the Jordan river. That mystical vision revealed to him that we are not only made by God, but that we are made of God. It was shown to him that this flesh in which we live and move is a manifestation of God's own Creative Energy, and everything in this world is made of Him and consists of Him.

Jesus was an ordinary man who had an extraordinary experience, and yet to say "an ordinary man" does not fully tell the story, for 'an ordinary man' is truly a manifestation of God's Creative Power and contains within himself the eternal Consciousness of God. But the Biblical story of Jesus's Mother having been impregnated by God, with the implication that Jesus was born of God's seed in a special exclusive manner is simply the invention of the Gospel authors. It was the mystical experience of God's revelation that changed Jesus from an ordinary man to a man illumined by God. However, it is not entirely clear whether that experience occurred at the time of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist or whether it occurred later during his sojourn into the wilderness. My own opinion is that the sojourn into the wilderness was a time of reflection and clarity on the experience that occurred at the time of Jesus' baptism and was simply an extension of the mystical experience that had suddenly revealed to Jesus that, not only the manifest world, but he, himself, was a manifestation of God, that he was, body and soul, essentially divine.

The mystical vision that came to Jesus revealed that the entire ocean of existence is one manifested Spirit, and that we are simply waves on that ocean. And as the ocean is contained within the waves, that one Spirit is within all of us. And likewise, since the waves exist within the ocean, all of us exist within that one Spirit. Each of us is therefore one with God, the Father—who is our one and only eternal identity. Clearly, as Jesus acknowledged, all this is truly the Kingdom of God.

This divine knowledge revealed to Jesus holds the answer to every question that can be asked about the nature of this world and this life. But, although Jesus tried with all his might to explain his vision to the people, few believed him, and many assumed that he was suffering from mental delusion and was simply attempting to establish himself as some sort of divine royalty. Some orthodox religionists, believing Jesus to be a threat, were even plotting violence against him, and some were inciting the authorities to arrest him on charges of sedition.

Try to imagine the state of Jesus' mind at this time: He had experienced an undeniable revelation from God, an experience of the divine nature of his own being and of all that exists, and yet, because it was an intimate personal experience, no one else was witness to it or could believe him. He had been gifted by God with this amazing spiritual revelation! But he couldn't openly share this holy knowledge with others, nor could he honestly remain silent about it! Very few of us have ever experienced such a situation or such a level of frustration as that which Jesus must have experienced at that time. But due to the continued preponderance of human ignorance, it is a frustration that every mystic must experience—even in these current times.

Introduction: How Christianity Falsely Represents The Life And Teachings of Jesus

Today, in much of the world, we are heirs to the long tradition of Christianity, a Christianity that, in all its present forms, pretends to faithfully present the facts about the 1st Century martyr, Jesus of Nazareth, and his teachings. But, as I shall show, it does not, and it never has. The founders of the Christian Church misunderstood who Jesus was and what he taught, and they fostered a fraudulent religious doctrine that has thrived for over twenty centuries.

When a young person begins to search earnestly for spiritual truth, they usually follow the religious tradition that is prevalent in their own country. But, in my case, I was drawn to the spiritual tradition whose aim was not merely a faith in the divinity of a God/man who lived two thousand years ago, but to the spiritual tradition whose aim was the direct *personal realization* of God in my own soul. I was led to this aim through the reading of a number of books on the Indian spiritual tradition—in particular, Advaita (Nondual) Vedanta. This tradition emphasized the attainment of “enlightenment,” an experience of direct revelation such as that which Jesus of Nazareth had experienced, in which the soul is uplifted to the eternal Consciousness and Source of all creation and is made aware of its identity with that eternal Source. I found many of the various spokesmen for this spiritual tradition to be very compelling, and eventually, at the age of twenty-eight, through intense dedication to my goal, I was blessed by God with that coveted spiritual enlightenment and was made to know my divine Self.

Over the course of time, my understanding of the tradition of Christianity also increased. And it occurred to me that, if God could bestow His revelation on me, who am certainly not an exceptional person, then is it not reasonable to assume that Jesus was a similarly ordinary person who had somehow experienced, as I had, the enlightening Grace of God, and had attempted to convey that fact to the people of Palestine those many years ago. It was only years after his death that a few of his followers wrote their interpretive biographies of Jesus and established an independent religious cult with its own Church organization, called Christianity. The leadership of that Church declared that Jesus was the one and only Son of God, and that spiritual salvation could be obtained simply by *believing* that this doctrine was true.

According to these Christian zealots, it was not incumbent upon man, or even possible for him, to attain personal enlightenment, as Jesus had done. Ordinary mortals were able to attain salvation simply by believing that Jesus was God's emissary to the world, and this simple act of faith would guarantee their entrance into heaven. To the gullible and unthinking populace, this doctrine made perfect sense. Therefore, most of what had actually been taught by Jesus became largely forgotten, and this 'shortcut' religion spread throughout the lands. The result is that, today, many people in the Western world accept without question the story of Jesus as it has been told for centuries by the representatives of Christianity—the Christian Church. It has become incumbent on us in the twenty-first century, however, to examine, in the light of repeated instances of mystical experience as well as common sense, some of the precepts of Christianity that we currently take so much for granted.

The founding principle of Christianity is the notion that Jesus was literally the son of God. Well, how do we know that Jesus was the son of God? Because we have been indoctrinated by the Church spokesmen to regard what is taught in the Gospels as unquestioned truth. One of those Gospel authors was called Matthew. Here is what Matthew, an anonymous Jew and self-appointed advocate of this tenet, said about the birth of Jesus in the following passage:

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” ...Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her [have sexual relations with her] till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.” ¹

First of all, we have to wonder, ‘how did Matthew learn of this dream of Joseph’s? Matthew’s lifetime was a century removed from the time of Joseph’s. Was the story related to him by an eye-witness? By whom? And is

the two-thousand-year-old tradition of the divinity of Jesus reliant solely upon a second-hand dream that comes to light only after the life of Jesus had long passed? This had to have been a stretch, even for those living in the early historical period in which Matthew wrote. And yet, the story has persisted. Also, there is the ongoing question of whether Jesus was the only child of Joseph and Mary, or were there some siblings, such as James, who were born before Jesus, and who would seriously compromise Matthew's story of Mary's virginity.

Nearly everyone would agree to the premise that for God all things are possible, but has anyone ever really thought through the idea that God, the Mind of the universe, personally fathered a son on a peasant woman in Bethlehem two thousand years ago? The anonymous theologians who came up with this notion no doubt took their inspiration from the earlier stories of the Greek gods. To be sure, we find frequent examples of the mating of divine gods with mortals in the myths of the ancient Greeks. But just as surely, it is incumbent on us today to clearly differentiate between myth and reality. The Greeks visualized God as having an individual man-like body with which it was possible to indulge his philandering activities. But can we even conceive of a scenario in which that which we now regard as the Spirit-Ground of all existence might impregnate a human female, either remotely, figuratively, or actually? Can't we all agree that when this idea is honestly examined, it is seen to be, not only unnecessary, but impossibly absurd?

My dear gullible children, God doesn't impregnate young married women in order to have a human son, nor does he return people back to life after they're dead. What He does do is He awakens devout young men to His presence within them and reveals to them that He lives within them and they in Him. In this mystical experience, He shows them that they are indeed one with Him. Throughout history, many have experienced this mystical vision, and so can you. There's no need to be literally fathered by God or to believe in the absurdities that the Church authorities have taught you. Awake to your own common sense and the clear and apparent truth that is before you.

It must be emphatically stated that Christianity, the canon of Jesus' teachings, is able to stand proudly *without* the phony magic and mythology, *without* the added miracles and exaggerations. Jesus had experienced God in what we now call a "mystical experience," and he attempted to reveal to his peers the truth revealed to him that we are in God, and are made of God, that God is our soul and our being, that because God is

the Truth in which we live and move, we are bound by our very being to love one another in Him, and to serve our neighbor as ourselves. And that is surely more than enough to constitute an enduring spiritual legacy of which all Christians may be proud.

NOTE:

1. Matthew 1:18-25

Greek And Roman Mythology

In the Roman empire as well as in its colonies of the first century such as Israel, Greek mythology was still the fundamental religious tradition, and in that mythology, the primary god, Zeus, was depicted as a profligate womanizer who often fathered his progeny on the female mortals to whom he was attracted. Even in the first century, the whole panoply of myths borrowed from the Greeks was viewed as accepted doctrine throughout the Roman Empire. Little wonder, therefore, that the story of God's fathering of a child upon a mortal woman would make its way into the Greek literature outlining the origin of the budding Christianity of that time. In that nascent theology, it seemed only natural and believable that Jehovah/Zeus would have impregnated the mother of the martyred hero, Jesus, providing him with an immortal lineage. In the twenty-first century, however, we should know better, given the advance in our current knowledge of human reproductive biology. And yet, the myth persists as the very foundation of a Christian religion accepted by a substantial number of people in the Western world.

Is it not time that we accept what is evident through common sense: that Jesus was a normal human male, born of a normal human mother in the normal manner, and who, at the age of twenty-eight or twenty-nine—corresponding to the period of the return of Saturn through the ecliptic to its natal position, and a common period in which one discovers one's destined vocation—had a spiritual experience, a mystical experience, as documented in the historical Gospels, that revealed to Jesus the Divine nature of his own being and of all reality, and set him on his destined path.

Over the course of many centuries, a number of others have experienced that same revelation, that same mystical vision, and have told of it to an incredulous public. It is a recurring revelation, not of the exclusive divinity of one individual, but of the innate *divine nature* of each one of us as human

beings. I am convinced that the commonsense reevaluation of the mystical revelation of Jesus and of other later mystics will usher in the emerging paradigm of our current age. And although the immense edifice of 'tradition' will stand against the emerging of this paradigm, it will nonetheless prevail, because it is in the cause of truth and will be recognizable as such by the hearts and minds of coming generations.

In the two thousand years since Jesus lived, a great deal of knowledge concerning subsequent mystics of all religious affiliations and the nature of the unitive mystical experience has been accumulated. Despite objections from the cynics who represent the strictly empirical sciences, today there is universal recognition of the factual occurrence of mystical experience occurring to isolated individuals throughout recorded history, and Jesus was certainly one such individual. Though many still cling blindly to the ancient myths and legends fostered by the early enthusiasts of the Church, there is ample evidence to suggest that Jesus was simply a bright young Jewish lad educated in the Judaic tradition who, in his late twenties, participated in a baptism at the hands of a holy man, and suddenly had an opening of his spirit and was illumined by the Grace of God. The story of his 'divine' parentage and birth was simply an embellishment added by his misguided admirers.

The truth shown to all who have experienced mystical vision is that all men are born of God and born in God; all are Divine—not one more than another. To continue to regard Jesus as a special incarnation of God may seem harmless enough, but this fairytale lineage not only puts him in a category that clearly does not biologically exist, but it tends to set him apart as an unattainable model for human behavior. Whereas, if he is seen as an ordinary normal human being graced by God, he is not only seen as he truly was, but he becomes someone to whom we can relate, someone we can genuinely admire and emulate. More importantly, the false notion of who Jesus was prevents us from the recognition of the fact that mystical experience is an avenue open to all of us through prayer and devotion, and that the life of Jesus is clearly relevant to our own human lives and understanding, and not just a figurative icon to worship as an impossible ideal.

Jesus was a man like you and me, and he became an authentic *seer*, through the experience of a God-given vision, wherein he clearly knew the truth of his own divine nature and the divine nature of all humanity, and proclaimed that truth to all who would hear, even at the cost of his own life. This may go

against everything that is taught by the Christian Church, but it is the truth, like it or not.

The Demystification of Jesus

In the past, when it came to the founding of a new religion, the founding parties frequently deemed it necessary to establish the supernatural birth and immortality of the religion's namesake in order for that religion to be acceptable to the gullible masses. This was the case in ancient India, Egypt, Greece, and in the Roman empire. And this was the case as well with the establishment of Christianity, in which Jesus, the slain Jewish mystic of the first century, was deified in all popular accounts as the divinely appointed savior (Hebrew: *Messiah*), and the divinely anointed one (Greek: *Christos*). The zealous followers who wrote about Jesus' life in what are called *the Gospels* did not have personal contact with him, but had only the benefit of hearsay; moreover, as early advocates of the newly formed sectarian Church of Christianity, they had an incentive to portray him as a supernatural being, and the stories of his virgin birth and his bodily resurrection after death were fashioned to support that legend. The effect of these propagandist legends was that the crucified Jesus quickly came to be regarded by the people as an element of Divinity Itself—the “Son” of God, or at least the *Logos*, or creative power, of God, who would forever dwell thereafter in an ethereal realm at the right hand of God, sitting in eternal judgment of the living and the dead.

For more than twenty centuries, we in the West have allowed these fairytales to avoid the overt censorship of our rational judgments, but the time is now long past due for reasonable men to make a serious effort at demystifying and demythologizing the legend of Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth, who lived in the first century of the Current Era, and was slain by order of the Roman prelate, Pontius Pilate, was indeed a real, historical person, like you and me. And whether the need for the religious zealots of that early period to exaggerate and embellish their accounts of the life and exploits of one who had direct experience of the Divine was born of ignorance or deception is not for us to say, but it has left us with the legend of a ‘fairytale’ Jesus, which maligns and denigrates the man himself, misrepresents the legacy of his ‘mystical experience,’ and leaves a false impression in the minds of simple unlearned people regarding the life and attainments of one of our greatest mystics.

The Life of Jesus

Little is known or has been related in scriptures about the life of Jesus prior to his great experience as a participant in a baptism by John the Baptist on the banks of the river Jordan.¹ According to the story recorded in the Gospels, when Jesus was baptized in his late twenties by the baptizing sage, John, he received the gift of God's Grace, and his spiritual vision was opened. That vision revealed to him the spiritual nature of this world and all that's in it. He, himself, he realized, was made of God and was nothing else but God. He was suddenly aware that, in his larger Spirit-Self, he was all-embracing, no longer confined solely to this Jesus body, but existing everywhere, in the clouds, in the soil, in the stars, and in the creatures of the wood. It was a startling revelation, awakening in him a new awareness that he and all beings were contained in and consist of the one all-pervasive Divine Being.

But for that *experience* at the river Jordan, no one would have ever heard the name of Jesus and there would not have been a Christianity. But that mystical experience *did* occur in that young man. It was a purely personal and subjective experience, but he later told many people of it; and, because of that unmistakably Divine experience, Jesus initiated his mission by announcing to everyone the amazing truth that had been revealed to him. At the time, the cultural expectations of a coming Savior were already rampant, and Jesus was later to be seen by many as the fulfilment of those cultural expectations, but in fact, he was simply a young Palestinian who had experienced a Divine revelation, a mystical vision which he felt obligated to share with everyone.

In the days to come, he would say to his comrades, "Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me,"² and "I and my Father are one."³ He was not boasting of a special status; he said this as one who had observed a new empirical fact and was declaring his astounding discovery. But it was difficult for anyone who had *not* experienced that divine revelation to grasp the truth of what he was saying, for in the early centuries of civilization in the Middle East and specifically in the Jewish scriptures, God (*Yahweh*) was conceived and portrayed as a distinctly individual human-like entity, an all-

powerful larger than life ‘person’ who walked on earth and talked with ordinary people. Though He had many different names and attributes, this ‘god’ of supernatural powers played a role in the myths and legends of nearly every tribe of people existing in the Middle East at that time. But Jesus had experienced God as He truly is, and God was revealed to him as the spiritual continuum in which he, himself, existed and of which he was constituted. And so, when he described God as being within him, and described himself as being within God, those who conceived of God as a distinctly embodied being could make no sense of what he was saying. In fact, his words were interpreted by many of the Jewish faith as dangerously blasphemous.

Jesus' words were a true reflection of the Divine revelation that occurred within him, and yet it is easy to see that his words could be offensive to those with strongly held traditional religious beliefs. Jesus, however, was totally convinced that it was his God-given mission to relate to the people the knowledge that had been revealed in him. But a group of religious 'authorities' made it their mission to put an end to his public pronouncements, and they incited the prelate of the occupying Roman forces to arrest Jesus for sedition against the state, a crime punishable by death on the cross.

NOTES:

1. *Matthew. 3:16, Mark. 1:10, Luke. 3:22, John.1:32.*
2. *John. 13:40.*
3. *John. 10:30.*

The Death, Entombment, And Resurrection of Jesus

The crucifixion and consequent death of Jesus of Nazareth was one of the most malignantly unjust, most unholy, and most unconscionable acts ever perpetrated upon a man to whom God had chosen to reveal Himself. Nevertheless, we cannot doubt that it occurred in accord with the inscrutable will of God.

What we know of that time and place we know from the scant historical documents passed down to us. In our modern times, there are recognized rules for formulating historical documents: generally, such documents contain copious reference notes which attempt to substantiate the information contained therein. The author of the document is identified by

first name, surname, and scholarly association; and the document is further identified and catalogued by publisher and date of publication. However, in the ancient days, this was not the case. At the time of the earliest recording of Christian ‘historical’ documents, the four books known as “the Gospels,” which describe the life, teachings, and death of Jesus, were attributed to four authors for whom absolutely nothing is known other than their first names. There was no additional information provided concerning these four authors, though later we learn that none of them were first-person witnesses of the events they describe, but were merely reporting hearsay, each of them having lived some thirty to fifty years after Jesus’ crucifixion.

The events of which each of these authors spoke are variously described, but they agree enough with one another to constitute a believable narrative overall. But, since religious narratives are notoriously replete with exaggerations, embellishments, and outright fabrications, we may be excused if we are suspicious of the veracity of certain passages within the ‘gospel’ accounts of these four revered authors in which some unnatural, and even ‘supernatural’ occurrences are described. Perhaps foremost among these questionable occurrences is the famous ‘resurrection’ of Jesus from his entombment, said to have been attested to by two female followers of Jesus.

This ‘resurrection’ is a central piece of the Christian church’s doctrine of the divinity of Jesus, who is hailed by them as ‘the only begotten Son of God.’ It is the centerpiece of the Christian holiday of Easter, a Springtime festival during which all the people of the West celebrate Jesus’ rising from the dead over twenty-one hundred years ago. Of course, no one believes in the possibility of ‘rising from the dead’— except for that *one* exceptional time. Because why? Because in this instance he is believed to have been God’s only son! And though no one really believes that God begat a son on an innocent Palestinian woman, we are nevertheless quite willing to acknowledge and celebrate this one preposterously exceptional occurrence. Why? Because it has become an established cultural tradition—a doctrine instigated by the founders of the Church, and long solidified in tradition. And you can’t argue against tradition, can you? A tradition is locked into the culture and installed and sealed into that culture by the acceptance and habit of the millions of its willing citizens over a period of hundreds of years, and it is not to be questioned. And yet, as rational human beings, we must question it.

Let us go back to the moment of the occurrence of this very exceptional

event: The story of Jesus' crucifixion, entombment, and resurrection is told in the Biblical New Testament book of Matthew, where the anonymous Matthew states that, after Jesus' body was entombed:

“The chief priests and Pharisees gathered together before Pontius Pilate, saying, ‘sir, we remember while he was alive, how that deceiver said, ‘after three days I will rise.’ Therefore, command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say to the people, ‘he has risen from the dead.’ Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard, go your way, make it as secure as you know how.’ So, they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.”¹

Then, according to this same author, it was on a Monday morning that Mary Magdalene and another Mary (not the mother of Jesus) went to Jesus' tomb to anoint his body, and they discovered that the large rock that had sealed the tomb had been rolled away, revealing an empty tomb. According to Matthew, these two women saw an angel sitting there who announced to them that ‘Jesus is not here, for he has risen.’ And the angel told them to go to Galilee where Jesus would meet them. And as the women made their way to Galilee, they came across the living Jesus, and they worshipped him.

This is the story told by Matthew, and it is evident that the accounts given by the authors of the other Gospels are not first-person accounts either but are merely embellishments on Matthew's original account. Nowhere, however, does the unidentified Matthew mention how he learned of these events, or of how and when the two women reported these occurrences to him. Also, he states that the risen Jesus thereafter met with a number of his former disciples, and dined with them, but this too is only hearsay, as there are no extant authentic first-person accounts of these meetings.

Matthew acknowledges that the guards who had been appointed to watch the tomb overnight told quite a different story of the disappearance of Jesus: for when they returned from their assignment, they reported to the elders that “the disciples came at night and stole Jesus' body away while we slept.” But though Matthew writes that “this saying is commonly repeated to this day,” he believes that the guards reported this because they were bribed by some of the city elders to do so. ² So, the truth of the matter is wholly dependent upon your choice of which side appears most believable.

Easter egg hunts and chocolate Easter bunnies are certainly a lot of fun for

the children, and therefore may constitute a valid justification for the holiday. But we shall never know with any real certainty what actually happened in the days following Jesus' crucifixion and entombment. Was it a *miracle*? Or was it a drama staged by a few of Jesus' zealous followers? Do we have faith in our common-sense intelligence or in the traditions handed down to us by the zealous founders of a newly organized Church organization?

Let us have a look at some of the religious traditions surrounding the passing of some other religious prophets and leaders:

It is stated in Islamic literature that, after the death of the great fifteenth century poet-saint, Kabir, his Hindu followers wished to cremate his body, while his Muslim followers wished to bury him, according to their separate customs. While thus arguing, one mourner lifted the shroud covering Kabir's body, and behold! the body had disappeared; and in its place were two bouquets of flowers, one for the Hindus and one for the Muslims.

It is interesting to note that the early biographers of Nanak, the great sixteenth century saint and founder of Sikhism, tell a story of his corpse's miraculous disappearance which is very similar to the one told of Kabir. In the version concerning Nanak, the Muslim and Hindu devotees had come to pay respects to Nanak on his deathbed, and they argued among themselves over whether his corpse was to be cremated or buried. Nanak, overhearing them, said, "If the bouquet of flowers brought by the Hindus remains fresh at my death, they may cremate my body; if the bouquet of the Muslims remains fresh, they may bury it." And, after Nanak died, sure enough, when someone removed the shroud, Nanak's body was gone, but there remained two bouquets, both of which were still fresh. These stories, along with the story of Jesus' miraculous 'resurrection,' give rise to wonder at the exaggerated claims and misguided zeal of religious disciples at every time and place.

It was not long after the 'resurrection' of Jesus that his followers, gathering together in his name, attempted to inculcate a new theology, outside of the ancient tradition of Judaism. Relying on Jesus' own declaration of oneness with God, and in opposition to the established Judaic authorities, these few followers officially recognized Jesus as 'the Son of God', and a suitable theology was constructed to establish that divinity. However, by their counterfeit theology, the followers unwittingly put an end to the universal

significance of Jesus' declaration regarding his spiritual nature, for that declaration clearly applied only to special men of Spirit like him, who had been fathered by God, and not to ordinary people who were parented by mere mortals like the rest of us.

However, after a few centuries, and in various parts of the world, a few others came forward to announce that they too had experienced the same interior revelation that Jesus had experienced, the same mystical vision that all this world is God's appearance in form, and they too stated: "I am in God, and God is in me. I and the Father are one." But this time, no one, not even the mystics themselves, claimed that they were Messiahs, fathered by God. So, this cast a different light on what was popularly believed about Jesus. For, now, there were a number of people saying the same thing, though none of them claimed to be a special incarnation of God, but just ordinary men.

Clearly, it was not necessary to be a God or a relative of God in order to be visited by this revelation. But could the vision of these men be true? Can it possibly be true that all of us are made of God-stuff? Can it be that we really are living in 'the Kingdom of God'? That we are in Him, and that He is in fact our very self, our very identity?

I suggest that we look carefully at what young Jesus said. He was telling us way back then of our true spiritual nature. But those who had not experienced that revelation for themselves could not understand what he said. They believed that Jesus was describing only his own nature as a unique manifestation of God. But now, two thousand years later, there have been many all over the world who have had the same revelatory experience and have declared the same truth that Jesus expressed. How many more will need to experience this revelation and make the same declaration before we begin to understand? Only time will tell.

What, we must ask, can be done to reformulate Christianity in accordance with our current enlightened view of the life and teachings of Jesus? What would such an enlightened Christianity look like? First, we must acknowledge that the story of Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament of the Bible is a true story of an actual person—well anyway, most of it is true. The virgin birth and the resurrection were added by well-meaning zealots, but the rest is factual. Jesus, as a young man, came under the influence of the wandering holy man, John, the Baptist, and was initiated by him in the river Jordan.

At that time, Jesus had a profound interior experience of his own divinity. The grace of God awoke in him, revealing the truth that he was indeed a manifestation of God. The part of the story that often gets left out, however, is that this experience of divine Grace revealed to Jesus not only his own divinity, but the divinity of all existence. He realized in that enlightening moment that nothing other than God exists, that all this universe of manifold forms—the clouds, the earth, the vast expanse of stars and planets and galaxies, and all the creatures, including himself, are made of God's creative light. And with that revelation, the aim of awakening that knowledge in the hearts and minds of all people became the mission of Jesus' brief life.

God's revelation showed to Jesus that he and the Father are one; and this is a truth that we are able to know as well. It is not necessary that our mother's hymen grow back, that we were conceived in a manner other than the normal one, or that after our death we are seen rising from our grave. We need only the Grace of God, revealing to us in our souls the certain knowledge that we consist of God's own Being; that He is our foundation, our substance, and our eternal Self. God's revelation in the story of Jesus is a true real-life occurrence—one that has played out many times in the real lives of various people of various lands who have been graced by God over the millennia. And while, in the West, we are taught the life and tragic death of Jesus, few are aware of the many others who have known their Divine identity and spoke of it, such as Plotinus, or al-Hallaj, or Meister Eckhart, or Rumi, or Shankaracharya, or Ibn Arabi, or any of the hundreds of other mystics who are renowned in other parts of the world. ³ It seems to me that an enlightened Christianity must recognize those mystics throughout the world's history whose experience corroborates and affirms the mystical realizations of which Jesus spoke.

NOTES:

1. Matthew: 27:63-66

2. Matthew: 28:12-15

3. If you would like to know about some of the many well-known mystics besides Jesus who have realized their identity in God, please see my book, *History of Mysticism*. It may be downloaded free at: www.themysticsvision.com.

The Revelation of Jesus

Prior to my own mystical experience, my own spiritual revelation, I was skeptical of the claims of traditional Christianity, but after having been graced by God with the knowledge of my own divinity and the divinity of all creation, I naturally began musing on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and his legacy. It quickly became clear to me that Jesus was, like me, the recipient of a divine ‘mystical experience’ that revealed God’s immanent presence. It was clear also that, in the time of Jesus, such a mystical experience was unheard of among the local population and was not at all recognized or understood.

Those Jewish writers who were tasked with writing the history of Jesus’ brief life and career had to rely on their own mistaken assumptions regarding Jesus, his mystical experience, and his message. It was these well-intentioned, but mistaken, individuals who created the myth of Jesus’ supernatural birth, the voice of God sounding from the heavens proclaiming him to be His son, and the apparently miraculous resurrection of Jesus after his entombment. It seems clear, as well, that Jesus’ disciples learned from the lips of Jesus himself of the mystical experience that occurred to him at the time of his baptism by John, though they had no intellectual context by which to understand that experience; and they chose to interpret it as the long-expected fulfillment of a Judaic prophecy that told of a coming ‘Messiah.’

The life and revelation of Jesus was an annunciation to the people that a pure-hearted, virtuous and devoted man is able to win the Grace of God, and come to know directly his oneness, his identity, with the almighty God. But that divine message went unrecognized by the people; instead, a small group of men, devoted to the notion of the special relationship of Jesus to the Father, manufactured a new faith, raising Jesus to a place of worship in their churches alongside the Father. They believed that Jesus came down from heaven to proclaim the message that he was a unique anomaly, a singular being uniquely identical with God, and that for men and women to believe that this fantastic story was true was synonymous with divine ‘salvation’. The true message of Jesus, the perennial message of all the mystics, that *all* men are of a divine nature, one with the Father, once again went unheard and unheeded and remains unrecognized and unacknowledged to this day.¹

Jesus had seen in an inner revelation that he was a manifestation of the

Father, as was all that was created. He was not representing himself as a special manifestation of God, but he was revealing the universal truth of human existence: that each one of us is born in God and consists of His divine Light. He asked all men to know that Light in themselves, to live in the enlightened awareness of their true being, and to manifest that Light in the world of men.

NOTE:

1. We can scarcely imagine how unheard of and how inexplicable were the occurrences of Mystical Experience in earlier times and civilizations. Not only were the people of Jesus' time and place unfamiliar with the phenomena, people of all subsequent centuries, up to and including our own, have been woefully uneducated regarding the nature and occurrence of the unitive or nondual mystical experience, that interior revelation of identity with the divine universal Mind that comes to 'the pure of heart,' as Jesus teaches us. Even today, there are only a few Western scholars and academics familiar with the pancultural and pan-historic occurrence of the nondual mystical experience, and fewer still who have actually experienced it.

Why We Celebrate The Birth of Jesus

Why do we celebrate the birth of Jesus? Because he attempted to teach the populace of his time the mystical truth that had been revealed to him: that all the world is, and each of us are, manifestations of the one Divinity. But, as he went about teaching, there were many who believed he was claiming that he alone was of Divine origin, that he alone was someone special; and so, they cruelly murdered him. Jesus had travelled all over the region, teaching the people that we are divine creatures, manifestations of God, contained in God, and that our divine origin could be known and experienced in this world; but some vicious religious representatives spread the rumor that he was saying that he alone was divine, that he alone was born of God.

The Roman authorities took the word of those religious representatives, and as punishment for this blasphemy, the authorities splayed Jesus on a cross to die. The great irony is that today the very same lie is told about Jesus by the authorities of the Christian religion. These so-called "Christians" proudly announce that Jesus, and Jesus alone, was the Son of God, the only one who could rightly say "I and the Father are one." And today, two thousand years after his martyrdom, there are many, under the banner of his name, who

promulgate the same erroneous message that Jesus was the one and only manifestation of God on earth. But even a cursory search of Jesus' teachings will reveal that this is not at all what he taught.

His was a mystical understanding, not easy for an uninitiated populace to comprehend. It was a metaphysical understanding derived from a deep spiritual vision that everything and everyone is born of God and is nothing else but that one Divinity, that God is the hidden Light that projects the images of all things and all beings in the world and exists within them as their source and creator:

“Jesus said, ‘The world’s images are manifest to man, but the Light in them remains concealed; within the image is the Light of the Father. He becomes manifest as the images, but, as the Light, He is concealed’.” 1

Jesus had seen in the full clarity of his mystical vision that the divine Light was the sole reality in all, and he openly declared that that Light was his true Identity, because he had *seen* it in a God-given vision. In the unitive mystical vision, the individual soul becomes transparent to its Source, and it knows that Source as its only true and eternal Identity:

“Jesus said, ‘I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there.’” 2

“If you knew who I am,” he said, “you would also know the Father. Knowing me, you know Him; seeing me, you see Him. Do you not understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” 3

Some believe that, in this declaration, Jesus was saying that he was a unique manifestation of God. But what did Jesus actually mean by this? He was saying that we are like waves on the ocean of God; that just as a wave exists in the ocean, we exist in God; and that, just as the ocean, because it constitutes the very substance of the wave, is *in* the wave, so God is in us; that, in fact, we and the Father are one. This is true because it *must* be true if, indeed, everywhere only the One exists. It is, of course, true for all of us, but Jesus had *seen* it, had *experienced* it in a divine revelation, a ‘mystical’ vision, and though others might vaguely sense the divine nature of their

being, for Jesus, it was radiantly clear, and his certainty was absolute. It is also clear that Jesus never meant this truth to be applied exclusively to himself; he knew very well that *everyone else* was also a manifestation of the divine Light; everyone else existed in the Father as well, and everyone else contained the Father within them—even though they might not yet be aware of it:

“He said to them, ‘There is a Light within a man of Light, and It lights up the whole world. If it does not shine [within that man], he is in darkness.’” 4

Jesus taught everyone who would hear him that the eternal Light is the sole reality manifest as each of us: ‘You are that light’ he said, ‘it is *who you are!*’

“You are the Light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your Light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” 5

Many others, since the time of Jesus, have been graced with the vision of God, and they too have proclaimed the saving knowledge that God is realizable as the source and manifestation of one’s very being, one’s very Self. But Jesus, because of his extraordinary life, his words, and his martyrdom, is rightly remembered and celebrated above all others as the knower of knowers, the teacher of teachers, and the very brightest of stars in God’s heaven. 6

NOTES:

1. James Robinson, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 1977; 83, p. 135.
2. *Ibid.*, 77, p. 135.
3. The Gospel of John 13:40
4. James Robinson, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 1977; 24, p. 129.
5. The Gospel of Matthew 5:14-16.
6. For more about Jesus and the many others throughout history who knew and taught the message of the divine Self, please see my book, *History of Mysticism: The Unchanging Testament*.

Nonduality In The Teachings of Jesus

It is important to stress the fact that no single religion holds deed to the Truth over and above the devotees of other lands and other religious traditions. Every religious tradition worth its salt recognizes the same eternal Truth; and all great religious teachers have taught according to their own intimate experience of God, their “mystical vision”—whether it is called “*samadhi*,” “*nirvana*,” “*fana*,” or “union with God.” Since there is but one ultimate Reality, which all share, each one who has experienced the Truth has experienced that same ultimate Reality. Naturally, therefore, their teachings about it, and about how one can experience It for oneself, are bound to be identical.

However, the languages and cultures of the various teachers who have lived throughout history are, no doubt, different from one another. Their personalities and lifestyles are different; but their vision is one. In the mystical experience, which transcends all religious traditions and cultures and languages, the Christian, the Jew, the Muslim, the Buddhist and the Vedantist, all come to the same realization: Each realizes the oneness of their own soul and God, the Soul of the universe. It is this very experience, which prompted Jesus, the originator of Christianity, to explain at various times to his disciples that he had known the great Unity in which he and the Father of the universe were one.¹

Man's unity with the Divine Spirit is the truth that the Indian philosophy of Vedanta speaks of as “Nondualism.” The term, “Unity,” is, of course, the same in meaning; but it seems that the declaration, “not-two” is more powerfully emphatic than a mere assertion of oneness. Indeed, the word, “Unity” is often used by religionists who apply it to God, but who have not even considered the thought that they themselves are logically included in an *absolute* Unity. Nondualism, the philosophy of absolute Unity, is the central teaching, not only of Vedanta, but of all genuine seers of the Truth. This understanding is embodied in the Vedantic assertion, *tat twam asi*, “That thou art.” Jesus expressed the same truth when he said, “I and the father are one.” That saying contains the whole teaching of Jesus, and it is one of the most perfect expressions of Nondualism ever uttered.

Once we begin to look at the teachings of Jesus in the light of his “mystical” experience of Unity, we begin to have a much clearer perspective on all the aspects of the life and teaching of the man. His teachings, like those of the various Vedantic sages who’ve taught throughout the ages, is that the soul of

man (the *Atman*) is none other than the one Divinity, none other than God; and that this Divine Identity can be experienced and known through the revelation that occurs inwardly, by the grace of God, to those who prepare and purify their minds and hearts to receive it. The words of Jesus are so well known to us from our childhood that, perhaps, they have lost their meaning through our over-familiarity with them. He attempted to explain to us, with the words, “I and the Father are one,” that the “I,” our own inner awareness of self, is none other than the one divine Self, the one all-pervasive Awareness, the Lord and Father of us all.

Why, then, are we so unable to see it? Why should it be so hard for us to attain to that purity of heart, which Jesus declared so essential to Its vision? Probably because we have not really tried—not the way Jesus did, going off into the wilderness, putting aside everything else in his life for this one aim, focusing completely and entirely on attaining the vision of God. Not the way the Buddha did. Not the way all those who have experienced in themselves the one all-pervasive Spirit have done. Perhaps we’re not ready for such a concentrated effort just yet. Perhaps we have other desires yet to dispense with before we will be free enough to seek so high a goal. For us, perhaps, there is yet much to be done to soften the heart, so that we are pure enough to hear the call of Divine Grace. And perhaps it is to us, for whom much yet needs to be accomplished toward the attainment of a “pure heart,” that Jesus spoke.

All of what Jesus taught to his disciples was by way of explaining to them that his real nature, and that of all men, is Divine; and that the reality of this could be realized directly. Furthermore, he taught them the path, or method, to follow in order to attain this direct realization. Let us look to his own words to corroborate this: In the Gospel book of John, he laments to God, “O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee. But I have known Thee.”² And, as he sat among the orthodox religionists in the Jewish temple, he said to them, “You say that He is your God, yet you have not known Him. But I have known Him.”³ Jesus had “known” God within himself. Whether this ‘mystical’ experience of revelation occurred at the moment of his initiation by John the Baptist, or later, during his time in the wilderness, we cannot know for certain. However, it is certain that it was that experience that had separated him and effectively isolated him from his brothers, because he alone among his contemporaries possessed this rare knowledge of the truth of existence.

This is the difficult plight of all those who have been graced with “the vision of God.” It is the greatest of gifts, it is the greatest of all possible visions; and yet, because the knowledge so received is completely contrary to what all men believe regarding God and the soul, it is a terribly alienating knowledge, which brings upon its possessor the scorn and derision of all mankind. History is replete with examples of others who, having attained this saving knowledge, found the world unwilling to accept it, and ready to defend its ignorance aggressively. This circumstance is little changed today.

Because the “vision” of God was so difficult to convey to those who had not experienced it, Jesus spoke often by way of analogy or metaphor in order to make his meaning clear. He spoke of the experience of “seeing” God as like the entrance into a realm beyond this world, a realm where only God exists. In his own Aramaic language, he called this realm *malkutha*. In the Greek translation, it is *basileia*. In English, it is usually rendered as “the kingdom of God.”

His disciples asked him, “When will the kingdom come?” Jesus said, “It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying ‘Here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ Rather, the kingdom of the Father is [already] spread out upon the earth, and [yet] men do not see it. 4 ... Indeed, what you look forward to has already come, but you do not recognize it.” 5 The Pharisees asked him, “When will the kingdom of God come?” He said, “You cannot tell by signs [i.e., by observations] when the kingdom of God will come. There will be no saying, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For, in fact, the kingdom of God is [experienced] within you.” 6

Jesus said, “If those who lead you say to you, ‘See, the kingdom is in the sky,’ then the birds of the sky will have preceded you. If they say to you, ‘It is in the sea,’ then the fish will precede you. Rather the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you [as well]. When you come to know your Self, then you [i.e., your true nature] will be known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you will not know your Self, you live in poverty [i.e., you live in the illusion that you are a pitiful creature far from God].” 7

Another of Jesus’ metaphors utilized the terms, “Light” and “darkness” to represent the Divinity and the inherent delusion of man, respectively:

Jesus said, “The world’s images are manifest to man, but the Light in them

remains concealed; within the image is the Light of the Father. He becomes manifest as the images, but, as the Light, He is concealed.” 8 He said to them, “There is a Light within a man of Light, and It lights up the whole world. If it does not shine, he is in darkness.” 9

These are terms which have been used since time immemorial to represent the Divine Consciousness in man and the hazy ignorance brought about by the material Creation which obscures It. In the very first paragraph of the Gospel of John, we find an excellent explanation of these two principles, and their Greek synonyms, *Theos* and *Logos*.

"In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God. He [or It] was with God in the beginning. All things were made by Him; without Him nothing was made. Within Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of man. And the Light shone in the darkness, but the darkness comprehended It not." 10

A word of explanation is necessary: These two terms, “Light and “darkness,” are also indicative of the cosmic aspects of Reality; in other words, they are not only the Divine Consciousness in man and the darkness of unknowing, but they are, at a higher level, the very Godhead (*Theos*) and Its Power of manifestation (*Logos*). They are those same two principles we have so often run into in other mystical texts, whether they are called *Brahman* and *Maya*, *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*, or *Jahveh* and *Chokmah*. It is the Godhead in us, which provides the Light of Consciousness in us; it is His Creative Power, His manifesting principle, which, in the process of creating an individual soul-mind-body, provides us with all the obscuration necessary to keep us in the dark as to our infinite and eternal Identity.

"Jesus said, “If they ask you, ‘Where did you come from?’ say to them, ‘We came from the Light, the place where the Light came into being of Its own accord and established Itself and became manifest through our image.’”

“If they ask you, ‘Are you It?’ say, ‘We are Its children, and we are the elect of the living Father.’ If they ask you, ‘What is the sign of your Father in you?’ say to them, ‘It is movement and repose.’” 11

Jesus said, “I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest. Everything came forth from me, and everything returns to me. Split a piece of wood, and I am

there. Lift a stone, and you will find me there.” 12 Here, Jesus identifies with the Eternal Light; but it is clear that he never intended to imply that he was uniquely and exclusively identical with It; it should be clear that his intention was always to convey the truth that all men are, in essence, the transcendent Consciousness, manifest in form:

"Ye *are* the Light of the world. Let your Light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." 13

Frequently Jesus declared to his followers that they too would come to the same realization that he had experienced:

"I tell you this," he said to them; "there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the kingdom of God already come in full power." 14

"The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence. And the one who lives from the living ONE will not see death. Have I not said: 'whoever finds his Self is superior to the world?'" 15 "Take heed of the living ONE while you are alive, lest you die and seek to see Him and be unable to do so." 16 "That which you have will save you if you bring It forth from yourselves. That which you do not have within you will destroy you." 17

"That which you have" is, of course, the Truth, the Light, the Divinity who manifests as you. "That which you do not have" refers to the false identity of a separate and independent individuality, which is simply a lie. It is the wrong understanding of who you are that limits you, and which prevents you from experiencing the Eternal.

The teaching, common to all true "mystics" who have realized the Highest, is 'You *are* the Light of the world! You *are* That! Identify with the Light, the eternal Truth, for That is who you really are!' And yet Jesus did not wish that this should remain a mere matter of faith with his disciples; he wished them to experience it, to *realize* this truth for themselves. And he taught them the method by which he had come to know God. Like all great seers, he knew both the means and the end, he knew both the One and the many. Thus, we hear in the message of Jesus an apparent ambiguity, which is necessitated by the paradoxical nature of the Reality.

In the One, the two—soul and God—play their love-game of devotion. At one moment, the soul speaks of God, its “Father”; at another moment, it is identified with God, and speaks of “I.” Likewise, in the words of Jesus to his disciples, we clearly see this complementarity: At one moment, he speaks of dualistic devotion in the form of prayer (“Our Father, who art in heaven”); and at another moment he asserts his oneness, his identity, with God (“Lift the stone and I am there ...”). But he cautioned his disciples against offending others with this attitude (“If they ask you, ‘Are you It?’ say, ‘We are Its children ...’”).

At times, identifying with the One, he asserts that he has the power to grant the experience of Unity (“I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind”).¹⁸ And at other times, identifying with the human soul, he gives all credit to God, the Father (“Why do you call me good? There is no one good but the ONE, that is God.”).¹⁹

There is an interesting story that appears in both Matthew and Luke which illustrates the knowledge, from the standpoint of the individual soul, that the realization of God comes, not by any deed of one’s own, but solely by the grace of God: Jesus had just commented upon how difficult it would be for a young man, otherwise spiritually inclined, who was attached to his worldly wealth and occupations, to realize God; and his disciples, who were gathered around, were somewhat disturbed by this, and asked, “Then, who *can* attain salvation?” And Jesus answered, “For man it is impossible; but for God it is possible.”

And Peter, understanding that Jesus is denying that any man, by his own efforts, can bring about that experience, but only God, by His grace, gives this enlightenment, objected: “But we here have left our belongings to become your followers!” And Jesus, wishing to assure them that any effort toward God-realization will bear its fruits in this life and in lives to come, said to them: “I tell you this; there is no one who has given up home, or wife, brothers, parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not be repaid many times over in this time, and in the time to come [will] know eternal Life.”²⁰ He could guarantee to no one the divinely-revealed knowledge of God; that was in the hands of God. But Jesus knew that whatever efforts one makes toward God must bear their fruits in this life, and in the lives to come.

And so, throughout the teachings of Jesus, one finds these two, apparently contradictory, attitudes intermingled: the attitude of the *jnani* (“I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest”); and the attitude of the *bhakta* (“Father, father, why hast Thou forsaken me?”). They are the two voices of the illumined man, for he is both, the transcendent Unity and the imaged soul; for he has “seen” this unity in the unitive mystical vision.

Jesus had experienced the ultimate Truth; he had clearly seen and known It beyond any doubt; and he knew that the consciousness that lived as him was the one Consciousness of all. He knew that he was, in fact, the living Awareness from which this entire universe is born. This was the certain, indubitable, truth; and yet Jesus found but few who could even comprehend it. For the most part, those to whom he spoke were well-meaning religionists who were dedicated to the exercises and rituals of their religion but were incapable of accepting the profound meaning of his words. The religious orthodoxy of his time, like all such orthodoxies, fostered a self-serving lip-service to spiritual ideals, and observed all sorts of symbolic rituals, but was entirely ignorant of the fact that the ultimate reality could be directly known by a pure and devout soul, and that this was the real purpose of all religious practice.

Jesus realized that, despite the overwhelming influence of the orthodox religionists, still, in his own Judaic tradition, there had been other enlightened seers of God, who had known and taught this truth. “I come,” said Jesus, “not to destroy the law [of the Prophets], but to fulfill it.”²¹ He knew also that any person who announced the fact that they had seen and known God would be persecuted and belittled and regarded as an infidel and a liar. In the *Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus is reported to have said, “He who knows the Father (the transcendent Absolute) and the Mother (the Creative Principle) will be called a son-of-a-bitch!”²² It seems he was making a pun on the fact that one who does *not* know his father and mother is usually referred to in this fashion; but, in his case, he had known the Father of the universe, and knew the Power (of Mother Nature) behind the entire creation, and still he was called this derisive name.

Such is the common experience of all the great seers, from Lao Tze to Socrates and Heraclitus, from Plotinus and al-Hallaj to Meister Eckhart and St. John of the Cross. All were cruelly tortured and persecuted for their goodness and wisdom. Jesus too found the world of men wanting in understanding; he said:

I took my place in the midst of the world, and I went among the people. I found all of them intoxicated [with pride and ignorance]; I found none of them thirsty [for Truth]. And my soul became sorrowful for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have vision. Empty they came into the world, and empty they wish to leave the world. But, for the moment, they are intoxicated; when they shake off their wine, then they will repent. 23

NOTES:

1. *John, Gospel Of*, 13:40.
2. *Ibid.*, 17:25.
3. *Ibid.*, 8:54.
4. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 114; (trans. by Thomas O. Lambdin), Robinson, James M. (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*; San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 138.
5. *Ibid.*, 51, p. 132.
6. *Luke, Gospel Of*, 17:20.
7. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 3; Robinson, James M. (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*; San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 126.
8. *Ibid.*, 83, p. 135.
9. *Ibid.*, 24, p. 129.
10. *John, Gospel Of*, 1:1.
11. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 50, Robinson, James M. (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*; San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 132.
12. *Ibid.*, 77, p. 135.
13. *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 5:14-16.
14. *Mark, Gospel Of*, 9:1.
15. *Thomas Gospel Of*, 111; Robinson, 1977, p.138.
16. *Ibid.*, 59, p. 132.
17. *Ibid.*, 70, p. 134.
18. *Ibid.*, 17, p. 128.
19. *Luke, Gospel Of*, 18:18.
20. *Ibid.*, 18:18-30; *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 19:16.
21. *Matthew, Gospel Of*, 5:17.
22. *Thomas, Gospel Of*, 105, Robinson, 1977, p. 137.
23. *Ibid.*, 28, p. 130.

A Seeing Man In A Blind World

Jesus stood up before the assembled crowd: 'Greetings friends and neighbors,' he said. 'On rare occasions, a fortunate person is granted clear vision, and sees into the very fabric of the reality in which we live. For some reason, I have been granted such a vision, and I wish to share with you what I have seen:

'All that we perceive in this world is nothing but God's glory! He has spread this feast before us of His own delight and joy; even we who enjoy this feast are born of His manifest delight. All is His dream-like production, born of the power of His own unfathomable mind. I saw that this very body, and this very awareness is His own, beyond this time and place that we see and relate to. We are made of eternal God and live within Him; and all that occurs within this world is His playful delight.

'Look at me, my friends: Do you not see that I am in God and God is in me? The same is true for you as well! I have seen it, and I swear it's true. What else is this world but God's delight? What else are we but His forms, produced by His will and formed of His substance? If you could see with my eyes, you would know the truth that all that *is* is God; He is in the clouds and in the gritty soil; He lives as every creature in the grass and as every creature in the air. He lives as you, and you are His own dear self. You can find Him therefore by turning within yourselves. There He lives and operates as you. Know Him, and your life will be blessed. You will see with His all-encompassing eye, and you will delight in His unfailing guidance. See Him in all, and love Him in all; and above all, know that you are His own, and live out your life in great joy and sweetness. Go now and remember my words.'

The Truth About Jesus

No one in their right mind would disparage Jesus, the great mystic-martyr of the first century. I, for one, have often stated that, in my opinion, of all the enlightened men gifted by God's revelation, he is at the forefront as teacher and representative of God's truth. But, in the interest of truth, I must insist on pointing out the harmful fallacies perpetuated by the unilluminated organizers of what came to be called Christianity—harmful fallacies that are perpetuated to this day.

Those early followers of the teachings of Jesus may be excused their zealous

intent to form an organization that spread and perpetuated those teachings, but, like many others before them, they mistakenly felt that it was necessary to deify their leader in order to guarantee his place in the eyes of the people as a singular authority, and so he was designated as the sole progeny of God, being both God and man, worthy of being worshiped and adulated as Divinity itself. This strategy did indeed work very well for centuries, and the simple people wholeheartedly accepted this doctrine as Gospel. Having been passed down from generation to generation, today this imaginative notion has attained the status of an unassailable tradition.

But this tradition has also brought along with it a negative consequence as well: mere man was henceforth relegated to a world where he could only aspire to a divine status, but he could never attain it. That status was reserved for Jesus, 'the Son of God'. The Church had essentially declared that there were two kinds of beings: the divine and the human. Jesus is divine, and the rest of us are mere humans. And that doctrine tended to not only dampen but deaden the innate aspirations of man to know his own divine identity.

Nevertheless, throughout history, God has continued to reveal to a few mere men the truth of their own divine nature. Like Jesus, so long ago, they experienced in clear vision that they are in God, and that God is in them, that they are truly made of God and one with Him. These men knew that they were not "sons of God" in any literally meaningful sense; they were not different in the manner of their paternity or their conception than any other men, and yet the revelation of their divinity had come to them. Therefore, it was readily apparent to them that Jesus, who had experienced what they had experienced, was not necessarily different in kind from them, but that, in fact, all men are manifestations of the one Divine Father of us all.

Today, enlightened Christians may no longer regard Jesus as the Son of God, or even as a special manifestation of God; but we must not, on this account, regard Jesus any the less, for, make no mistake: Jesus—like all who become illumined and who live to serve God as His spokesman—was chosen and empowered by the Father. The life and mission of Jesus—in fact *everything* that occurs in this world—is conceived, enacted, and accomplished by God. Jesus may no longer be hailed as the sole progeny of God, but he and all of his illumined brothers and sisters throughout the world stand as proof of the ability of every single person to know their own divinity by the gracious gift of God.

The distinction between human and divine does not exist; all is in fact divine. And yet there remains a distinction between those who, through divine revelation, *know* the truth of their divinity and those who do not. Ultimately, your religion is not about the status of Jesus, nor about having faith in Jesus to save you; it's about you. It's about you becoming what Jesus was: A man illumined by God. And that will happen through the purification of your heart and by the bountiful Grace of God.

Your only spiritual task is to open your heart to Him. Seek Him in silence. Seek Him in the long dark night. If your heart is open and pure, He will come. He will illumine you as He illumined Jesus. Then you too will be a man illumined by God, and your life will be joyfully fulfilled. The enlightening truth is revealed by God to those whom He chooses, and only they know with utmost certainty the marvelous truth that He alone exists, that He is our very substance, that we are all contained in, sustained in, and united in Him.

NOTE:

1. An expanded understanding of the nature of the unitive mystical experience will most certainly be instrumental in revolutionizing the understanding of every religious institution in the near future. It will no doubt be especially instrumental in revolutionizing the Christian religion through the demythologizing of the human person of Jesus of Nazareth upon whom the Christian faith is founded, and a reconsideration of his stated message in the light of his mystical experience. This expanded understanding will have a revolutionizing effect upon Buddhism and Islam as well. But we should not anticipate the occurrence of a universally expanded understanding anytime soon. It will occur and become popular among a small group of scholars and thinkers at first, and only after an extended time will this understanding become universal.

If I may paraphrase something Max Planck said in referring to “a new scientific truth”: it is also true that a new *spiritual truth* “does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.” (Paraphrase of Max Planck, *Scientific Autobiography And Other Papers*, New York, Philosophical Library, 1949; pp. 33-39.)

Jesus Was Not The Only One

It's not necessary to be born of a virgin,
 Or to be miraculously conceived
 In order to know that you're born of God's light,
 That you live within Him and consist of His being,
 To know that all this universe is made of Him.

God has revealed Himself in me as well.
 Do you think that I'm special? I'm sorry; you're wrong.
 Yet even a poor fool like me is able to realize God by His grace,
 And know oneness with Him.
 But how could that be—unless He lived within me,
 And lived within every other being as well?

Do you really want to hold onto the old storys
 Even though it's clear they're untrue?
 Know that each of us is made of His light.
 Know that you too can experience your divinity within,
 And come to know the truth of your oneness with Him.

Cast off superstition, the habits of the past!
 So many have known Him; this can't be denied.
 Wake up to the truth: the truth is that each of us is
 The son of the almighty God.
 Pray to Him who lives in your heart:
 Ask Him to reveal your oneness with Him,
 And enable you to reflect His light to the world.

* * *

Following is some additional material that will provide a broader historical perspective on the life and teachings of Jesus:

THE Gnostics

(Excerpted from *History of Mysticism* by Swami Abhayananda)

Contemporary with the growth of the Christian movement, during the first few centuries of the Current Era, there existed throughout the Mediterranean world a number of religious sects referred to as *Gnostics* (*Knowers*). Up

until recent times, the bulk of our knowledge about the Gnostics was derived from the anti-Gnostic writings of the early Church Fathers, especially Ireneus and Hippolytus (d. ca. 235). But since the find of fifty-two Gnostic books at Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945, and their belated publication thirty years later, we possess numerous first-hand accounts of the Gnostic views during the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

The Gnostics claimed to represent the esoteric tradition of mystical knowledge (*gnosis*), and while many of them embraced and infiltrated the Christian community, they stood opposed to the authority of the orthodox (Catholic) Church, regarding themselves as representative of the “true” interpretation of Jesus and his teachings. It must be understood that, during those first few centuries of the Christian Era, Christianity was not yet a coherent body, but rather consisted of a wide variety of disparate groups, each dedicated to their own opinions regarding Jesus, the Christ. Their opinions were embodied in the works they wrote in order to promote their own particular view.

Many of these works, written and distributed by various authors shortly after the death of Jesus, took the form of “Gospels” (*good news*), purporting to be the authentic reminiscences of the life and teachings of Jesus. The ones that were eventually adopted by the Church authorities as Christian scripture in 367 C.E. are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, known thereafter as “the canonical Gospels.” There were other books of this type, however, that circulated during those first few centuries; one of them, *The Gospel According to Thomas*, was purported to be the work of Didymos Judas Thomas, i.e., Thomas, “the twin brother of Jesus” [which may be either a literal or a figurative designation]. It told nothing of the activities of Jesus and mentioned nothing of Jesus’ status as ‘Son of God,’ or his resurrection, but restricted itself to a collection of 114 mystical sayings attributed to him. It began, “These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke, and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down.”¹

One group of Christians, the so-called “Thomas Christians”, who adopted *The Gospel of Thomas* as representative of their views, believed that “salvation” lay not merely in accepting that Jesus had direct knowledge of God, but by following his directions, in obtaining that direct knowledge of God for themselves. Others, who adopted the “canonical” Gospels, and who later became known as the “orthodox” (*straight-thinking*) Church, believed that such knowledge was beyond the reach of mere mortals; they believed in

the Divinity of Jesus as a unique and special manifestation of God, and held that it was this very faith in his unique Divinity that by itself constituted “salvation.”

In the first century after Jesus’ death, *The Gospel According To Thomas* was widely circulated in its original Greek edition among some groups of early Christians; then it was translated into Sahidic Coptic (ancient Egyptian) in the third or fourth century C.E. A copy of this Coptic version found its way to the Christian monastery of St. Pachomius in Upper Egypt at the foot of Jabal al Tarif mountain near a village called Nag Hammadi. When, in the late fourth century, the order went out from the Christian authorities to burn all non-canonical books that might be suspect in doctrine, some monks from the monastery loaded a number of such books, including *The Gospel of Thomas*, into a large earthen jar and hid them away in a nearby cave for safekeeping.

For some reason, the books stored in that cave remained undiscovered for fifteen hundred years, when in 1945, a Bedouin peasant, searching for fertilizer, uncovered the jar and discovered its contents. Prior to his dawning awareness of the value of his find, a portion of the books were burned as fuel, leaving intact only thirteen of the long-lost leather-bound manuscripts, containing fifty-two tractates of early Gnostic writings, among them *The Gospel of Thomas*. It would be another eleven years before this document was translated and published in English. Due to the bickering of the scholars in charge of the lost Gnostic books, many of them would wait even longer to see the light of day. When, in 1956, *The Gospel According To Thomas* made its appearance upon the world stage once more, it was hailed as one of the most important scholarly finds to appear in centuries, one that would greatly influence the study of the teachings of Jesus for all time.

Many of the mystical sayings contained in *The Gospel Of Thomas* may appear to us to be merely rewordings of the sayings in the canonical Gospels, but scholars agree that this text is at least as old as those more familiar Gospels. Some even assert that it is a precursor or source of the sayings found in the canonical Gospels. The sayings in *Thomas*, however, are declared “secret”, and appear to be addressed exclusively to Jesus’ sincere disciples rather than to an uninitiated public.

Jesus said, “It is to those [who are worthy of my] mysteries that I tell my mysteries.”²

When Jesus was among the orthodox religionists in the Jewish temple, he said to them, “You say that He is your God, yet you have not known Him. But I have known Him.”³ Jesus had known God directly during a time of deep prayer, following his initiation by his “guru,” John the Baptist, probably during his time in the wilderness; and that experience had separated him and effectively isolated him from his brothers, because he alone seemed to possess this rare knowledge of the truth of all existence. Unfortunately, this mystical experience, known as “the mystic marriage”, “the vision of God”, or simply “enlightenment”, is an extremely rare occurrence, occurring most commonly only to devout, intelligent young men with a lifelong inclination to philosophy and fearless in the pursuit of Truth. Drawn on by the sweet caresses of Grace, they come to realize God only during a prolonged solitary meditation entered upon in the search to know Him.

The soul, seeking to draw nearer to God in prayer, enters into a deep state of contemplation. The inner gaze is fixed, the breath is suspended, and suddenly the veil of ignorance dissolves. Suddenly, there is no longer a soul, no longer a God; no longer an “I” or “Thou”. The devotee, in the depth of contemplation of God, experiences an unprecedented clarity of awareness, and his consciousness is utterly transformed. No longer seeing as a soul apart, he “sees” from the vantage point of Eternity. No longer aware of his individual identity or the world about him, he knows himself to be the sole Existence and revels in the bliss and perfection of the One. The devotee is enlightened, and knows his true, eternal, Identity.

After such an experience, even though the devotee knows that His true Self is none other than the eternal One, he may still on occasion retain his relationship to God. In the One, the two, soul and God, play their love- game of devotion. At one moment, the soul speaks of God, its “Father”; at another moment it is identified with God and speaks of “I.” In the words of Jesus to his disciples, we see this same complementarity: At one moment, he speaks of dualistic devotion in the form of prayer (“Our Father, who art in heaven...”); and at another moment he asserts his oneness, his identity, with God (“Lift the stone and I am there...”). But he cautioned his disciples against the appearance of hubris, instructing them to avoid offending others (“If they ask you, ‘Are you It?’ say ‘We are Its children...’”).

At times, identifying with the One, Jesus asserts that he has the power to

grant the experience of Unity (“I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind...”) 4 And at other times, identifying with the human soul, he gives all credit to God, the Father (“Why do you call me good? There is no one good but the ONE: that is God.”) 5 And so, throughout the teachings of Jesus, one finds these two, apparently contradictory, attitudes intermingled: the attitude of the *jnani*, or knower (“I am the Light; I am above all that is manifest...”); and the attitude of the *bhakta*, or devotee (“Father, Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?”). He speaks now as the transcendent Unity and now as the imaged soul; they are the two voices of the illumined man, for he is both—now one, now the other.

Once we begin to look at the teachings of Jesus in the light of his mystical experience of Unity, and the extraordinary powers accompanying that experience, we begin to have a much clearer perspective on all the aspects of the life and teaching of the man. His teachings, like those of the sages of all religious traditions who’ve taught throughout the ages, is that the soul of man is none other than the one Divinity, none other than God; and that this Divine Identity can be experienced and known through the revelation that occurs inwardly, by the grace of God, to those who prepare and purify their minds and hearts to receive it. Jesus had realized that God was masquerading as him, and that it is God who masquerades as every form, revealing Himself within those whom He chooses.

Because the vision of God is so difficult to convey to those who had not experienced it, Jesus spoke often by way of analogy or metaphor in order to make his meaning clear; he spoke of the experience of “seeing” God in terms of entering into a realm beyond this world, a realm where only God is. In his own Aramaic language, he called this realm *malkutha*. In the Greek language it was *basileia*. In English, it is usually rendered as “The kingdom of God”.

The Pharisees [who believed “the kingdom of God” to be a coming event in time] asked him, “When will the kingdom of God come?” He said, “You cannot tell by signs [i.e., by observations] when the kingdom of God will come. There will be no saying, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For, in fact, the kingdom of God is [experienced] within you.”⁶

In *the Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus said,

If those who lead you say to you, ‘See, the kingdom [of God] is in the sky’, then the birds of the sky will have preceded you. If they say to you, ‘It is in the sea’, then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom [of God] is inside of you, and it is outside of you [as well]. When you come to know your Self, then you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living Father. But if you will not know your Self, you live in poverty, and you *are* that poverty. 7

Another of Jesus’ metaphors utilized the terms, “Light” and “darkness” to represent the Divinity and the inherent delusion of man, respectively:

Jesus said, “The world’s images are manifest to man, but the Light in them remains concealed; within the image is the Light of the Father. He becomes manifest as the images, but as the Light, He is concealed.”8

He said to them, “There is a Light within a man of Light, and it lights up the whole world. If it does not shine, he is in darkness.”9

Here, these two terms, “Light” and “darkness” indicate the Divine Identity within and the ignorance concealing it, but they are also indicative of the cosmic aspects of Reality; in other words, they are not only the Divine Consciousness in man and the darkness of unknowing, but they are, at a higher level, the very Godhead and Its Power of manifestation. They are those same two principles we have so often run into, called “Brahman and Maya,” “Purusha and Prakrti,” “Shiva and Shakti”, “Tao and Teh”, or “the Father and the Mother”. It is the Godhead, which provides the Light in us; it is the manifestory Power which, in the process of creating a body, brain, and nervous system, provides us with all the obscurity necessary to keep us (temporarily) in the dark as to our true Identity.

Jesus said, “If they ask you, ‘Where did you come from?’ Say to them, ‘We came from the Light, the place where the Light came into being of Its own accord and established Itself and became manifest through our image.’ If they ask you, ‘Are You It?’ say ‘We are Its children, and we are the elect of the living Father.’ If they ask you, ‘What is the sign of your Father in you?’ say to them, ‘It is movement and repose. [i.e., ‘who, but God, is capable of producing the miracle of animate life?’]”10

In the “mystical experience,” one learns of his identity with The Divine Reality and realizes that all of the substance of this world is contained in that

one Self. Identifying with the transcendent Spirit, which is manifest as the phenomenal universe, Jesus said,

It is I who am the Light which is above all. It is [also] I who am the All. From me did the All come forth, and unto me does all return. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there.¹¹

While Jesus here identifies with the eternal Light; he seems never to have intended to imply that he was uniquely and exclusively identical with It; it should be clear that his intention was always to convey the truth that all men are, in essence, the transcendent Consciousness, manifest in form, and that, if they knew the Truth, they would identify with that eternal Spirit:

Ye *are* the Light of the world. Let your Light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven.¹²

To know the Eternal is to know the one Source of all that is; it is to know that there is no one else in all of existence but that One. When, in contemplation of God, the apparent small self has vanished, the soul is no more; and only this immense Identity, in whom there is no division at all, breathes alone. Jesus attempted to explain to us, with the words, “I and the Father are one,” that “the I,” our own inner awareness of self, is none other than the one Self, the one Existence, the Lord and Father of all. For the God-realized man, there is no longer a separation between the “I” and “the Father”; to distinguish the one from the other is to lapse once more into the universal illusion of duality. For while the mind is elevated and concentrated at the highest level, there is no other “I” besides the one transcendent Reality, the eternal Self. In *the Gospel of John*, Jesus attempts to convey this understanding when he asks his disciples:

...Do you not understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? It is the Father who dwells in me doing His own work. Understand me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.¹³

Frequently he declared to his followers that they too would come to the same realization that he had experienced:

“I tell you this,” he said to them; “there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the kingdom of

God already come in full power.”¹⁴

The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence. And he who lives from the living ONE will not see death.

Have I not said: ‘Whoever finds his Self is superior to the world?’¹⁵

Take heed of the living ONE while you are alive, lest you die and seek to see Him and be unable to do so.¹⁶

That which you have will save you if you bring it forth from yourselves.
That which you do not have within you will destroy you.¹⁷

“That which you have” is, of course, the Light, your Divine Identity. “That which you do not have” refers to the false identity of separate individuality, which is simply a lie. It is wrong understanding of who you are that limits you, and which prevents you from experiencing the Eternal. The teaching, common to all true “mystics” who have realized the Highest, is ‘You *are* the Light of the world! You are That! Identify with the Light, the Truth, for That is who you really are!’ And yet Jesus did not wish that this should remain a mere matter of faith with his disciples; he wished them to realize this truth for themselves. *Gnosis* (Self-knowledge) is superior to *pistis* (faith), for faith is still subject to doubt and error; but direct God-revealed Knowledge is unassailable. A person with direct Knowledge becomes fearless, unperturbed. He is not troubled for the body and is not ruffled by the vagaries of the mind; he remains calm, insightful, knowing with the utmost certainty that he is the deathless Self.

In many instances throughout the canonical Gospels, as well as in *The Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus’ disciples question him on how they too might attain that direct Knowledge, how they too might enter that ‘kingdom of God’; and he gives them instructions on the practice they are to undertake:

Jesus said, ‘Let him who seeks [the eternal Truth] continue seeking until he finds [It]. When he finds [It], he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over all.’¹⁸

Jesus [said], “He who seeks will find, and [he who knocks] will be let in.”¹⁹

His disciples questioned him and said to him, “Do you want us to fast? How shall we pray? Shall we give alms? What diet shall we observe?”²⁰

Jesus said, “If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves; and if you pray, you will be condemned [by others]; and if you give alms, you will do harm to your [own] spirits. When you go into any land and walk about in the districts, if they receive you, eat what they will set before you, and heal the sick among them. For what goes into your mouth will not defile you, but that which issues from your mouth it is that which will defile you.”²¹

Jesus said to them, “When you make the two [“I” and “Thou”] one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female [the transcendent and the immanent] one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female [be] female; ...then you will enter the kingdom...”²²

[Jesus said,] “If you do not fast as regards the world [i.e., if you do not leave aside worldly desires], you will not find the kingdom...”²³ “Become passers-by”²⁴

Jesus said, “The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence. And the one who lives from the living ONE will not see death [i.e., he will know his deathless Self]. Have I not said, ‘Whoever find his Self is superior to the world?’”²⁵

Jesus said, “Many are standing at the door, but it is the solitary who will enter the bridal chamber [of union]”²⁶

Jesus said, “Blessed are the solitary and elect, for you will find the kingdom [of God]. You are from it, and you will [thereby] return to it.”²⁷

Spiritual instructions such as these point the way and indicate the rare and difficult life of one-pointed devotion to God, which leads to enlightenment. Solitude must be procured, and the mind must be freed from the distractions of worldly desire, in order to give one’s heart and mind to the contemplation of God. Yet who could be expected to follow such a life? Only those drawn to it by Grace are inclined to give their lives entirely to interior contemplation. And these are always but few. Of the many others, Jesus asked only that they believe what he told them; that they have faith in his words and live as best they were able to in accordance with the truth. Perhaps they were not among the “elect”; perhaps they would not “see” God in this lifetime, but still they could live fruitfully and joyfully in the love of God, and trust by their actions to win His Grace.

There is an interesting story that appears in both Matthew and Luke which illustrates that the realization of God comes, not by any deed of one's own, but solely by the Grace of God, and that we are all journeying toward that goal: Jesus had just commented upon how difficult it would be for a young man, otherwise spiritually inclined, who was yet attached to his worldly wealth and occupations, to realize God; and his disciples, who were gathered around, were somewhat disturbed by this, and asked, "Then, who *can* attain salvation (i.e., enlightenment)? And Jesus answered, "For man it is impossible; but for God all things are possible." And Peter, understanding that Jesus is denying that any man, by his own efforts, can bring about that experience, but only God, by His Grace, gives this awakening, objected: "But we here have left our belongings to become your followers!" And Jesus, wishing to assure them that any effort toward God-realization will bear its fruits in this life and in lives to come, said to them: "I tell you this; there is no one who has given up home, or wife, brothers, parents or children, for the sake of [attaining] the kingdom of God, who will not be repaid many times over in this time, and in the time to come know eternal Life."²⁸

The knowledge of one's eternal Life is liberation from the darkness of ignorance forever; but Jesus realized, of course, the impossibility of conveying this knowledge to those who were incapable of accepting it, and the price to be paid for attempting to share it. He knew that any person who announced the fact that they had seen and known God would be persecuted and belittled and regarded as a blasphemer and a liar. In *the Gospel of Thomas*, Jesus, who was heir to the mystical tradition of Judaism which recognized *Chokmah* as the creative aspect of *Jehovah*, the transcendent Father God, is reported to have said, "He who knows the Father and the Mother will be called a son-of-a-bitch!"²⁹ It seems he was making a pun on the fact that one who does *not* know his father and mother is usually referred to in this fashion; but, in his case, he had known the Father of the universe, and knew the Power (of Mother Nature) behind the entire creation, and still he was called by this derisive name.

This is the common experience of all the great seers, from Lao Tze to Heraclitus and Socrates, from Plotinus and al-Hallaj to Meister Eckhart and Saint John of the Cross; all were cruelly tortured and persecuted for their transcendent knowledge. Jesus too found the world of men wanting in understanding; he said:

I took my place in the midst of the world, and I went among the people. I found all of them intoxicated [with pride and ignorance]; I found none of them thirsty [for Truth].

And my soul became sorrowful for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have vision. Empty they came into the world, and empty they wish to leave the world. But for the moment, they are intoxicated; when they shake off their wine, then they will repent. 30

This is the difficult plight of all those who have been graced with “the vision of God”. It is the greatest of gifts, it is the greatest of all possible visions; and yet, because the knowledge so received is completely contrary to what all men believe regarding God and the soul, it is a terribly alienating knowledge, which brings upon its possessor the scorn and derision of all mankind. History is replete with examples of others who, having attained this saving knowledge, found the world unwilling to accept it, and ready to defend its ignorance aggressively. This circumstance is little changed today.

NOTES:

1. *The Gospel of Thomas*, 62
2. *The Gospel of John*: 17:25
3. *Ibid.*, 8:54
4. *The Gospel of Thomas*, 17
5. *The Gospel of Luke*, 18:18
6. *Ibid.*, 17:20
7. *The Gospel of Thomas*, 3
8. *Ibid.*, 83
9. *Ibid.*, 24
10. *Ibid.*, 50
11. *Ibid.*, 77
12. *The Gospel of Matthew*, 5:14-16
13. *The Gospel of John*, 13:40
14. *The Gospel of Mark*, 9:1
15. *The Gospel of Thomas*, 111
16. *Ibid.*, 59
17. *Ibid.*, 70
18. *Ibid.*, 2
19. *Ibid.*, 94
20. *Ibid.*, 14
21. *Ibid.*, 14

- 21. *Ibid.*, 27
- 22. *Ibid.*, 22
- 23. *Ibid.*, 27
- 24. *Ibid.*, 42
- 25. *Ibid.*, 111
- 26. *Ibid.*, 75
- 27. *Ibid.*, 49 *The Gospel of Thomas*, 105
- 28. *The Gospel of Luke*, 18:18
- 29. *The Gospel of Thomas*, 105
- 30. *Ibid.*, 28.

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7. THE NATURE OF RELIGION

**A Compilation of Articles from The Mystic's Vision
by Swami Abhayananda
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Religious Organizations

Periodically, in the course of history, an individual comes along who experiences the blessing of God whereby the divine nature of himself and of all reality is revealed to him in a mystical vision. But, very quickly thereafter, following upon the life of that individual, there arises a cadre of unilluminated individuals who, wishing to codify and institutionalize those revelations to suit their own inclinations and interpretations, set about founding a religious organization in accordance with their own understanding and their own purposes. It is the revelations of the authentic mystics whose vision is granted by God who are the carriers and disseminators of God's truth in order to inspire the rest of us and to instill that God-given knowledge into our hearts and minds. But it is the work of their counterparts, the religious zealots, to distort and misinterpret those mystical revelations to form the chains in which to bind and imprison the weak and gullible souls who are willing to follow their mistaken theoretical paths.

Religious organizations founded and promulgated, not by the seers of God, but by the clerks and officers of a dogmatic club of the unenlightened followers who regularly make up such organizations, inevitably corrupt and tarnish the teachings of the true mystics, the seers, who give their lives and hearts to bring enlightenment to the people. After the Upanishadic rishis, came the ritual-laden priests; after the Buddha, came the monks and their monasteries; after Jesus, came the unenlightened preachers and church organizers. After every worthy teacher of truth, came the blind popularizers and their distorted tenets. So, it has always been and probably shall always be. But, my friends, listen only to those who have truly *seen*, to those who are gifted by God to give expression to the true knowledge; and stubbornly ignore those who pretend to represent those genuine seers but whose only true motive is to enslave you as a follower in the service of their pious, and

lucrative, religious organizations.

Realistic Religion

Current popular religious ideologies tend to idolize or deify one or another historical religious figure whose spiritual wisdom is attributed to their unique divine origin and status. But as our understanding evolves, we are learning that each of us is of divine origin and that we too are able to access the fountain of spiritual wisdom within ourselves. Today, we understand that a number of people throughout history have experienced a revelation on the psycho-spiritual level that transcends the world of time and space, and essentially reveals that the identity of the individual consciousness and that of the all-embracing eternal Consciousness are one. This ‘mystical’ experience is still regarded as uncommon, and yet I estimate that it occurs to at least one person in every million, which amounts to around 7000 people in today’s world population of seven billion. Perhaps that is a generous estimate, but certainly a great number of people throughout the world have experienced at least momentary breakthroughs in consciousness that revealed a deeper, spiritual, level of reality underlying this apparently concrete world of material phenomena.

A more realistic approach to our religious understanding, therefore, would be to reject the deification and worship of a few historical religious figures, to see them rather as inspirational exemplars; and to embrace the ever-present possibility that we and all men and women might experience in ourselves an awareness of our own Divine Source in this very lifetime and know firsthand the certainty of our own divinity. The willingness to follow this path will not appeal to everyone, of course; but only to those few who are called to it. For we are not able to seek or bring about the experience of the soul’s ‘union with God’ of our own will; it is clearly the will of God Himself that sets us on the path and brings us to that ineffable experience.

Nor is it possible to know whom He will choose, but He seems to choose the very intelligent, the very compassionate, those selfless souls surrendered to His will; and He inevitably draws them within themselves through introspection and contemplation to His meeting place where those souls are merged in His eternal awareness. But this ‘mystical’ path is not without obstacles; it is a path that demands much courage and sacrifice, for

the mystic will undoubtedly face much opposition from a skeptical world. Nor should he expect any worldly rewards, for the only rewards obtainable in the mystic's life are the seeds of hope, faith and joy that he is able to plant and blossom in the hearts of those whom his words touch. And his greatest happiness and satisfaction comes from his lifelong service in the praise of God to His glory and to the benefit of all His children.

Universal Spiritual Knowledge

As a young man, I became associated with a large spiritual organization, and was able to experience firsthand the exclusivity and group isolation that is a necessary offshoot of all religious or spiritual organizations centered on the adoration of any one spiritual teacher. However marvelously gifted or cloaked in legend such teachers or gurus may be, the exclusive adulation of any one teacher, whether living or dead, is much less worthy of emphasis than the demonstrable fact that all the many spiritual figures throughout history experienced an identical revelation of their divine identity.

Understandably, the 'disciples' of each charismatic spiritual teacher are drawn to and place their faith and devotion in the one they see and know, and to whose qualities they are most attracted. And yet, as I witnessed exemplified in the organization with which I was associated, the individual presence, personality, powers, and teachings of a particular 'guru,' along with his lineage, tend to become the sole center of the organization's attention, and the work of the group becomes not the promulgation of universal spiritual knowledge, but the promotion of membership in that particular group, and the ritualized adoration and adulation of the celebrated teacher.

This pattern appears in every religious organization, and each such organization then stands, if not in opposition to all others, at least independent of and indifferent to all others. Each individual teacher, and his/her individual group of devotees is distinct from and exclusive to all other teachers and organizations. Each group comprises an independent corporate business enterprise whose purpose is to perpetuate itself. How could it be otherwise? Unless—if only we could imagine it—there was at heart a true interest in promoting the dissemination of a common universal spiritual knowledge, regardless of trademarks, copyrights, and the self-interest of individual spiritual teachers or organizations.

It was in the interest of this common pan-historical spiritual knowledge that I wrote my *History of Mysticism*, which emphasizes the common non-sectarian mystical experience occurring throughout history to countless individuals regardless of religious or organizational ties. Its purpose was to draw attention, not to any one particular spiritual teacher, but to the many individuals of various lands and traditions living over an immense period of time who have experienced a common revelation of the divine nature of existence. It is they who make up the grand tapestry of spiritual knowledge that is the legacy and heritage of all, regardless of separate affiliations—a heritage that includes all teachers and all disciples in one universal and undeniable wealth of accumulated understanding, framed in a million ways and languages.

And yet, it is almost impossible for the partisan members of the various spiritual organizations to recognize those mystics and teachers outside the bounds of their own trademarked groups as brothers and sisters in a common vision, for it does not serve their separate self-interests or the long-term survival of their individual organizations to do so. The separate sectarian religious powers prefer not to acknowledge the universality of the mystical experience of ‘Self-realization’, ‘enlightenment,’ or ‘spiritual illumination;’ for they are heavily committed to and invested in the claim to their own long-established and unique religious traditions based on distinct historical persons and events. Thus, though Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism are based on an identical experiential foundation, each of these religious traditions has continued for centuries to hold fast to its own unique historically based perspectives and foundations and its own ritualized religious observations, while ignoring the common experiential root of all—God’s interior revelation in the form of mystical experience.

A universal spirituality, informed by a broad knowledge of all religious traditions and their common mystical origin is not taught in the partisan churches, temples, mosques or synagogues; nor is it taught in our public schools or universities. Indeed, the people are so deeply steeped in the tradition of spiritual ignorance and exclusivity, it appears that there is little possibility that the tide can ever be turned. Certainly, the awakening from this profound slumber will not suddenly occur overnight. It will be a long, slow progression, as every cultural advance has been and must be. And it will be a result of a worldwide effort at education that will require many voices. Will you do your part? Help spread the word! One thing you can

do is to promote and disseminate free ebook copies of *History of Mysticism* in your country and abroad. You can also lend your own voice to a universal spiritual revolution, free of sectarian religious organizations. In this way, you can help to defeat the scourge of religious bigotry in this world. Thank you.

Freedom of Religion In The USA

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States specifies that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ...” It is this document which guarantees freedom of religion to every citizen of this country. But there was a time in some countries of the world that this freedom was denied to its citizens. In the 7th century of the Current Era, the prophet Muhammed wrote in his Quran: “Kill those who join other deities to Allah, wherever you shall find them. But if they shall convert, ... then let them go their way.”¹ 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.”²

It is this fear-inspiring scriptural doctrine that provided the means whereby Islam so rapidly expanded throughout the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent in the 7th to 13th centuries; and it is this same policy that is the foundation of the current *jihad* movement on the part of those radical members of Islam currently aligned against the entire rest of the world. This doctrine of ‘conversion or death’ must have seemed to Muhammed a reasonable prohibition of the ungovernable religious chaos prevalent in seventh century Arabia, but today it is regarded as still valid only by a few radical Islamic fundamentalists. For most educated Muslims, and in fact the great majority of Muslims, it is considered to be a remnant of an alien past and no longer a relevant portion of Islamic scripture.

Also, just as everyone easily understands that “*jal*”, “*pani*”, “*agua*” and “water” are merely different names for a substance that relieves thirst, and which remains the same substance regardless of the difference in the names used, they also easily understand that the universal Creator and Conscious Ground of existence and also is one, despite the many different names men use to refer to Him. Therefore, it is recognized that all religions already belong to Allah. He may be called by any number of names: Allah, Hari,

Yahveh, God, or Shiva—but all these names refer to the same Creator and Lord recognized as the universal Spirit dwelling within everyone. How, one wonders, would it even be possible for there to be more than one all-pervading and governing Spirit?

There are, indeed, 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 contain apparent differences. Let them! 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. If Allah wishes to reform anyone's faith, He is well able to do so without your assistance or anyone else's assistance. We are innately free to choose our own scriptures, our own ideas, and our own ways of worshiping; and so, 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 and regional perspective and by the light of their own intellect.

In the United States, Freedom of Religion is mandated by law, and here it is a guaranteed right that is taken for granted by many. Yet we should all be reminded that this written mandate is derived from a precious unwritten law that takes precedence over any and all sectarian religious laws: it is the divine law of human freedom—and it is universal and absolute. Freedom of religion, freedom of thought in general, is a basic right on the part of all peoples and is recognized as such by every world faith. It is this God-given freedom which guarantees the peaceful coexistence of people of differing backgrounds and beliefs and assures their freedom from coercion. In today's world, there is no place for an enforced religion, and those sectarian partisans insisting that the rest of us adopt *their* scriptural creed and its laws must be loudly, explicitly, and universally refuted and condemned throughout all the world.

Let the intelligent people of the world rise up with one voice and declare their unity in opposition to this fanatical policy! Let the various religious bodies and all the world's governments fearlessly declare the priority of universal religious freedom and insist on its adoption throughout the world! Gather up your courage, all you administrators and rulers, all you thinkers and writers, all you godly and wise people of the earth! Speak out the truth

that *all* religious scriptures—even those claimed to be divinely inspired—were written by fallible human beings. Divinely inspired as these men may have been, all ‘scriptures’ are merely products of the minds of men rooted in time and circumstance and bear no divine universal mandate for all. 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.

Those who are on a spiritual quest must realize that this quest is *not* the pursuit of a worldly victory for a particular sectarian ideology; it is not a pursuit that is advanced by physical conquest at all. The spiritual quest is an *inner* pursuit of the direct revelation of God as one’s own divine Self. And if we are to directly experience God, or Allah, within ourselves, we must be able to explore all ideas without limits or exclusions; we must be able to court the Divine in our own hearts by every means and by whatever name we choose. When we do come to know Him, we will realize that He can never be limited to any single name, concept, or form.

The inner revelation of the all-pervading Spirit is the same for all and reveals a common truth; and yet that revelation too often becomes colored by the interpretation put forward by the particular religious tradition of the society into which one is born, or to which one is karmically attracted. All religious traditions are born of someone’s spiritual experience, and while each tradition contains and preserves some kernel of the truth of that universal experience, the different cultural and historical contexts surrounding each tradition oftentimes serve only to limit our spiritual perspective and understanding. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and all the rest, are mere ideational precepts, mere politics; and they divide us and disconnect us from the true conscious awareness of our own universally divine reality. Indeed, we as a people have succeeded over the centuries only in obfuscating and concealing the simple truth of our universally divine existence by the many dissevered and dissonant perspectives that we mistakenly call by the name of religion.

Isn’t it amazing how the majority of the world’s populace continues to hold fast to its childish sectarian mythologies while often remaining completely

unaware of the very existence of true spiritual realization! It is as though the general tradition-bound public and those pursuing true spiritual realization exist in distinctly separate dimensions with no means of communicating with each other. It is not only diverse languages and regional cultures that divide us, nor merely the multiplication of disparate voices throughout history that has caused a proliferation of allegiances of faith; we seem to be lost in our own inherently impenetrable and directionless fog, our own innate blindness of ignorance. And we must wonder: 'Will the world's scattered flocks ever return to a single common pasture? Or will each separate collection of partisans remain forever isolated from one another, perpetuating dissent and confusion and conflict in full view of the reality of an undivided Unity?'

Let us not bicker about the differences in religious traditions in a misguided attempt to find which of them is true. None of the various religious traditions contains truth in themselves; and yet each of them possesses the ability to lead one to the *experience* of truth. It is the inner *experience* of the Divine Self that is the prize to be sought; religious institutions merely provide pathways to that inner experience wherein lies all certainty and satisfaction. The purpose of all religious traditions is to focus the mind on God, who lives within the heart of every soul. When that Divine Spirit draws the soul to the realization of its oneness with Himself, then and only then is the truth found.

If your religious tradition is truly worthy of your allegiance, it will lead you from the exterior to the interior, from the outer environment to the inner environment, and from thought construction to the still clarity of vision. Become quiet, and search for your Divine Lord, not within the pages of a book, but within yourself. If He reveals Himself, you will know Him as your own Self as well. Then your religious path will have fulfilled its purpose, and you will have no further need of a religious path. For here is the secret truth:

Though you play the game
Of searching for God's presence,
And though at times it seems that you are
Lost in this persuasive dream of time,
The truth is that you are the One
Who is imagining this broad fantasy.
All this is You: You are the seeker,

The search, and that which is sought.
 You are truly the divine Self in all.
 You have only temporarily forgotten
 That you reign supreme as the eternal One,
 Forever unbounded by time or place.

NOTES:

1. Quran, IX:5, 6.
2. Quran, VIII:39, 40. Also II:191-193.

For Those Who've Been A Long Time Sleeping

It turns out that the earth is not flat, but round, my dear.
 And it circles the Sun—not the other way around.
 It is also clear that it's not necessary to be born of a virgin,
 Or miraculously conceived
 In order to know that you're born of God's light,
 That you live within Him and consist of His being,
 That all this universe is made of Him.

God has revealed Himself in me as well.
 Do you think that I'm special? I'm sorry; you're wrong.
 Yet even a poor fool like me is able to realize God by His grace,
 And know oneness with Him.
 But how could that be—unless He lived within me,
 And lived within every other being as well?

Do you really want to hold onto the old stories,
 Even though it's clear that they're untrue?
 Know that each of us is made of His light.
 Know that you too can experience your divinity within,
 And know the truth of your oneness with Him.

Cast off superstition, the habits of the past!
 So many have known Him; this can't be denied.
 Wake up to the truth: we are each one of us
 Sons of the almighty God.
 Pray to Him who lives in your heart
 That He will reveal your oneness with Him,

And enable you to reflect His light to the world.

Self-Reliance

For spiritual aspirants, there is a great deal to be said for living in a focused spiritual environment such as a monastery, ashram, or temple; but oftentimes a life so lived is at the cost of one's intellectual and moral freedom, and this is detrimental. To limit oneself to a specific tradition, with determined hierarchies and specific unquestionable narratives, is always detrimental to the freedom of thought. And if that tradition demands an unswerving devotion, not to the divinity within you, but to the words and divine authority of some book or historical person, so much more is the limitation and the detriment.

Of course, living unprotected in the world is dangerous also. There are many temptations to avoid, and the peace required for meditation and contemplation is hard to find. Also, the absence of the companionship of like-minded souls makes for a lonely existence. But it seems to me, that despite the loneliness and the hardship, an earnest soul, with the help of God, has the strength, courage and inner resources to forge a spiritual life in the world. She finds companionship in the presence of God and knows the added advantage of living free of confining restrictions to her intellectual and moral freedom.

I am a great believer in freedom, and therefore recommend to all spiritual aspirants the path of independence, non-affiliation, and self-rule, which allows freedom to evolve. Even if conforming to the herd appeals to your desire for belonging to a community or for the possible attainment of some measure of authority; resist it; be your own master—even if it means you must deal with some loneliness and struggle. The greatest attainment is freedom—the freedom to give your heart entirely to God within you, and to think and act in accord with the dictates of your own divine Self. At the end of a long and productive life, nothing will savor so sweetly to you as the satisfaction of being and having been wholly true to your Self.

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8. THE LIFE OF A MYSTIC

**A Compilation of Articles from *The Mystic's Vision*
by Swami Abhayananda.**

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A Few Remarkable Individuals

There are a number of levels of intelligence and understanding among those who profess to some spiritual understanding. At the bottom of that list are those who accept unquestionably the religious tradition into which they are born, and which comprises their early religious environment. That religious environment may be Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, or one of the other less practiced religious traditions, depending on one's family history and geographical location. Such a person is generally accepting of the history, dogmatic literature, and rituals that accompany that particular tradition, and they are relatively unfamiliar with the history, tenets, and practices of religious traditions other than their own. Accordingly, they tend to be suspicious of those other religious traditions and their followers and are negatively biased against them.

At a level higher, we find a stratum of students and scholars from each of these traditions, who undertake to comprehend, formulate, analyze and explain the tenets of the religious tradition to which they belong and to which they profess allegiance. These people write books, give lectures, and serve as functionaries and proselytizers of their own particular religious or philosophical tradition. In this way, the accumulated wisdom of the ages is passed from one generation to another.

Periodically, however, into this mix are born a few remarkable individuals who are gifted by God with a divine vision, a vision that reveals God's ever-presence in the soul and in all that exists. These exceptional individuals transcend the partisanship of religious traditions, and are able to see, by the power of God, the unity of God's creation and the all-inclusiveness of God's governorship and love. These are the mystics, the seers, the knowers of the divine Self in all. They bear the Light of God and share His gift of sacred

knowledge with all His children. By God's grace, they know the secret that makes men free.

Blessedness

It is evident to everyone that God is adept at concealing Himself; but few people know that He also reveals Himself—and yet He does! He reveals Himself in those who love Him and whose hearts are pure. Since He is in all creatures, He is easily able to reveal His inner presence in those whom He finds worthy. Those to whom He reveals Himself awaken to the knowledge that they and all things are made of God, that He alone constitutes the being of all things in the universe.

Those to whom this revelation comes are known as mystics. Prior to that awakening, they had no idea that they were God's manifestations. They thought they were merely individual beings alone in the Universe. They didn't understand that there is but one omnipotent Power who fills all creatures and all things; that He alone exists in every form. If He has not yet revealed Himself in you, pray to Him for His merciful Grace. Let Him know your loneliness without Him. Without the knowledge of His eternal presence, you are lost, even if you know it not.

To know Him as your essence, to know Him as your very identity and breath, will so fill your heart with joy and wisdom that you will think of Him every moment and see Him in every thing and every event on earth. You will sing His praise in your heart and delight in the divine beauty all around you in His world. This blessing is the revelation of the true Kingdom of God in which the blessed live forevermore. May He grant this blessing to you.

The Enlightened Soul

One who has been granted the "vision" of the absolute Reality, who has realized the absolute Truth, knows without the least doubt that everything that exists is nothing but God (the Self). He has no more need of philosophical theories about the nature of reality; he has seen that it is God (the Self) who exists as the very consciousness that lives and experiences as 'I,' and it is God (the Self) who exists as every perceivable form. In other words, He is, in every case, the subject; and He is, in every case, the

object. naturally, those people who have not been graced with the realization of this truth identify solely with the individual perspective, which they possess as perceiver, and regard all that they perceive as something other than themselves. But, say the mystics, it is the one eternal Consciousness who is manifesting as the subject, and it is that same Consciousness who is manifesting as the phenomena that we perceive as the objective world.

Everything is God (our eternal Self)—both the subject and the object. It is He who is the witness of the universal play, and it is He who provides that universal drama from His own creative imagination. He projects Himself as Energy-in-form, and then lives within His creation as the many individual conscious subjects who experience that world of forms.

The subject-object relationship is most evident to us in our perception of objects in the external world, but it is just as operative, though in a subtler way, in our perception of internal phenomena—such as thoughts, images, reveries, etc. Ordinarily, we do not think of such phenomena as “objective” occurrences because they are so ephemeral and insubstantial. Also, because they occur *within* our minds, we tend to view them as part of the “subjective” reality. Strictly speaking, however, the subjective “I,” the witness-Self, is pure, unqualified Consciousness; clear, unblemished Awareness. Thoughts, images, dreams, etc., as they arise, are projected from that pure Consciousness and appear upon that conscious Screen as “objective” phenomena. Thus, on this subtle, mind-level, the witness-Self, which is the true subject, experiences mental phenomena as the “objects” of perception.

The pure Consciousness, or witness-Self, is the only subject in all creatures; and all that is perceived, both on the subtle and on the gross sensual level, is the object. This apparent duality of subject and object constitutes all experience. Without this apparent separation between the two, no experience would be possible. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that this duality is *apparent* only; and that God and the world, the experiencing Self and the experienced phenomena, is a Unity still. This is the ever-recurring theme of the mystical philosophy of *Advaita*, or “Nondualism.” For, while it admits to an apparent duality existing between the immortal Self and the world-appearance, as between the individual awareness and the activity of the mind, it does not acknowledge an actual duality. There is nothing that is not God: this is the watchword of Nondualism. From this, it clearly follows that *tat tuam asi*, “That thou art.”

However, even though we may know with certainty that this is true, we may continue to identify with our own unique perspective from the standpoint of our own embodied soul. To explain what the soul is, we may compare it with a wave on the ocean, which identifies with its wave form and not with the entire ocean. From its isolated perspective, it is, of course, a unique wave, separate from all other waves; but when that wave comes to know its own nature, it realizes that it is only a manifestation of the ocean, which has never really divided its identity into separate waves. We too, like waves on the ocean, continue to identify with our separate make-believe identity as the “soul.” When true realization comes, we will know that we were never anything but God, and that no *permanent* “soul” ever existed. Nonetheless, while it has the semblance of existence, the soul cries out in longing for God, and seeks Him as though, instead of being the subject, He were an object to be attained.

The truth is that, whether we seek Him as the ever-present subject, “I,” or as the ever-present object, “Thou,” we must seek Him beyond the puny ego of individual personality, in the silence of a keen and clear intelligence. For it is only in the upper reaches of concentrated intelligence, in the rarefied atmosphere reached only by a soaring mind, uplifted on the draft of Grace, that He is found. In truth, He is *both* subject and object; it is He who plays *both* of these parts. It is He who calls out to Himself, and it is He who answers, “You are within Me, and have never been apart from Me!”

The man of knowledge, identifying with the One, speaks of being aware of the Self; and the man of devotion, identifying with the soul, speaks of remembering God. But the pure sky of Consciousness whom the man of knowledge calls the Self is the same eternal Consciousness whom the devotee calls God. One identifies himself with that pure Consciousness and calls it “I”; the other regards It as other than himself and calls It “Thou.” But both are setting their eyes toward the same eternal One.

And though the man of knowledge may speak of being aware of the Self, there is no awareness of the Self, for the Self *is* awareness. And the devotee who speaks of remembering God is likewise defeated, for God is quite beyond the comprehension of the intellect or the conception of the imagination or the vision of memory. And to love God is also paradoxical, as God is that very love we feel. These are instances of the difficulty of

applying a language that requires a subject, verb, and object to a Unity in which these are all the same. It is possible, however, to lift the individual soul to the awareness of God in the unitive vision through an intense aspiration, which utilizes “reminders” as rungs on the ladder leading to mental clarity and higher consciousness.

Such reminders may take the form of prayer, the reading of devotional works, the singing of hymns of love, or the mental repetition of His name, which brings to the mind of the individual the awareness of God. These lift the consciousness from its limited individual perspective to a Divine perspective from which all is seen as it truly is, as God.

The Ascent of The Soul

The levels of human reality, from the gross physical body inward, have been variously named and described; and in all true metaphysical systems the primary teaching has been that one is able to reach to and experience the divine Self by way of the inner journey only, seeking it by way of self-examination, purification, contemplation and selfless devotion. Self-examination reveals to us that we are more than the physical body with which the immature consciousness identifies. We are more than the effusive mind with which some others identify; more than the intellect which reasons and oversees the mind; more than the individual soul which evolves from lifetime to lifetime. The purification of the soul occurs through the grace of God, causing the soul to desire only God; and the absence of all other desires *is* the soul’s purification, leading it naturally to contemplation, selfless devotion, and eventually to the very Bliss of God.

From the perspective of those who have experienced it, the ascent of consciousness occurs quite unexpectedly in a moment of concentrated awareness focused inwardly. The individual soul ascends in Consciousness, drawn on by its inherent thirst to know its Source. When it comes inwardly to a perfect, concentrated stillness, it emerges from its time-bound isolation as an individual creature and awakes to its participation in the consciousness of an all-inclusive Creative Power. And yet above that Creative Power, at a yet subtler stage of consciousness, it knows itself as the eternal One from which the Creative Power takes its origin. It knows this, not as an object is known to a knowing subject, but as the subject’s own primary and eternal Identity.

The soul, seeking God, scans the inner darkness, as though to discover another, as though awaiting something external to itself to make its presence known. But as the concentration focuses within, the mind becomes stilled, and suddenly the seeking soul awakes. No external has made its appearance; it is the soul itself, no longer soul, which knows itself to be the All, the One. Like a wave seeking the ocean, the seeker discovers that it is, itself, what it sought. Through contemplation and selfless devotion to that highest Self, we discover that we are the Life in all life, the integrated Whole of which all manifest creatures and things are a part. And, at last we awake to the supremely ultimate Identity, knowing ourselves as the one Light of existence, the Source of all manifestation, the one God who is the true Self of all, and from Whom all else follows.

Those who have experienced the union of their souls with the Divine Mind experience themselves no longer as individual separate identities, but rather as ideational wave-forms on the one integral ocean of Cosmic Energy. They no longer identify with the composite of body, mind, and soul, but know themselves as having their real identity in the entire undivided ocean of Creative Energy in and on which these temporary forms manifest. The conscious awareness focused on this clear vision of the subtler level of its own reality then moves onward, as one moving through a fog comes to a clearing where the fog is no more, to the ultimate and final level of subtlety, the Divine Source, the Unmanifest. Then, it knows the pure unqualified Consciousness that is the Father, the One, prior even to the Creative Power which acts as Creator; and it knows, "I and the Father are one."

From that vantage point in Eternity, one sees one's own Creative Power manifesting all that has manifest existence in a cycle of creation and dissolution. There is a bursting forth, just as the spreading rays of the Sun burst out from their source, and then a returning to that source in a cyclic repetition, much as the cycle of the breath's inhalation and exhalation. One witnesses this from that transcendent vantage point, aware of one's Self as the Eternal One, totally unaffected and unaltered by the expansion and contraction of the out-flowing Creative Force—as a man might watch the play of the breath or the imagination without being at all affected by its rise and fall. That One is the final irreducible Reality, and It is experienced as identity. Nothing could be more certain than the fact that It is who one really is, always was, and always will be.

NOTE:

1. “From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all.” (from Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Over-Soul”, *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Tudor Publishing Co., p. 174).

The Unchanging Testament

There is a summit of knowledge which has been reached by a few lone souls such as the Buddha, Jesus, Shankara, Ramakrishna, and others. This knowledge came to them by the grace of God, revealing the truth that all existence is forever one. This being so, there are no separate beings such as the Buddha, Jesus, Shankara, etc., but only the One, knowing Himself in all these various forms. Indeed, it is just this knowledge which constitutes the message of every seer of Truth: ‘The One exists as you and me. Realize this truth; know that you are that One and be free of the pain of enmity.’

There is but one religion, not many. It is only the childish and the deluded who think otherwise. There is but one substance which is variously named as ‘water’, ‘pani’, ‘jal’, ‘agua’; but no matter what it is called, that same substance quenches the thirst of all. There is but one Life, though it takes various forms, such as tiger, serpent, or man; all breathe one air, all see one light. Understand too that one all-pervading Intelligence fills all minds, gives conscious Light to all that lives. He alone is, and He lives and breathes as us.

In knowing Him, all purposes of life are fulfilled. In shedding darkness from our minds, by rising high above the clouds of ‘me’ and ‘mine’, we come closer to this Light, and merge our souls in Him. This is the tale which all have told who’ve seen the Truth. It is neither old nor new, but it is an unchanging testament that neither time nor place on earth affects. Jesus, Buddha, Ramakrishna—all have reached that same summit, and shown to us the way. Now, we must climb alone and find our way into the Truth which they enjoy and make it finally our own.

The Mystic's Journey

The person who realizes God in himself, who knows that he and the Father are one, is not a 'son' of God; he is not of miraculous birth—those are simply tales for children. Still, the person who realizes God is a distinctly peculiar individual; as a child, he is not drawn to desire the accumulation of wealth or fame. He has no interest in a career in business or politics. He has, from his earliest years, a pervasive interest in broad areas of learning that more conventional people would regard as impractical—such as poetry, literature and the history of philosophical thought. Unlike his peers and other normal young people, he has an overriding interest in the writings and sayings of the philosophers and innovative thinkers of the past. To others, he seems directionless, but he is driven by an inner fire that has its own purpose and its own imperceptible objective.

By the time he reaches his late twenties, the purpose of his searching, the direction of his objective, at last becomes clear: through his learning, he discovers the teachings of the mystics of the various religious traditions, and through them becomes enamored with God. It is then that he procures solitude and begins to spend his quiet wakeful nights in prayer and in the searching of his own heart. As his longing for God grows in intensity, he prays that he may become united with Him so that he may share the truth and glory of God with all his brothers and sisters; and in that moment the Divine within him reveals Himself in a culminating burst of inner glory, allowing him to see the world through the eyes of God, and know that all is He.

For some time, he experiences incredible heights of ecstasy. Then, in the days left to him, our mystic endeavors to fulfill his commitment to share with all God's children the knowledge God has bestowed upon him, and God enables his sharing by inspiring him with His presence. This story, though rare, occurs again and again through the ages. It is the story of the mystics who've gone before and of those who are to come. This self-concealing and self-revealing of the merciful Lord is simply a regular feature of His unfolding cosmic play. He is the Giver, and He is the receiver. It is He who sees, and He who is seen. He is the sole Reality living in this universe and in the hearts of all beings.

How The Enlightened Man Lives

How does the enlightened man live? He lives free of concern for himself, for he lives only to serve. As he views all the world as his own self, he acts always for the good of all. He is relaxed, asking for nothing; he relies on the universal order, trusting entirely in the perfect benevolence of the One. He is friendly to everyone, knowing all are struggling in the face of death. He gives, unconcerned with receiving, for the One he serves fills his heart with joy, and that is all the reward he needs.

He is wise, but he appears to be a fool. He appears to be poor, but he is the wealthiest of men. He lives and acts in the world like everyone else, finding enjoyment in pleasures, like everyone else. But, to him, it is all a game, quickly put aside. He does not follow the broad pathways of men, but he keeps to his own quiet ways. His is a life of peace, hidden and calm, though he accomplishes a thousand marvelous deeds. He seeks no glory or honor, and so is ignored by the world. He is a roaring fire, shedding light for generations, warming hearts both living and unborn; yet, in his own heart, he never strays from the sweet tranquility of his eternal home.

The Retention of Divine Awareness

I am occasionally asked if I continue to have ‘mystical’ experiences similar to my initial experience in the mountain forests of Santa Cruz which I documented in my book, *The Supreme Self*. The answer is ‘No, I do not continue to have similar experiences.’ But the truth is that there is a kind of ‘accustomization’ that has followed that experience, and which increases or diminishes in clarity at various times. It’s like any other kind of knowledge—say the knowledge of one’s proximate environment; there are times when it becomes more pronounced in your awareness, and times when it is less so. I find it impossible to retain the same level of awareness of God’s presence in a continuous manner, without interruption; but I nonetheless make every effort to retain that awareness as best I can at all times.

My initial mystical experience was truly transformational; I was never the same again. I had been given an enlightening knowledge that affected my vision of myself and the world forever thereafter and instilled in me a lasting certainty that has never been more than the flutter of an eyelid away. For the most part, I hold onto the knowledge that He alone is—in my

surroundings, in myself, and in the guidance and movement of all that exists. The intensely clarified awareness of His intimate presence, however, comes only rarely, though I long for it constantly. It's quite possible that age has some deleterious effect on the refinement and clarity of my intellect and my spiritual perception; I can't say for certain. But so long as He grants me the capability of remembering Him, I am filled repeatedly with an upsurging of loving gratitude and freedom from care that is invincible. My knowledge remains as strong and certain as ever, and I live consciously, confidently, in His merciful grace.

The Life of a Self-Realized Man

O the life of a Self-realized man! It's much like yours,
my friend; I feel the prick of ennui and suffer the
ignorance of men.

I know the annoying insistence of passions and the trickery of
the brain; I endure the deterioration of the body and its
attendant pains,

And the requirements of providing bread for my table and a shelter
for my head.

Like you, I muddle through from day to day, and find a welcome
refuge in my bed.

I watch with hope this troubled world and see no
end to pain. But O my friends, I've shared eternity
with God;

I've seen the infinite, eternal Self of all beyond this bubble of a
world, And deep down know a peace and joy unsullied by this
maudlin scene.

I merged into the heart of God and saw the universe explode
in form, And then implode again, a breath-like cycle,
endlessly repeated.

I balanced, poised in mindless vision, in His still domain, at one
with Him; And saw no separation or division, nor I or Thou, nor
now or then.

The pairs of opposites were no more, but
canceled out In breathless heights of all-
inclusive oneness.

And I knew the everlasting Self of God as me, the only I who

ever was. Though bound, like you, to worldly life, I'm free;
my heart is calm and certain.

I know the "I" beyond my role here in this paltry
play; And when I exit from the stage, I'll still be
I, backstage,

The One who plays all roles, who lives to ply His art once
more With plots, and lines, and costumes ever new.

And, even now, while taking in the very air you
breathe, And walking on the very shores of time
you walk,

I breathe, as well, the light eternal and walk the
hallowed skies. My heart imbibes the sweetest joy
time's shadows can't obscure; And, like a man with
either foot astride a threshold,

I'm here, though I am there.

I walk the world on tiptoe, with my head above the
clouds; My eyes are fixed undeviatingly on God's
perpetual smile.

And, though you see me here with you, performing on the
boards, I'm there, in God's unbounded bliss, my own
eternal Self.

* * *

9. SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

A Compilation of Articles from *The Mystic's Vision*

by Swami Abhayananda

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Personal Spiritual Experience

Mysticism is a metaphysical perspective based on personal spiritual experience. That perspective may be informed by the knowledge of the experience of previous mystics but is not dependent upon that knowledge. It is dependent upon the direct personal revelation of God in the soul. Strangely enough, however, personal spiritual experience is quite alien to the normal modern Western religious sensibility. Once, several years ago, when I asked a group of students associated with a Protestant Christian organization to speak individually of their personal spiritual experience, each of them, without exception, offered a list of the various churches to which they had belonged over the years. They had no concept of what a 'spiritual experience' was.¹

It's not necessary to accept the doctrines of any established religion in order to have a personal spiritual experience. It is only necessary to be openly receptive to God in your soul. He is the Ground of everyone's existence, and the sole Savior of all His children. Pray to Him in your heart of hearts, and He will hear. In every age, however, it seems that there are very few who seek Him wholeheartedly. This was the case at the time that Jesus lived as well. Young men studied the Torah and memorized the verses which they were instructed to memorize. But few actually sought to have personal knowledge of God in their own lives. Jesus was one of those very exceptional persons who opened his heart to God with a pure love, and God graced him by revealing His eternal presence. The life of Jesus was thereafter filled with much personal spiritual experience: the divine light enveloped him and revealed to him the knowledge of his innate divinity.

In ancient India, it was the enlightening personal spiritual experience of the *rishis* that inspired them to write the Upanishads. The Buddha too became enlightened through personal spiritual experience. He meditated deeply

upon the mystery of his own nature until at last the truth of his divine nature was revealed to him. Muhammad also knew personal spiritual experience; it was through that experience that he became filled with love for God and was inspired by Him to write his inner realizations for the benefit of his people.

Do you think you are less than these men? God lives in you as well, and only awaits the turning of your gaze to Him in order to fill you with the wonder of His glorious presence in your life. Exceptional people are not content with mere beliefs based on hearsay but seek to know God directly through their own personal spiritual experience. Know that you are His own. Give your heart and your life to Him, and He will surely illumine you with His merciful Grace, invigorating your life with the blissful knowledge of your divine and all-pervading Self. This is the blessing He bestowed on me, and this is the blessing I wish for you.

NOTE:

1. Personal spiritual experience was once a cornerstone of the Christian Church, but after the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, there was a trend away from a theocentric focus in the Church to a more anthropocentric focus, and this resulted in fewer instances of personal spiritual experience within the Christian tradition. This, in turn, resulted in a sort of cultural agnosticism within a more secular society in the West. Today, therefore, *Mysticism* is much more associated with the Eastern religious traditions that have retained much of their theocentric focus.

How Do We Know?

One of the recurring problems of philosophy involves the question ‘What is knowledge—and how do we define it?’ The various answers to this question constitute the branch of philosophy known as *epistemology*, a subject that has been much discussed and argued throughout history. It was a question frequently discussed among the early Greek philosophers, such as Plato and his teacher, Socrates, who held that the highest and most worthy kind of knowledge was the knowledge of the Divine Mind, the *Nous*. However, over time, the idea that such a knowledge was at all possible of attainment fell out of favor. Also, the subjective and undemonstrable nature of such knowledge made it suspiciously untrustworthy to some minds, and it became popular to regard only that knowledge whose evidence was sensory

as valid, because it was experientially apparent and demonstrable. Sensory knowledge, i.e., the confirmation of sight, hearing, smell, touch, etc., came to be regarded, therefore, as the only acceptable criteria of “knowledge”. Knowledge obtained in this way was considered to be *empirical* knowledge. Webster’s New World Dictionary defines “empiricism” as “(1) relying or based solely on experiment and observation [the empirical method] rather than theory; (2) relying or based on practical experience without reference to scientific principles.” In these sentences the *sensory* nature of “experiment,” “observation”, and “practical experience” is implied and understood.

But such a limited definition of “knowledge” leaves little room for a subjective non-sensory knowing, such as the self-evident knowledge *I am*, i.e., the knowledge of being conscious. It also does not account for the knowledge of the thoughts and images existing only in the psyche; nor does it account for what we call “spiritual” knowledge. After all, we use the words “I know” to represent an inner certainty based on the various kinds of evidence to which we have access.; and this may pertain not only to sensory phenomena perceived as objects, but also to mentally perceived phenomena as well as spiritually perceived noumena. “Knowing”, we must admit, is ultimately a subjective and intangible thing, difficult to put one’s finger on. All forms of knowledge—even that we refer to as “empirical knowledge”—exist only as ephemeral conditions within the subjective field of awareness of each individual. And all these kinds of knowledge—empirical, mental, and spiritual—are informed by the kinds of evidence appropriate to each.

Evidence, in the scientific, empirical sense, consists of sense data. This refers, usually, to that data which reaches us through the faculty of vision via the *physical eye*. Even when there is mathematical proof of a scientific theory, empirical proof demands the confirmation of visual measurement, whether performed by the physical eye or by technological instrumentation. But there are other kinds of *knowledge*, and other faculties of vision which provide the evidence for those other kinds of knowledge. There is not only the physical vision, but also psychic vision and spiritual vision, corresponding to the physical (phenomenal) field of experience, the mental (psychological) field of experience, and the spiritual (noumenal) field of experience; and the instruments of these various kinds of vision are the physical eye, the psychic eye, and the eye of spirit.

The contemporary author and mystic, Ken Wilber, has written extensively about these different faculties and instruments of vision in his book, *The Eye*

of *Spirit* ¹, where he points out that without acknowledging these different ways of seeing and *knowing*, we are limited to a very incomplete and woefully deficient theory of knowledge; with them, we are able to account for the entire spectrum of knowable experience—physical, mental, *and* spiritual.

Now, while the criterion of *empirical* proof is objective evidence limited to sensory experience, the criterion for the ‘proof’ of dreams, imaginations, and other subjective mental phenomena is, not physical vision, but *psychic vision*. This ‘vision’ does not occur through a faculty of sense, but through a faculty of the mind, or psyche, inherent in all, and is subjectively accessible by everyone: this faculty is frequently referred to as ‘the mind’s eye’, a term we use to represent that psychic instrument of vision whereby we “see” the images which we willfully or unwillingly project upon our inner ‘screen’ as “imaginations”. It is by this inner projection that we are able, in an instant, to create whatever images we desire to enjoy within our own private screenings. In dreams, also, we see subconsciously produced images that our dreaming selves believe to be real while they are being presented to us. Some also claim to experience images in the waking state that are clairvoyant or prescient, or projected from other human sources, living or dead. All these kinds of visual experience are ‘seen’ in the mind’s eye. (*Conceptual thought* seems to be audial, however, rather than visual; bringing up the likelihood of the existence of a physical, mental, and spiritual “ear” as well.)

Spiritual vision is not obtained by means of the physical eyes, or any of the other senses, nor through the imaginative or psychic faculty referred to as “the mind’s eye”; but rather through a yet subtler faculty arising only in the higher reaches of contemplative concentration, which is usually referred to as “the spiritual eye” or “the eye of contemplation”. The spiritual eye “sees”, but without the physical sense of eyesight or the deliberate projection of mindsight. The individual’s interior awareness is lifted beyond his/her mental field of awareness, as well as beyond the awareness of worldly perceptions, as that awareness is transformed into a timeless awareness of identity with the limitless and eternal Consciousness from which the universe emanates. In a uniting of the separative individual consciousness with the absolute and eternal Consciousness, one’s awareness transcends, not only the senses and the imaginative faculty, but the sense of self, the egocentric identity, as well, relieving the individual of the sense of a separate identity, as he becomes aware of the all-inclusive One. The individual knows this eternal Consciousness as his own, since there is no

longer a separate individual identity by which he can perceive this Consciousness as other.

It is this unitive mystical experience that we must consider the only valid knowledge, proof and confirmation of the existence of God or Spirit. No other kind of vision is appropriate to this kind of knowledge. It has long been accepted as axiomatic that reason, in the form of philosophy or metaphysics, is powerless to provide a credible proof (empirical knowledge) of the existence of God, since it is limited to mental conceptions only; but God has been “seen” repeatedly in the unitive vision by the eye of Spirit. It should therefore be widely understood and accepted that the only self-evident knowledge and indubitable proof of God, the eternal Self, is the direct unitive vision. For those who fail of that, there is faith, a trust in the validity of the experience of others.

The unitive ‘vision’ bears with it a unique kind of clarity, possessing an unmistakable and indelible stamp of truth that does not accompany the mere physical or psychic kinds of vision. If it fails of the established standard for “knowing”, then it must itself replace that standard, for it is the very essence of *knowing*. However, insofar as I know, it is a knowledge that is non-transmittable, and therefore undemonstrable. It may (with difficulty) be verbally described, but that scarcely constitutes the actual ‘knowledge’ itself. The direct knowledge is obtainable only via the eye of Spirit. It should immediately be added that the unitive vision must never be regarded by its recipient as a matter of pride, for it is not a deed to which the individual may lay claim. Such experience is brought about entirely by the One in whom the individual exists. The individual is not meritorious in experiencing the unitive vision; rather, he is illumined despite himself. He is drawn as if by a magnet to the experience by the power of the greater Self, and, as a dream-character in a dream is dissolved in the waking consciousness of the dreamer, his sense of a separate selfhood (ego) is likewise dissolved in the eternally wakeful Consciousness of the One in whom he lives and moves and has his being. The One alone has absolute being, and alone has the power of self-revelation. It is that One who is seen, and it is that One who sees Himself in that unitive vision. Ultimately, no other may truly be said to exist but that One who exists absolutely and forever.

Many have experienced the unitive vision who have never sought it. It comes, at times, when least expected, during moments of introspective reflection, or when viewing a restful scene, or while feeling especially

content or joyful. If the individual so illumined is fortunate, that unitive vision will take up perhaps twenty minutes of his life. But, for the rest of his life, his mind will hover about that vision, as a moth about a flame, in search of a continual clarification of the illuminative understanding obtained in that fleeting vision. It is in this way that he revisits the unitive vision, basking in the contemplation of the One who illumined his heart. There he finds the adoration, the bliss, and the sweet wisdom which that Self revealed to him, ever living and ever new. It is not just a memory, but it is a lasting presence in his life, benefiting him every moment, and also shedding some benefit to others whom he touches with his words. That vision is a lifelong treasure, filling his mind with a never-failing fountain of love and happiness and the brightest consolations of wisdom. Though to the world he appears empty and alone, he possesses within himself the fullness of the universe, and his solitude is the blissful aloneness of the only One.

NOTE:

1. Ken Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit*, Boulder, Colorado, Shambhala, 2001.

Who Sees God? (Part One)

It is only God (the Divine Mind) who sees God—but He does so through the souls of men. One's soul is able to search within itself and ascend in consciousness all the way to God. If it were not an expression of the Divine, it could not do that. When a soul rises to the vision of God, it is no longer soul, but is merged in and made one with God, so that it is not the soul that sees, but God Himself who is seeing Himself. Looking within itself, it sees its own original Self, an infinite, eternal, and all-pervasive Self. No longer two, soul and God are one Spirit, seeing Itself. Nonetheless, the vision is retained by the soul, even after the soul is no longer united in vision with God. And so, the soul is able to speak of the experience. And the story told is identical with that of all other souls who have seen God. There have been, over the centuries, many well-known and unknown souls who have seen Him, this soul among them. And it may be useful to look to some of the best-known seers who have described this experience, in order to piece together a consolidated description of what has been seen:

From **the Upanishads** [10th to 4th century B.C.E.]:

He cannot be seen by the eye, and words cannot reveal Him. He cannot be realized by the senses, or by austerity or the performance of rituals. By the grace of wisdom and purity of mind, He can be seen in the silence of contemplation. ²

When a wise man has withdrawn his mind from all things without, and when his spirit has peacefully left all inner sensations, let him rest in peace, free from the movement of will and desire. ... For it has been said: There is something beyond our mind, which abides in silence within our mind. It is the supreme mystery beyond thought. Let one's mind and subtle spirit rest upon that and nothing else.

... When the mind is silent, beyond weakness and distraction, then it can enter into a world, which is far beyond the mind: the supreme Destination. ... Then one knows the joy of Eternity. ... Words cannot describe the joy of the soul whose impurities are washed away in the depths of contemplation, who is one with the Atman, his own Self. Only those who experience this joy know what it is. ... As water becomes one with water, fire with fire, and air with air, so the mind becomes one with the infinite Mind and thus attains Freedom. ³

When in inner union he is beyond the world of the body, then the third world, the world of the Spirit, is found, where man possesses all—for he is one with the ONE. ⁴

From **the Bhagavad Gita** [5th century B.C.E.]:

When the mind of the yogi is in peace, focused on the Self within, and beyond all restless desires, then he experiences Unity. His mind becomes still, like the flame of a lamp sheltered from the winds. When the mind rests in the prayerful stillness of yoga, by the grace of the One, he knows the One, and attains fulfillment. Then he knows the joy of Eternity; he sees beyond the intellect and the senses. He becomes the Unmoving, the Eternal. ⁵

... In this experience of Unity, the yogi is liberated, delivered from all suffering forever. ... The yogi whose heart is still,

whose passions are dissolved, and who is pure of sin, experiences this supreme bliss and knows his oneness with Brahman. ⁶

Maximus of Tyre [2nd century C.E.]:

The eye cannot see God, words cannot name Him, flesh and blood cannot touch Him, the ear cannot hear Him; but within the soul That which is most fair, most pure, most intelligible, most ethereal, most honorable, can contemplate Him because it is like Him, can hear Him because of their kinship.

... The soul holds herself erect and strong, she gazes at the pure light [of the Godhead]; she wavers not, nor turns her glance to earth, but closes her ears and directs her eyes and all other senses within. She forgets the troubles and sorrows of earth, its joys and honors, its glory and its shame; and submits to the guidance of pure reason and strong love. For reason points out the road that must be followed, and love drives the soul forward, making the rough places smooth by its charm and constancy. And as we approach heaven and leave earth behind, the goal becomes clear and luminous—that is a foretaste of God's very self. On the road we learn His nature better; but when we reach the end, we see Him. ⁷

How, we must ask, do we attain such vision? And all who have experienced that inner revelation of the Divine Self declare that they have done so only through the grace of God. One cannot therefore speak of the 'attainment' of that vision; it is given. It cannot be produced according to one's own will. Those who are truthful acknowledge this and give thanks to the One who so generously blessed them; and they shower Him with a constant love, knowing that this love too is His own. Here, Plotinus acknowledges this truth.

Plotinus [3rd century C.E.]:

When there enters into it a glow from the Divine, the soul gathers strength, spreads true wings, and however distracted by its proximate environment, speeds its buoyant way to something greater; ... its very nature bears it upwards, lifted by

the Giver of that love. ... Surely, we need not wonder that It possesses the power to draw the soul to Itself, calling it back from every wandering to rest before It. From It came everything; nothing is mightier.⁸

... In advancing stages of contemplation, rising from contemplation of Nature to that in the soul, and thence again to that in the Divine Mind, the object contemplated becomes progressively a more and more intimate possession of the contemplating being, more and more one with them. ... In the divine Mind itself, there is complete identity of knower and known, no distinction existing between being and knowing, contemplation and its object, [but] constituting a living thing, a one Life, two inextricably one.⁹

In this state of absorbed contemplation, there is no longer any question of holding an object in view; the vision is such that seeing and seen are one; object and act of vision have become identical.¹⁰

... There, our Self-seeing is a communion with the Self restored to purity. No doubt we should not speak of “seeing,” but, instead of [speaking of] “seen” and “seer,” speak boldly of a simple unity. For in this seeing, we neither see, nor distinguish, nor are there, two. The man is changed, no longer himself nor belonging to himself; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into It, one with It; it is only in separation that duality exists. This is why the vision baffles telling; for how could a man bring back tidings of the Supreme as something separate from himself when he has seen It as one with himself?¹¹

Meister Eckhart [(1260-1328 C.E.):

As the soul becomes more pure and bare and poor, and possesses less of created things, and is emptied of all things that are not God, it receives God more purely, and is more completely in Him; and it truly becomes one with God, and it looks into God and God into it, face to face as it were; two images transformed into one.¹²

...Some people think that they will see God as if He were standing there and they here. It is not so. God and I, we are one.¹³ ...I am converted into Him in such a way that He makes me one Being with Himself—not a *similar* being. By the living God, it is true that there is no distinction!¹⁴ ...The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one and the same—one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving.¹⁵

The soul awakens to know itself as the Divine Mind, but the One, its prior, is experienced only from a distance, as it were. The One is the transcendent Source of all, and beyond all predication or qualification; It is indescribable, as It is prior to all discernible qualities. The soul is keenly aware of the blissful imperturbability, unlimited power, omniscience, and eternal existence of its ultimate Source; but It is not distinctly 'seen', nor does the soul 'merge' with It. Nonetheless, the soul in union with the Divine Mind keenly recognizes that One as the beginningless Source of its own identity and of all that follows upon It—as the Sun hidden in the cover of the clouds is recognized to be the source of the omnipresent light.

That One was even before the first movement of Creation:

Rig Veda [15th century B.C.E.]:

Then, neither the non-Real (*asat*) nor the Real (*sat*) existed. There was no sky then, nor the heavens beyond it. What was contained by what, and where, and who sheltered it? What unfathomed depths, what cosmic ocean, existed then?

Then, neither death nor deathlessness existed; between day and night there was as yet no distinction. That ONE (*tad ekam*), by Its own power (*svadha*) breathlessly breathed. ¹⁶

Lao Tze [6th century B.C.E.]:

Before heaven and earth existed, there was something unformed, silent, alone, unchanging, constant and eternal; It could be called 'the Source of the Universe.' I do not know Its name and simply call It "Tao." ¹⁷

Plotinus:

The All-Transcendent, utterly void of multiplicity, is Unity's Self, independent of all else... It is the great Beginning, wholly and truly One. All life belongs to It. ¹⁸ ...The One is, in truth, beyond all statement; whatever you say would limit It; the All Transcendent has no name. ¹⁹ ... [It] is That which is the truly Existent. ... It is the Source from which all that appears to exist derives that appearance.²⁰

... Everywhere one and whole, It is at rest throughout. But ... in Its very non-action It magnificently operates and in Its very self-being It produces everything by Its Power. ²¹ ... This Absolute is none of the things of which It is the Source; Its nature is that nothing can be affirmed of It—not existence, not essence, not life—It transcends all these. But possess yourself of It by the very elimination of [individual] being, and you hold a marvel! Thrusting forward to This, attaining, and resting in Its content, seek to grasp It more and more, understanding It by that intuitive thrust alone, but knowing Its greatness by the beings that follow upon It and exist by Its power. ²²

Here, **Meister Eckhart** distinguishes between the One and the Divine Mind, using the terms “Godhead” and “God”:

God and the Godhead are as different from each other as heaven and earth... Creatures speak of God—but why do they not mention the Godhead? Because there is only unity in the Godhead and there is nothing to talk about. God acts. The Godhead does not. ...The difference between God and the Godhead is the difference between action and non-action. ...The Godhead is poor, naked and empty as though it were not; it has not, wills not, wants not, works not, gets not. It is God who has the treasure and the bride in Him; the Godhead is as void as though it were not.²³

Eckhart's “God” is the manifestory Power of the One, which has been referred to as *Prakrti*, *Maya*, *Nous*, *Shakti*, *Logos*, and many other names; we are calling It ‘the Divine Mind’. The Divine Mind is not a thing apart from or distinct from the One; It is the causal aspect or agency of the One. It is the ‘Creator’ aspect of Divinity, from which Soul is radiated as an

extension of Itself. It is the Divine Mind with which the soul is reunited, and by It, through It, knows the One as its eternal Self.

But how can it be that this immoveable, unchangeable, contentless One produces from Itself a Power so great containing all this universe? Is it, as the *Rig Veda* suggests, the arising of ‘Desire’ within the One that gives rise to that Power; or is it, as Plotinus suggests, a ‘Circumradiation’; or is it simply a wish to be many, instead of alone, as suggested by the author of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* or the Gnostic, Valentinus? Here is the *Rig Veda*’s theory of Desire as the originating impetus to Creation:

Rig Veda:

In the beginning, darkness lay wrapped in darkness; all was one undifferentiated (*apraketa*) sea (*salila*). Then, within that one undifferentiated Existence, [something] arose by the heat of concentrated energy (*tapas*). What arose in That in the beginning was Desire (*kama*), [which is] the primal seed of mind (*manas*)...²⁴

And here is Plotinus’ suggestion that the Creative Power of God is a spontaneous “circumradiation” of the One:

Plotinus:

Given this immobility in the Supreme, It can neither have yielded assent nor uttered decree nor stirred in any way towards the existence of a secondary. What happened, then? What are we to conceive as rising in the innards of that immobility? It must be a circumradiation—produced from the Supreme but from the Supreme unaltering—and may be compared to the brilliant light encircling the sun and ceaselessly generated from that unchanging substance. ...There [in the One] is the Unity which is the potentiality of all existence. ...The perfection entails the offspring; [for] a power so vast could not remain unfruitful.²⁵

And here is the suggestion in the Upanishads that the Creation was born of the desire of the One to be many:

Taittiriya Upanishad:

He [the One] desired: ‘May I be many, may I procreate. He performed *tapas* (created heat); and, having performed *tapas*, He created all this—whatever there is. Having created all this, He entered into it. Having entered into it, He became both the manifest and the unmanifest, both the defined and the undefined, both the supported and the unsupported, both the intelligent and the non-intelligent, both the real and the unreal.’²⁶

And here is a similar theory from the Gnostic, Valentinus, in the second century C.E.:

Valentinus:

The Father existed alone, unbegotten, without place, without time, without counselor, and without any conceivable qualities ..., solitary and reposing alone in Himself. But as He possessed a generative Power, it pleased Him to generate and produce the most beautiful and perfect that He had in Himself, for He did not love solitude. He was all love, but love is not love if there is no object of love. So, the Father, alone as He was, projected and generated [the world].²⁷

Each of these speculations provides a plausible scenario; but do we really think that we can determine, by any amount of speculation, just how and why the one Divine Father, the absolute Consciousness, managed to possess a creative Power by which the Spiritual and material universe is produced? Really! If, as the Gnostic, Valentinus, and others have suggested, He abandoned His Oneness and entered into all this apparent multiplicity and tumult out of a desire to escape Aloneness, to be many, it may be that He is happily enjoying being all these worlds and creatures; or it may be that underneath it all, He is still quite aware that it’s all only Himself, and still feels Alone. What do *you* think?

NOTES:

1. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247c-e; trans. by Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, London, Oxford University Press, 1871.
2. *Mundaka* Upanishad, III.1; Mascaro, Juan, *The Upanishads*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1965.
3. Svetasvatara Upanishad, VI.19-23.

4. *Ibid.*, II.1.
5. *Bhagavad Gita*, 6:18-21; Mascaro, Juan, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1962.
6. *Ibid.*, 6:23-27.
7. Maximus of Tyre, *Diss.*, XI.9-10
8. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 38:6:22-23; MacKenna, Stephen (trans.), *Plotinus: The Enneads*, London, Faber & Faber, 1956; p. 199.
9. *Ibid.*, 30:3:8; pp. 113-114.
10. *Ibid.*, 38:6:35; p. 204.
11. *Ibid.*, 9:6:10; p. 221.
12. Meister Eckhart, Treatise A.2, Colledge E. & McGinn, B. (trans.), *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, Ramsey, N.J., Paulist Press, 1982; p. 222. *Ibid.*, *Sermon 6*; p. 188.
13. Meister Eckhart, Sermon 18, Blackney, Raymond B., *Meister Eckhart, A Modern Translation*, N.Y., Harper Torchbooks, 1941; p. 181.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Meister Eckhart, Sermon 23, *Ibid.*, p. 206.
16. *Rig Veda*, x.129.1
17. Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 25.
18. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 44:5:15-16; MacKenna, Stephen (trans.), *Plotinus: The Enneads*, London, Faber & Faber, 1956, pp. 162-163.
19. *Ibid.*, 49:5:13; p. 162
20. *Ibid.*, 26:3:4; p. 101
21. *Ibid.*, 47:1; p. 76
22. *Ibid.*, 30:3:10; p. 116
23. Meister Eckhart, Sermon 27, Blackney, Raymond B., *Meister Eckhart, A Modern Translation*, N.Y., Harper Torchbooks, 1941; pp. 225-226.
24. *Rig Veda*, x.129.2-5
25. *Enneads*, V.1.4-8: The Three Initial Hypostases
26. Taittiriya Upanishad, II.6.1, Swami Nikhilananda, *The Principal Upanishads*, N.Y., Dover Publications, 1963, 2003; p. 269.
27. Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Heresium* VI.29.5ff. Roberts, Rev. A. & Donaldson, J. (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1892; Vol. VI.

Who Sees God? (Part Two)

In many religious traditions, the One, the absolute Ground, is regarded as the masculine component, and Its Creative Power (the Divine Mind) is regarded as the feminine aspect. This genderization of God and His Power is certainly not to be taken literally, but it is merely a metaphorical device to emphasize their apparent duality within a subsuming Unity. It is a metaphor that is most evident in the Hindu and Buddhist Tantric traditions, as well as in the ancient Mesopotamian and Canaanite religious traditions; but it exists also in many other unrelated traditions, such as in the Taoist tradition, where *Tao* is the One, the Father; and *Teh*, Its feminine aspect, is Its Creative, or manifestory, Power:

Lao Tze:

... The Tao that can be spoken of is not the absolute Tao. That Nameless [*Tao*] is the Father of heaven and earth; That which is named [*Teh*] is the Mother of all things.²⁸

These two are the same; they are given different names in order to distinguish between them. Together, they constitute the Supreme Mystery.²⁹

The *Tao* is an empty cup, yet It is inexhaustible; It is the fathomless Fountainhead of all things.³⁰ That which gave birth to the universe [*Teh*] may be regarded as the Mother of the universe.³¹ The Womb of creation is called the Mysterious Female; it is the root of heaven and earth.³²

The myriad objects of the world take form and rise to activity, but I have seen THAT to which they return, like the luxuriant growth of plants that return to the soil from which they spring.³³

That ONE called *Tao* is subtle, beyond vision, yet latent in It are all forms. It is subtle, beyond vision, yet latent in It are all objects. It is dark and obscure, yet latent in It is the creative Power of life [*Teh*].³⁴

From the ancient days till now Its manifestation has never ceased; it is because of this [*Teh*] that we perceive the Father of all. It is the manifestation of forms that reveals to us the Father

[*Tao*].³⁵ The *Tao* is never the doer, yet through It everything is done.³⁶ The *Tao* fathers, and the *Teh* brings everything forth as the world of form, time, and space.³⁷

The later Taoist sage, **Chuang Tze** [3rd century B.C.E.], explains these two: The One and Its manifestory Power, in a straightforward manner, without the symbolism of gender:

In the beginning, even nothing did not exist. There was only the *Tao*. Then something unnamed which did not yet have form came into existence from the *Tao*. This is *Teh*, from which all the world came into being. ...It is in this way that *Teh* created all forms.³⁸

The *Tao* is the source of the activity of universal manifestation, but It is not this activity. It is the Author of causes and effects, but It is not the causes and effects. It is the Author of universal manifestation and dissolution, but It is not the manifestation or dissolution. Everything proceeds from It and is governed by It; It is in all things, but is not identical with things, for It is neither divided nor limited.³⁹

Tao is invisible, hard to hold, and difficult to describe. However, I will outline It for you: The visible world is born of the Invisible; the world of forms is born of the Formless. The creative Power [*Teh*] is born from *Tao*, and all life forms are born of this creative Power, whereby all creation evolves into various forms.

...Life springs into existence without a visible source and is reabsorbed into that Infinite. The world exists in and on the infinite Void; how it comes into being, is sustained and once again is dissolved, cannot be seen. It is fathomless, like the Sea. Wondrously, the cycle of world-manifestation begins again after every completion. The *Tao* sustains all creation, but It is never exhausted. ... That which gives life to all creation, yet which is, Itself, never drawn upon—that is the *Tao*.⁴⁰

And here is how **Plotinus** describes the Eternal and Its Power:

Time was not yet; ... it lay ... merged in the eternally Existent and motionless with It. But an active principle there ... stirred from its rest; ... for the One contained an unquiet faculty, ... and it could not bear to retain within itself all the dense fullness of its possession. [Like] a seed at rest, the nature-principle within, unfolding outwards, makes its way towards what appears a multiple life. It was Unity self-contained, but now, in going forth from Itself, It fritters Its unity away; It advances to a lesser greatness.⁴¹

Philo Judaeus (1st century C.E.) refers to these two as ‘God’ and His ‘Logos’:

God is high above place and time ... He is contained by nothing, but He transcends all. *But though transcending what He has made, nonetheless, He filled the universe with Himself.* [My italics]⁴² The supremely generic is God, the next is the Logos of God;⁴³ ... That which comes after God, even if it were the most venerable of all other things, holds second place, and was called feminine in contrast to the Creator of the universe, who is masculine.⁴⁴

Here is another surprisingly perceptive treatment of the One and Its Creative Power represented as masculine and feminine, by the 1st century Gnostic, **Simon Magus**, who refers to the One as “the Divine Mind”, and Its Energy-producing Power as ‘the Thought’:

There are two aspects of the One. The first of these is the Higher, the Divine Mind of the universe, which governs all things, and is masculine. The other is the lower, the Thought (*epinoia*) which produces all things, and is feminine. As a pair united, they comprise all that exists. The Divine Mind is the Father who sustains all things and nourishes all that begins and ends. He is the One who eternally stands, without beginning or end. He exists entirely alone; for, while the Thought arising from Unity, and coming forth from the Divine Mind, creates [the appearance of] duality, the Father remains a Unity. The Thought is in Himself, and so He is alone. Made manifest to Himself from Himself, He appears to be two. He becomes “Father” by virtue of being called so by His own Thought.

Since He, Himself, brought forward Himself, by means of Himself, manifesting to Himself His own Thought, it is not correct to attribute creation to the Thought alone. For She (the Thought) conceals the Father within Herself; the Divine Mind and the Thought are intertwined. Thus, though [they appear] to be a pair, one opposite the other, the Divine Mind is in no way different from the Thought, inasmuch as they are one.

Though there appears to be a Higher, the Mind, and a lower, the Thought, truly, It is a Unity, just as what is manifested from these two [the world] is a unity, while appearing to be a duality. The Divine Mind and the Thought are discernible, one from the other, but they are one, though they appear to be two. [Thus,] ... there is one Divine Reality, [conceptually] divided as Higher and lower; generating Itself, nourishing Itself, seeking Itself, finding Itself, being mother of Itself, father of Itself, sister of Itself, spouse of Itself, daughter of Itself, son of Itself. It is both Mother and Father, a Unity, being the Root of the entire circle of existence. ⁴⁵

The Divine Mind possesses Its own light of Consciousness which we name 'Soul'; but Soul, being invisible Spirit, requires a substantial and relatively stable world of forms to inhabit; and so, the Divine Mind periodically sends forth a burst of Energy that transforms into the Matter of which the physical universe is constituted. He sends forth this Energy in cycles, first projecting His Light Energy, which transforms into the universe of matter in its four dimensions; and then, at the end of a cycle, withdrawing that universe of matter, time and space. To us, perceiving this drama from the temporal side, these cycles appear to last for billions and billions of years; but for the soul united in consciousness with the Eternal, the Divine Mind, they are seen to last but the space of a breath.

The Divine Consciousness, or Soul, both contains and inhabits this material universe formed by the Divinely manifested Energy, becoming its indwelling evolutionary force, its living vitality, and its conscious Intelligence. By inhabiting or permeating the distinctly manifested forms, Soul becomes associated with those individually distinct forms, and thus takes on the individual characteristics of each one; It appears as separate and multiple souls, while yet retaining its inseparability and singularity. Soul, by virtue of its inhabiting of body, takes on an individuality, thus becoming distinct souls; and yet, because it is identical with the Divine Mind, it retains

its Divine unity as Soul, being in essence the Divine Mind.

Philo Judaeus:

That aspect of Him which transcends His powers cannot be conceived of at all in terms of place, but only as pure Being; but that power of His by which He made and ordered all things [the Logos] ... pervades the whole and passes through all the parts of the universe. ⁴⁶

Heraclitus (5th century B.C.E.):

Of all the wise philosophers whose discourses I have heard, I have not found any who have realized the one Intelligence, which is distinct from all things ⁴⁷ and yet pervades all things. ⁴⁸ That Intelligence is One; to know It is to know the Purpose, which guides all things and is in all things. ⁴⁹ Nature has no inherent power of intelligence; Intelligence is the Divine. ⁵⁰ Without It [the one Intelligence], the fairest universe is but a randomly scattered dust-heap. ⁵¹

Plotinus:

There is one identical Soul, every separate manifestation being that Soul complete. The differentiated souls issue from the Unity and strike out here and there, but they are united at the Source much as light is a divided thing on earth, shining in this house and that, and yet remains one. One Soul [is] the source of all souls; It is at once divided and undivided. ⁵²

... Diversity within the ONE depends not upon spatial separation, but sheerly upon differentiation; all Being, despite this plurality, is a Unity still. ⁵³... The souls are apart without partition; they are no more hedged off by boundaries than are the multiple items of knowledge in one mind. The one Soul so exists as to include all souls. ⁵⁴

Soul, permeating and inhabiting the universe of Matter, lends its Intelligence and Vitality to the material forms, thus bringing life and an evolutionary force to the material universe. As Heraclitus rightly states, the universe of Matter, without the Intelligence of Soul, would be nothing but 'a randomly scattered dust-heap'.

As for the material universe, which dwells within, and is permeated by, the *anima mundi*, or world soul, we have shown that it is the product of a periodic burst of (electromagnetic) Energy cast forth by the Divine Mind. This light-energy has the ability to transmute into material forms (wave-particles), which in turn aggregate into the larger forms that make up the universe.⁵⁵ Plotinus, of course, knew nothing of this, and so he could never grasp the nature of Matter.

Plotinus was also tripped up in his attempt to understand the nature of Matter by his Platonist concepts. He could only conceive of the world of things as eternal Idea-forms, and so he had to regard Matter as an eternal existent; and yet, in other instances, he saw the material universe as the very outer limits of the radiance of the Divine Mind, where, extending beyond Soul, it fades into utter darkness. Plotinus often equated this darkness, this extremity of the reach of the Divine, with the world of Matter. Brilliant and insightful as he was, he simply did not have all the facts, and so could not piece together all the elements of manifest existence into a comprehensive and consistent whole.

The eighth century Indian Nondualist philosopher, Shankara, declared that the appearance of the universe is an illusion, a product of Maya, the Creative Power of Brahman. And, as contemporary science has shown, the universe does indeed consist of (a Divinely produced) Energy that transforms into material particles; but these material particles are really nothing more than submicroscopic electromagnetic impulses, mere ‘points of Energy’, interacting in such a way that the appearance of substance is produced—forming, in other words, an illusory world.

How do these “points” of Energy, these wave-particles that began as “photons”, manage to produce the illusion of form and substance? In their original abundance, they collide, transforming into particles such as electrons, and quarks—which combine to form protons and neutrons, which combine to form atoms; and the atoms combine to form molecules, which combine in vast numbers to form perceptible gases, liquids, and solids in a variety of sizes and configurations. And yet the atoms of which these perceivable solids consist are mostly empty space in their interior. In fact, all of what we call *Matter* is 99.999999999999 percent empty space; the other infinitesimal part seems to be nothing more than energy wavelets and intangible forces. Subatomic wave-particles consist of intangible electrically charged impulses held in proximate “orbits” about one another

by invisible forces, so as to form the appearance of much grander substantial entities. And these appearances are multiplied in infinite profusion and variety as if by some magician's hand, to appear before our eyes as a multitudinous world of objects. And so, this material world, this phenomenal reality of ours, is a marvelous magic show of truly immense proportions!

Soul is Spirit, and the Divine Energy that becomes Matter is also Spirit; they are both from the Divine Mind, but the two are distinctly different: Soul is noumenon, and Matter/Energy is phenomenon. Obviously, they require distinctly different means of production. Soul, possessing Intelligence, is inherently Divine, emanating from and partaking of the Divine Intelligence. It is an extension or radiance of the Divine Itself. Whereas Matter, woven of Light Energy, had to have been produced deliberately as an illusion-producing force expressly to produce the appearance of form and substance—it is, as Shankara tells us, Maya, or illusion.

Intelligence, or Soul, is a direct extension of the Divine, an emanate of conscious Intelligence identical with its source; and the Energy constituting Matter is of an entirely different kind, transient and lifeless, lacking Intelligence, whose only function is to house the Soul or Spirit. We call this universe-manifesting Energy 'electromagnetic radiation' but it may just as rightly be regarded as 'the power of Maya'.

Shankara (8th century C.E.):

Maya, ...also called the Undifferentiated, is the power (*shakti*) of the Lord. She is without beginning, ...being the Cause of all. One who has a clear intelligence infers Her existence from the effects She produces. It is She who brings forth this entire universe. Maya is neither real nor unreal, nor both together; She is neither identical with Brahman nor different from Him, nor both; She is neither differentiated nor undifferentiated, nor both. She is most wonderful and cannot be described in words.⁵⁶ ...Everything, from the intellect down to the gross physical body, is the effect of Maya. Understand that all these and Maya itself are not the [absolute] Self, and are therefore unreal, like a mirage in the desert.⁵⁷

Clearly, the Divine Energy-producing Power, also referred to as *Prakrti*, *Maya*, *Logos*, etc., must be differentiated from the Soul-emanation that is essentially identical with the Consciousness of the Divine Mind (*Purusha*). Soul, being identical with the Divine, is eternal; the world-appearance, produced by an eternal Energy, is temporal, and transient, and therefore, by Shankara's definition, 'unreal'. It is produced by the Divine Mind periodically, in a cyclic manner, similar to the production of a recurrent respiration. This has been repeatedly 'seen', experienced, in the unitive vision, and described by numerous seers. Here is how this cyclic "creation" and "destruction" is described by some others who have seen it:

Svetasvatara Upanishad (4th to 1st century B.C.E.):

He [the Lord] spreads his net [of appearance] and then withdraws it again into His *Prakriti* [His creative Power].⁵⁸

And here, from the ***Maitri Upanishad*** (5th century B.C.E.):

The supreme Spirit is immeasurable, inapprehensible, beyond conception, never born, beyond reasoning, beyond thought. He is vaster than the infinity of space. At the end of the worlds, all things sleep; and He alone is awake in eternity. Then from his infinite space new worlds arise and awake, a universe which is a vastness of thought. In the consciousness of Brahman, the universe exists, and into Him it returns.⁵⁹

In the 5th century B.C.E., the author of the ***Bhagavad Gita*** has Krishna explaining to Arjuna the process of manifestation-dissolution in the following passages:

They who know that the vast 'day' of Brahma (the personified Creative Power), ever lasts a thousand ages; and that his 'night' lasts also a thousand ages—they know in truth day and night.

When that day comes, all the visible creation arises from the Eternal; and all creation disappears into the Eternal when the night of darkness comes. Thus, the infinity of beings which live again and again all powerlessly disappear when the night of darkness comes; and they all return again at the rising of the day. But beyond this creation, visible and invisible, there is a

higher, Eternal; and when all things pass away, this remains for ever and ever. ⁶⁰

Krishna, who is identified with *Purusha*, the Eternal, continues, referring to His Creative Power by the Sankhya term, *Prakrti*:

At the end of the night of time all things return to my [creative Power, called] *Prakrti*; and when the new day of time begins, I bring them into light. Thus, through my *Prakrti* I bring forth all creation, and these worlds revolve in the revolutions of time. But I am not bound by this vast work of creation. I exist alone, watching the drama of this play. I watch and in its work of creation *Prakrti* brings forth all that moves and moves not: and thus, the worlds go on revolving. ⁶¹

What do the mystics of other traditions have to say? **Lao Tze**, of the Taoist tradition of China, who lived in the 6th century B.C.E., also spoke of the universal creation/dissolution cycle:

The myriad objects of the world take form and rise to activity, but I have seen THAT to which they return, like the luxuriant growth of plants that return to the soil from which they spring. ⁶²

And **Chuang Tze**, who lived in the 3rd century B.C.E., wrote:

The visible world is born of the Invisible; the world of forms is born of the Formless. The Creative Energy [*Teh*] is born from the Eternal [*Tao*], and all life forms are born of this Creative Energy; thus, all creation evolves into various forms.

...Life springs into existence without a visible source and is reabsorbed into that Infinite. The world exists in and on the infinite Void; how it comes into being, is sustained and once again is dissolved, cannot be seen. It is fathomless, like the sea. Wondrously, the cycle of world-manifestation begins again after every completion. The Eternal [*Tao*] sustains all creation, but It is never exhausted. ... That which gives life to all creation, yet which is, Itself, never drawn upon— that is the Eternal [*Tao*]. ⁶³

Heraclitus adds his voice to the consensus:

What is within us remains the same eternally; It is the same in life and death, waking and sleeping, youth and old age; for, It has become this world, and the world must return to It. ⁶⁴ This ordered universe ...always was, is, and shall be, [like] an ever-living Flame that is first kindled and then quenched in turn. ⁶⁵

(This last, by the way, led unilluminated commentators to say that Heraclitus believed the universe was made of fire.)

By all accounts, the creative expansion and “eternal return” of the universe to a state of potentiality in the Divine Mind was also recognized by Pythagoras (570-490 B.C.E.), Empedocles (495-435 B.C.E.), and the early Stoics, and was an established major tenet of Stoic metaphysics by the time of Plotinus. Yet both Plato and Plotinus assumed that the material universe was eternal and unchanging. Plotinus emphatically stated this opinion in his *Enneads*. How could he have begun to imagine the countless wonders that would eventually be discovered in the heavens with the aid of the telescope, including the revelation that the universe is expanding, and that it had its beginning around fourteen billion years ago? No doubt, we in this current time are also woefully deficient in both spiritual and material knowledge, the future addition of which will one day more perfectly complete our understanding of ourselves, our world, and our place in it.

NOTES:

28.Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 1

29.*Ibid.*, 1

30.*Ibid.*, 4

31.*Ibid.*, 52

32.*Ibid.*, 6

33.*Ibid.*, 16

34.*Ibid.*, 21

35.*Ibid.*, 21

36.*Ibid.*, 37

37.*Ibid.*, 51

38.*Chuang Tze*, Ch. 12

39.*Ibid.*, Ch. 8

40.*Chuang Tze*, 22

41. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 45:3:11; *Op.cit.*, p. 106
42. Philo, *De posteritate Caini*, 14-16; Winston, David (trans.), *Philo Of Alexandria—The Contemplative Life, Giants, And Selections*, Ramsey, N.J., Paulist Press, 1981.
43. Philo, *Legum Allegoriorum*, 2:86; *Ibid.*, p. 93
44. Philo, *De uga et inventione*, 50-52, *Ibid.*, p. 93
45. Simon Magus, *Apophasis Megale* (“The Great Exposition”), quoted by Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutatio Omnium Heresium*, VI.8; adapted from Roberts, Rev. A. & Donaldson, J. (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1892; Vol. VI, pp. 208-210.
46. Philo, *De confusione linguarum*, 136-137; Winston, 1981; p. 90.
47. Heraclitus, based on Freeman, K., *Ancilla To The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983; pp. 24-34. Fragment nbr. 108.
48. *Ibid.*, 113
49. *Ibid.*, 41
50. *Ibid.*, 78
51. *Ibid.*, 124
52. *Enneads*, 27:4:2-5; *Ibid.*, p. 118.
53. *Enneads*, 22:6:4; *Ibid.*, p. 184.
54. *Enneads*, 22:6:4; *Ibid.*, p. 184.
55. For details regarding the transformation of electromagnetic radiation into material particles, in this book, see the chapter on “Body”.
56. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani*; Prabhavananda, Swami (trans.), *The Crest-Jewel Of Discrimination*, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 59.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 62
58. Svetasvatara Upanishad, V.3.
59. Maitri Upanishad, 6.17.
60. *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapters VIII.17-20.
61. *Ibid.*, Chapter IX, 7-10.
62. Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 16.
63. Chuang Tze, Chapter 22.
64. Heraclitus, fragment 88; based on Freeman, K., *Ancilla To The Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1983.
65. Heraclitus, fragment 30; *Ibid.*

Seeing Is Believing

The metaphysical understanding of the Western philosophical tradition is virtually identical to that of the Eastern philosophical tradition. Only the names used by each tradition are different. The current metaphysics in both East and West holds that the Absolute Ground, the transcendent One, possesses a Creative Power that we call *God*, or *the Creator*. In the beginning, that Creative Power of God manifested the Light of creation; that Light became form, and every form is permeated with the Divine consciousness. For, just as our own consciousness exists as the substratum of every one of our dream-forms or thought-constructs, and permeates them all, so does He, the universal Consciousness, permeate the forms of this world, made of His self-produced light. Over the course of time, His life awakens within these forms;¹ and the forms evolve, culminating in man, in whom God's consciousness exists as individual souls. When He reveals Himself as the soul within us, that conscious soul realizes itself to be no one else but Him.

When we say that the universe is “ensouled”, it means that the one Soul, the Mind of God, permeates and is present in everything. That presence manifests in this universe as an all-pervading Spirit, or *anima mundi*, which enfolds, inheres in and embodies every element of this cosmic appearance. It is a unified Spirit in which all exists, and by which all constituent appearances are permeated and governed—just as, in our own personal experience, all images are contained, permeated and governed by the mind in which they appear. It is in such a conception of the universe and the Soul that we find, for example, the possibility of a correspondence between existing planetary patterns and the incarnation of individual souls, the sum of whose karmic histories are depicted in those patterns. Indeed, such a miraculous correspondence *requires* a universe that is ensouled, one that is pervaded by a universal Spirit, or *anima mundi*. It requires a universe in which all things move together of one accord, in which assent is given throughout to even the most insignificant occurrence.

Soul, as an intelligent organizing principle, is present in every single particle of matter; but the limited sense of an independent self which we identify as ‘our soul’ is perceived as a conscious individual identity that exists distinct from body and material things. It is a conscious ‘I’ that, while *associated* with the body, brain, and sense perception, is independent of all these. However—wonder of wonders—when our soul ascends to its transcendent

Identity by the grace of God, it experiences that Identity as *both* the material manifestations *and* the universal Soul within material manifestations as well. For, in God (the Divine Mind), the two are undivided; they are one unitive Spirit. One all-pervading Consciousness is the substratum of both the material world and the all-pervading Soul. That Divine Mind who manifests as the manifold world and all souls remains one undivided Spirit, guiding all things, and so throughout the cosmos “all things move together of one accord, and assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.” What a mysterious and wonderful world Thou hast made, O Lord! Who can fathom it?

When God (the eternal Self) reveals Himself in man, the illusory duality of body and soul vanishes. Like all dualities, this one exists only in the spatio-temporal reality produced by God’s projected Light. When the individual mind (soul) ascends to the Eternal, it then sees from the unitive perspective of the Eternal, wherein body and soul are both contained. Here, all dualities vanish, and only the undivided Mind remains. Here, the division between I and Thou is no more; now and then both vanish in the Timeless; life and death no longer stand apart. Only the One shines eternally.² This experience is the revelation from which all religion derives. It is this mystical experience that provides the irrefutable evidence for the Divine identity of the soul. Those who have not experienced that ‘mystical’ union may argue the question of the immortality of the soul, but for those who have been graced with that unitive experience, no question remains. The Divine Mind is an experiential reality that is a thousand times more impressive than mere thought or sense experience. It is an experience more indubitable than the light of day.

God’s creative Light is eternal, though the forms it takes are temporal and transient. Likewise, Soul is eternal; the forms it takes are temporal and transient and are stamped with the pattern of the heavens at the time of their embodiment. As limited souls, we journey through time from body to body in quest of the perfect joy and satisfaction that already exists in its fullness within us. Our souls are limited rays of the one Sun, droplets of the one ocean of Joy; and when we are ripe for seeing, He opens our eyes: He reveals our true nature, showing us that we are His own Beauty, His own unlimited Vastness, His own sweet Joy. He shows us who we have always been.

It is this experience that prompted the authors of the Upanishads to proclaim,

“That thou art”; it is this experience that prompted Jesus to declare “I and the Father are one”, and Mansur al-Hallaj to declare, *an al Haqq*, “I am the transcendent Reality”. It is this experience that provides the self-evident proof of our Divine Ground and ultimate Identity. It is an experience that is accessible, by the Grace of God, through contemplative introspection.

The soul experiences its “union” with God when He reveals His eternal presence in the soul. This vision is the greatest attainment possible to man, and yet it is not an attainment that can be taught. The reason is that it is not something that can be accomplished by man. A man can only make himself receptive to it, but it is accomplished by God Himself. It is a gift. I am not speaking of the mere intellectual recognition of the fact that the one all-pervading Spirit is the only one who exists; the *experience* of union entails the actual upliftment of the soul to its divine Source, so that it is no longer aware of its separate existence on this earth, but knows itself, for as long as that experience lasts, as God—transcendent to the cosmos and yet the life and conscious Spirit pervading the cosmos. It is a going-out of the limited soul-identity and an awakening to the consciousness of an unlimited, eternal and all-inclusive Identity. All questions are answered in this altered awareness—or rather, they are dissolved away in the sweetness of eternity, an eternity that is realized to be one’s own indubitable Self. Truly, there are no words to describe this ‘awakening’; but it is the foundation of all religion and all philosophy, and the bedrock of all certainty and satisfaction.

Those who have experienced that ‘awakening’ tend to espouse the metaphysical view, the mystical theology, that is commonly referred to in modern times as ‘the Perennial Philosophy’. It is the perennial expression of the revealed knowledge of the one eternal Spirit. Yet such reasoned arguments for the Divine creation of our world and the existence of our Divine soul are oftentimes utterly impotent to convince the determined advocates of a Godless and materialistic worldview. The materialist worldview is based entirely on the material sciences, and does not even give consideration to a metaphysics, insofar as “metaphysics” implies a non-physical reality creating, underlying and controlling the physical reality. The materialist worldview acknowledges the insubstantiality of matter at the quantum level, but it does not recognize a supernatural cause, a noumenal Source and Ruler of the phenomenal world of matter.

The proponents of materialism say that ‘when the body dies, the consciousness associated with it dies as well; there is no second entity such

as an enduring soul.’ ‘Life and consciousness’, they say, ‘are merely transient properties of matter, and have no existence apart from individual material bodies.’ And without some inner experience of God, they remain skeptical of the spiritual view, and rely solely on what they perceive through sense experience.

Also, those who *have* known God have found no objectively rational way of convincing such people of the existence of the Spirit, though throughout history many have tried to do so. The Spirit must be experienced subjectively, and then only by God’s self-revelation. It would seem that He has retained control of this knowledge among humans by causing it to be unknowable by the senses or by rational thought, and realizable only through His grace. Once He reveals Himself within our soul, we realize that we are His creations, made of His substance, and that we are utterly dependent upon Him. Then we learn to surrender our own will to His will; and this, in turn, alleviates us of all our errors, and brings about our own highest good and happiness. Without that self-revelation, we remain blind to Him in ourselves and in the world. This, too, is His doing; as He says: “I bring the dust of blindness”. But He is also the remover of that blindness. He is not only the Light of the phenomenal world; He is also the inner Light that reveals His presence as our own Soul, our own divine Self.

This being the case, how can we enjoin others to awaken to the knowledge of God when such knowledge is only obtained through the Grace of God? Even the desire to know God arises through the workings of His Grace! What, then, can we do? It has been said that ‘The breeze of His grace is always blowing; but it is we who must set our sails to receive that breeze’. I reply that it is only by His Grace that we are inspired to set our sails to receive Him. The truth is that He is doing everything, whether we are aware of it or not. “We” are *His* manifestations, and we live and move within His omnipresent Spirit.

However, as His manifestations, we possess the abilities that He has granted us; and one of those abilities is the power to exercise our individual wills. We are able to choose, and we are responsible for our choices; and it is we, as individual souls, who receive the consequences of those choices. Every moment, He offers us the choice of turning our intention to Him or to the illusory world:

I have given sweets that decay to those that crave them.

*I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
My hands are open—nothing is concealed.*³

We choose, ultimately, not from reason's arguments or empirical proofs, but from the yearning that arises from the loving kinship of the soul to God. And the rationale for expounding rational arguments that tell of His presence and the possibility of knowing Him is that such reasonings are on rare occasions capable of prompting a recognition and a yearning in those who are readied for it, leading them to seek His revelation in their own hearts. And that too is His doing, as His presence in our hearts inspires both the expounding and the recognition.

Nonetheless, I fear that the great majority of souls living on earth today have yet to see beyond immediate appearances, have yet to experience God in their lives, have yet to experience the joy of the soul upon being uplifted to union with the Creator. They cannot therefore be expected to give credence to such a mystical worldview. They are bewitched by a fascination with and desire for the things of creation, and fail to recognize their Creator, or even their own souls. I have not the slightest doubt that these people will eventually come to recognize the Divine in themselves and in the world; but for the time being, they are blind, and therefore suffer many miseries. It is certain, however, that the Lord, in His justice and mercy, will bring them, in the course of time, to awaken from their slumbers, and will make Himself known to them, leading them to comfort and joy in His bosom.

NOTES:

1. Many believe, as the respected Biologist, Michael Behe, believes, that the propensity for 'life' was pre-programmed into the evolution of matter from the beginning:

"I am not saying the origin of life was simply an extremely improbable accident. I am saying the origin of life was deliberately, purposely arranged, just as the fundamental laws and constants and many other anthropic features of nature were deliberately, purposefully arranged. But in what I'll call the "extended fine-tuning" view, the origin of life is merely an additional planned feature, culminating in intelligent life. The origin of life is simply closer to the very same goal that the other, more distant anthropic features (laws, chemical properties, and so forth) were also put in place to bring about." (Michael J. Behe, *The Edge of*

Evolution, New York, Free Press, 2008; p. 216.)

2. This ‘coincidence of opposites’ in the unitive experience was first noted by Heraclitus. In fact, Heraclitus touched on nearly all of the elements of mystical experience, and yet his valuable insights have never been fully acknowledged or appreciated.

3. From Swami Abhayananda, "The Song of The Self" in *The Supreme Self*, Atma Books, Fallsburg, New York, 1984.

Mystical Experience And Near-Death Experience

Have you ever noticed the difference between the descriptions of the spiritual world by the so-called ‘mystics’ and the descriptions by people who claim to have had a ‘near-death’ experience? Have you ever wondered how these stark differences can be explained or reconciled? Is it possible that both perspectives are true? The vast majority of those people who claim to have had a ‘near-death’ experience speak of having gone out of their bodies, of having perceived a loving light at the end of a tunnel, and of having moved rapidly through that tunnel toward the light. They experienced themselves as being outside of their body, sometimes hovering over it, and observing the occurrences taking place in the physical world around them. While they were out of their bodies, they sometimes perceived deities or messianic figures, or experienced meetings with relations and loved ones who had ‘passed over’. They sometimes experienced visions of beautiful ethereal landscapes to which they became attracted; and then came the sudden, often non-volitional, return to their body.

The mystic, on the other hand, experiences no such out-of-body excursions, no soul-travels or events relating to an individual ‘me’ at all. Rather, he experiences a sudden shift of consciousness wherein he becomes the all-pervading spiritual identity, in which there is neither subject nor object, neither an ‘I’ nor a “Thou”, but rather a blissful awareness of identity with the one eternal Being. The mystic experiences that he *is* that eternal Being (‘I and the Father are one’), and often is able to see clearly into the workings of that eternal Being as well. How can we possibly explain the vast differences between these two descriptions of spiritual experience?

First of all, we must come to recognize that there are at least three distinct levels of subtlety, not only in the world, but in ourselves. These three levels

of subtlety are simply progressive elements of the one conscious Being who is the sole reality.¹ Our own human make-up is a reiteration of that triune cosmic reality; in other words, as conscious beings within the divine reality, we have our origin in the eternal Being—the Divine Mind; and secondly, within that Divine context, we exist as an individual soul; and lastly, we have a transient association with a physical body. On the physical level, we see each other solely as physical bodies; but the awareness of one who experiences a ‘near-death’, no longer identifies himself as a body, but sees himself and experiences existence as an individual soul, living and operating on what some call ‘the astral plane’. As a soul, he is free of the body, and yet retains all the memories of the people and past events associated with it.

However, at the highest, or deepest, spiritual level, there are no souls, and no individual perceptions; there is only the divine Self, the Eternal, wherein all the various levels of manifestation—including the material and the astral—are merely potential. This ultimate reality has been called the One, Brahman, the Godhead, the Self, the Void, the Tao, and many other names; and is realized by enlightened sages to be the highest truth, the sole source and origin of all the manifest planes of existence, and everyone’s ultimate Identity.

Our experiences are different because the focus of our attention is different. A focus on the state of one's personal well-being will likely result in an experience of the soul, whereas a focus on God and the determination of His will would likely result in an experience of the Divine Mind. People often experience themselves in a near-death situation as souls moving about in the astral realm at a very crucial time regarding their personal well-being; some few, whose focus is on God and His service, are blessed to experience the eternal Being as their true Self. But understand, there is no contradiction implied between these two experiences. The Self may reveal Itself as one's eternal Identity, or it may present Itself as a disincarnate soul on the astral plane or as a soul associated with a body in the manifested plane. Many, including myself, have seen disembodied souls on the astral level; and many, including myself, have experienced the universal Spirit, the divine Self, as the ultimate Identity. The soul and the Absolute Self are not mutually exclusive. He is all, and all is He; He also transcends all. The Godhead, Brahman, the one Spirit, is the ultimate Reality and Source of all that exists and constitutes the ultimate knowledge to be attained. But, at a grosser level of consciousness, each of us is an individual soul, just as we are temporarily—at a yet grosser level—manifested in this phenomenal world as

a *material* body.

The Creator and the created, manifesting as our Divine Self and the individual soul, are not two; there is only the One, appearing in many forms, and as the many varied souls. And yet, since most of us do not frequently experience an intensely intimate level of conscious deliberation toward God, we seldom experience ourselves as the Divine Self; instead, we experience ourselves as individual souls with distinctly unique attributes, and we deal with others as individuals with unique attributes—though in fact, there is only the one Divinity living and acting in the world as manifold individual souls. Look more deeply into the truth! Lift the veil! See God in each other! There is no one here but God—appearing as you and as all in this world. This is the highest knowledge and the highest attainment. Identify with the attributeless Self and become free of the limiting soul attributes. Once you’ve known your divine Identity, those soul-attributes may or may not continue. No matter. Know that you are free. Know that you are the one Divine Reality.

Realization of the eternal Self does not put an end to one’s soul or one’s body, just as, in other cases, knowing or recognizing the whole does not negate or destroy the constituents within that whole. We, as souls, live within Him, even while being aware of our oneness with Him; and we partake of that vision by His loving Grace. So, let us put away our arguments, acknowledging that we are both the divine Self and a uniquely individual soul, and that we may rightly experience ourselves as either the one or the other. These two, Self and soul, are complementary aspects of our own conscious identity; they are, in fact, complementary aspects of the one all-inclusive Divinity in which we live and breathe and have our being.

NOTES:

1. The three levels of subtlety were described by Plato, and by the 3rd century Roman Neoplatonist mystic-philosopher, Plotinus, as consisting of *the One*, followed by Its Creative Power, *the Divine Mind*, and thirdly, the *Soul*. According to Plotinus, our material bodies consist of an illusory substance produced by *the Divine Mind* by which the *Soul* is ensnared and with which the *Soul* then becomes identified. Our modern understanding of the nature of *Matter*, by which we recognize that the phenomenal world is comprised of electromagnetic impulses masquerading as substance, would seem to reinforce Plotinus' notion of *Matter* as an illusory substance.

About Spiritual Knowledge

You probably know that there is a real and definite division between the spiritually informed and the spiritually uninformed, not only in this country, but in the entire world. And you probably agree that the former group is a very small minority, and the latter group is a very large majority. But before you jump with both feet onto this particular bandwagon, be advised that you're probably not on the side of this divide that you think you are.

The fact is that almost no one has any real spiritual knowledge—no one except those of us who have been blessed by a direct revelation, a vision, of God. Such a divine revelation is usually referred to as a 'mystical' experience.

True mystical experiences are rare, and few have even heard of such an experience.

One of the reasons that mystical experience is so unfamiliar to the majority of people is the infrequency of its occurrence. Also, among those who *do* experience divine revelation, there are only a few throughout history who have garnered widespread public attention. There are the authors of the Upanishads, the Buddha, Lao Tze, Jesus, Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, and one or two Sufis, such as Rumi or Ibn Arabi—hardly enough to hold the world's attention for very long. And then, here am I, a contemporary mystic, with the ability to give a good description of the experience. Will it make a difference in the times to come? Who can say?

For many years now, I have undertaken to inform the public about my own mystical experience, and have discovered that, in these current times, almost no one is aware of the fact that 'enlightenment,' the 'vision of God,' is even something that is possible of experiencing. And so, I am up against the opinion held by nearly the entire population that I am either insane or deluded or both.

It seems that it is also futile for me to bring up the similar experience of Jesus of Nazareth, since his experience is not believed to have occurred either, or if it did occur, is believed to have been a unique experience exclusive to him. To speak of the other mystics who've existed throughout history and who have also written of their experience of God is also a

pointless exercise, since no one seems to be aware of their existence either.

After many years of attempting to inform the public about the validity of mystical experience, it is clear that the larger populace regards my testament of mystical experience as a fraudulent representation and considers me to be a liar, a deceiver, a con artist. I don't think that this universal judgement is due to any fault or inability of my own, but rather because it's just so difficult to know and trust what a person has to say when that person says that they have come to know God directly and intimately. It sounds to many so much like the preaching of ordinary religious zealots whose only basis for their knowledge is what they learned from a "holy" book. This public judgement cannot affect or harm me, but on the other hand, this judgement greatly hinders my ability to have a beneficial effect on others through my writing, and I have failed to understand what I must do to counter this unwarranted public judgement. Perhaps it is simply God's will that only those to whom He has revealed Himself are intended to know the truth.

Who is to say what God's intentions are? Jesus, assuming that others would listen and follow his teachings, was flummoxed when, instead, they hung him on a cross. "Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?" he cried. Jesus had believed that God had his back, but no one truly knows what God's intentions are or where His story is heading. Perhaps my words will be heard by others after I'm gone. Perhaps not. Perhaps my words will vanish like smoke in the wind. Who can say? It's best to have no expectations. As Krishna taught Arjuna, 'Do not cease to perform your actions, but renounce the *fruits* of your actions.' Thy will be done, Father. Thy will be done.

* * *

10. FUNDAMENTALS OF MYSTICAL THEOLOGY

(Consisting of Articles from *The Mystic's Vision*
by Swami Abhayananda.

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Fundamentals of Existence

It seems to me that, with the current worldwide emphasis on education aimed at scientific and technological progress, there has been a corresponding decline in education focused on obtaining a broad philosophical understanding of the fundamentals of the reality in which we live. Religion was once the major source for our understanding of these fundamentals, but it is much less reliably so in our current age. Let us look back, then, to a pre-scientific age, in search of what were considered to be the fundamentals of existence as taught by the ancients:

I.

In India's most ancient scripture, the *Vedas*, one of the words for God, the Divine Consciousness, was *Purusha*, a masculine noun, meaning "the Person," or "the universal Self". That Divine Consciousness (*Purusha*) was said to have produced the universe of time and space through the power of Its Creative Energy, or *Prakrti*, which is a feminine noun. Later, in the 8th or 9th century B.C.E., a sage named Kapila adopted this terminology exclusively, and his theology of *Purusha* and *Prakrti* became known as *Samkhya*, which, like *Veda*, simply means "knowledge". Then, sometime around the 5th century B.C.E., another sage, by the name of Vyasa, wrote an epic story called the *Mahabharata*, within which was embedded a dialogue between the Avatar, Krishna, and his charioteer, Arjuna, that took place on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. That dialogue is famously known as the *Bhagavad Gita*, or "the Song of God." In this spiritual parable, Vyasa, adopting Kapila's by now well-known Samkhya terminology, explains, through Krishna, that *Purusha* is the Divine Lord, and *Prakrti* is His Creative Energy.

Prakrti is sometimes defined as "Nature" or "Matter", but *Prakrti* is more precisely God's Creative Energy, from which, at the beginning of a universal cycle, the material universe, or nature, originates and evolves, and to which, at the end of each universal cycle, the universe returns. *Prakrti*, therefore, is essentially the totality of the Divine Light that constitutes 'the Great

Radiance' of which and by which the universe is formed, and into which it is once again subsumed. So, according to the *Bhagavad Gita*—by way of Kapila—, these two, *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, the Divine Consciousness and Its Creative Energy, are the fundamentals of the reality in which we live. Initially, and ultimately as well, there is only *Purusha*; there is only God, since *Prakrti* is produced by, exists in, and belongs to *Purusha*. It is *His* Creative Energy! *Prakrti* is never really distinct from *Purusha*; it only appears to be—as it provides the apparent distinction between Matter (*Prakrti*) and Spirit (*Purusha*), constituting respectively one's body and soul, each of which possesses a distinct destiny—one briefly in time, the other in eternity.

Prakrti is eternally within *Purusha* and is thereby suffused with the Divine Consciousness of *Purusha*. *Prakrti* is enveloped in and pervaded by the Divine Consciousness, and is never distinct from or isolated from *Purusha*, but is always contained within It. So, while the material universe, produced by and consisting of *Prakrti*, is a transient phenomenon, of merely temporary duration, *Prakrti*, the Creative Energy of *Purusha*, is itself eternal.

II.

These two fundamentals, the Divine Consciousness and Its Creative Energy, appear in other cultures as well, such as the Chinese Taoist culture, where the Divine Consciousness and Its Creative Energy, known in India as *Purusha* and *Prakrti*, are referred to as *Tao* and *Teh* by the great originator of the Taoist tradition, Lao Tze, who lived in the 6th century B.C.E.:

"Before heaven and earth existed, there was something unformed, silent, alone, unchanging, constant and eternal; It could be called 'the Source of the Universe.' I do not know Its name and simply call It "Tao." ...That Nameless (*Tao*) is the Father of heaven and earth; that which is named (*Teh*) is the Mother of all things."¹

Lao's compatriot and fellow Taoist, Chuang Tze, who lived in the 3rd century B.C.E., elaborated on Lao Tze's words:

"In the beginning, even nothing did not exist. There was only the *Tao*. Then something unnamed which did not yet have form came into existence from the *Tao*. This is *Teh* (the Creative Energy), from which all the world came into being. ... It is in this way that *Teh* created all forms."²

"The *Tao* is the source of the activity of universal manifestation, but It is not this activity. It is the Author of causes and effects, but It is not the causes and effects. It is the Author of universal manifestation and dissolution, but It is not the manifestation or dissolution. Everything proceeds from It and is governed by It; It is in all things, but is not identical with things, for It is neither divided nor limited. ³

"*Tao* is invisible, hard to hold, and difficult to describe. However, I will outline It for you: The visible world is born of the Invisible; the world of forms is born of the Formless. The Creative Energy (*Teh*) is born from *Tao*, and all life forms are born of this Creative Energy; thus, all creation evolves into various forms.

"...Life springs into existence without a visible source and [at the end of a cycle] is reabsorbed into that Infinite. The world exists in and on the infinite Void; how it comes into being, is sustained and once again is dissolved, cannot be seen. It is fathomless, like the Sea. Wondrously, the cycle of world-manifestation begins again after every completion. The *Tao* sustains all creation, but It is never exhausted. ..." ⁴

So, as we can see, the great mystics of previous centuries have described the fundamentals of existence in ways very similar to our current view. This is because, throughout the centuries, the (mystical) experience wherein these fundamentals of reality are revealed in interior vision is consistently the same for all who experience it.

What the author of the *Bhagavad Gita* saw, the Buddha and Jesus saw, and I also have seen. What Lao Tze and Chuang Tze saw, Heraclitus, Ibn Arabi, and Meister Eckhart also saw, and I have also seen. In fact, the knowledge of the fundamentals of existence remains the same for all who have experienced this revealed vision. There is one Divine Consciousness who, through Its Creative Power, manifests this universe with an emanation of divine Energy produced from Itself. This magnificent world of ours, including our own conscious selves, is made of that one Divine Consciousness and Its Divine Energy; and each of us, by searching within ourselves, is capable of knowing that Divine Source who constitutes our fundamental reality, and is truly our own eternally blissful and undying Self.

III.

Purusha and *Prakrti* were not the only names given to the two aspects of the Divine in the land of India; there were other ancient names such as *Brahman* and *Maya*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*, *Vishnu* and *Lakshmi*. Other, different names arose in other lands: For the ancient Jews, the sovereign Spirit and His Creative Power were called *Jahveh* and *Chokmah*. And in the early years of the growth of Christianity, Christian theologians labeled these two divine counterparts as *Theos* and *Logos*. Today, in the secular Western countries, where the ancient theologies are forgotten by the citizenry, these two divine aspects are referred to simply as “The Father,” and “Mother Nature.” But these two complementary aspects of Divinity—an eternal Mind and Its Creative Power—are not recognized as existents by the scientific community. However, the world of science *does* recognize the existence of an Energy that manifested as “the Big Bang” some fourteen billion years ago, and which constitutes our current physical universe, but that Energy is not referred to as *Prakrti*, nor is it seen as having its source in the Divine Mind, or *Purusha*. The Fundamentals of Existence, as experienced in the mystical vision of a few individuals scattered throughout time, carries little weight in the science-oriented world of today.

Today, science holds the floor, and contemporary scientific thought does not allow for the existence of an eternal (ever-existent) Consciousness that precedes, emanates, and pervades the natural (phenomenal) universe. Such a scenario is precluded by the very nature of “science,” which, by definition, is confined solely to empirically demonstrable, i.e., physical, evidence. An eternal supernatural Mind that breathes forth the mass/energy that constitutes the natural universe clearly has no place in such an empirical discipline. In their earnest desire to present verifiable conclusions, scientists have seen fit to outlaw empirically undemonstrable truth, such as an eternal Mind from whom all creation emanates, even though that truth has been repeatedly experienced in mystical vision for thousands of years. It appears that, instead of being led by the vision of our seers, today we are led by the vision of our technicians. Is it any wonder that our civilization seems to be descending into the darkness of ignorance?

But hold the phone! The great majority of the people of our civilization care little for the speculations of scientists; they have learned over time that the fashions of science are constantly changing. Even today, the majority of the people continue to rely strongly upon the teachings of their spiritual seers and hold intuitively to confidence in the truth that this world in which we live is created and permeated by God. The strength that each person draws upon in life is invariably the strength of his or her inner Spirit; the strength

of our divine souls, which are identical with God. And though, in our darkest hours, the world seems just as terrible as it is painted by its most cynical detractors, we discover again and again that the divine Lord who placed us here in this verdant garden lives always in our hearts and reveals His great goodness and compassion in those very moments that He seems most absent. Without fail, He rises from our own hearts to save the day, to right the wrong, to prove the truth of His undying presence. So, never fear. All is well. His mercy still rules. His majesty still reigns. His love still shines within our hearts and throughout the land. And, as always, the lowering darkness will be averted; the Sun will shine again. Praise God.

NOTES:

1. Lao Tze, *Tao Teh Ching*, 25.
2. Chuang Tze, Ch. 12
3. Chuang Tze, Ch. 8
4. Chuang Tze, 22.

The Metaphysics of Duality

If we think carefully and accurately, we must come to the conclusion that God constitutes everything that exists. That being understood, it must also be understood that *He exists in two different modes or aspects*: He is the ultimate reality, the divine Mind, the absolute Consciousness, the one conscious Spirit containing all—formless, invisible, and eternal, who exists as the conscious Self within all of us; *and* He is *also* the Creator who periodically projects His own Light-Energy that becomes the material particles that form the substance of the phenomenal universe in which we live and move.

So, we have an *apparent* duality within the nondual Reality: it is a duality between the one Spirit and Its Creative Power, between God and the world-substance, between Spirit and Matter. This apparent duality of Spirit and Matter is reiterated in the perceived duality of our own body and soul; but we must remember that the duality is *apparent* only. God is both the eternal Soul and the transient body, both the invisible Spirit and the 'material' universe. He exists in two different modes; He has two different aspects: He is the transcendent and eternal Spirit, the absolute Ground that constitutes our conscious Self; *and* He is *also* the projected Light-Energy projected fourteen billion years ago that gives form and 'material' substance to our world. So, while these two modes or aspects exist separately and independently, they are *both* God, they are both eternal. The material world

with all its illusory forms is indeed transient: it has a beginning and an end; but the Light-Energy of which it is constituted is nonetheless eternal. For, while the multi-formed appearance that is the material universe is eventually dissolved back into the pure Light of God of which it was made, that Light-Energy itself, by virtue of its divine nature, lives eternally in God.

I would like to propose a simple remedy to the confusion that often arises when discussing the nonduality that underlies the apparent duality: If you don't care to use the terms "Purusha" and "Prakrti" to represent the two aspects of Divinity, then regard the one Spirit, the Divine Mind or Supreme Self, as "God I"; and regard the Light-Energy that constitutes the material world as "God II". I feel that, with the implementation of this terminology, confusion will not arise, and it will become clear that there is only God I and God II, and that it is to be recognized hereafter that God, in His dual aspects, constitutes everything that exists.¹

NOTE:

1. I can't help thinking that, had Descartes truly understood that Mind and Body are both constituted of God, he would have found a solution to his Cartesian duality in the realization that the nondual One, while appearing to us to be a duality, is *in Itself* a single unified and integrated reality. This fact is not known through reason but is realized and subjectively confirmed in the mystical vision, for, as a soul experiences itself as the all-inclusive Divinity, it knows no distinction between its form and its essence, its body and its mind; all is in fact experienced as the one indivisible Self.

Where Is God?

In the days before the modern revolution in astronomy and cosmology, back when the heavens were conceived in the old Aristotelian/Ptolemaic manner as concentric spheres within spheres, we knew where heaven was and where God dwelt. It was up there! All was one great multi-layered reality, enclosing both the terrestrial world and the heavenly world above. A stationary sphere, surrounding the fifty-five concentric transparent spheres rotating at different velocities, was the domain of the "Prime Mover", God's heaven. But today, the heavens are no longer beyond our ken: our telescopes reveal that the clusters of galaxies go on and on for billions of light-years; and heaven—the eternal abode of God—has been evicted from the upper regions of our universe, or has, at least been understood to be noumenal.

Today, we understand that the eternal abode of God upon which the universe of time and space is projected is a timeless, dimensionless realm of Consciousness coexisting with and underlying the physical world as its substratum. And while we can accurately determine particular locations in the physical universe, there is no method of determining the location of God's place in His eternal realm. For God, and heaven itself, are *noumena*¹ — spirit entities, having no physical location in time and space.

How, then, can we answer the question of '*Where* does God live?' 'From whence did He fling forth this vast universe of space and time, and from where does He watch and govern the doings of creatures here on earth?' One answer is, 'Why, from right here, of course!' God's invisible Spirit-realm transcends our own time-bound spaces, to be sure; but these two, the noumenal and the phenomenal realms, the spiritual and the material, are nonetheless parallel, synchronous, and inseparable. All the heavenly bodies, and earth and every human being, is formed of, permeated and inhabited by the Divine; therefore, God is not in some distant heaven, but is here, co-habiting this universe, co-existing in and constituting this very present here and now.

God, the Divine Mind, is the causal agent for the production of the Energy of which universal matter consists, and so it is natural for us to regard Him as separate from, and other than, the material universe. But this universe—with you and I in it—is co-present with the Divine Mind. Though we use language suggestive of temporal and spatial relations, such as 'emanated from', or 'dwelling within', we must understand that the material world has no spatio-temporal relationship to the Divine Mind, its noumenal substratum, but is *co-existent* and *co-present* with It. The Divine Mind is the Ground of which the universe is the figure. The universe is not somewhere outside It, or even "within" It; but is made of It, permeated by It and co-extensive with It.

All is indeed permeated by, encompassed by, and contained "in" the One. The Divine Mind acts as the bridge between eternity and time by sending forth Its Energy to become a substantial material world of spatio-temporal form superimposed "upon" Itself—the one eternal Consciousness. We err when we think of God as being in some distant realm apart from the universe He created. The two are not separate in place; they overlap, one superimposed, or "intraposed on" ² the other. The eternal One is the Spirit-Ground of all appearance. He is equally present everywhere. There is no place where He is not in His fullness. Truly, "in Him we live and move and have our being."

The One is the *only* one. He is without a second. Strictly speaking, He has no ‘inside’ or ‘outside’; so, while we may say, figuratively, that all is ‘contained within’ Him, there is really no spatial relationship such as “within” for the noumenal. The Divine Mind is the creative faculty of the One, but we cannot say that it is “within” Him either. Terms of spatial relationship, such as “within” or “outside of”, are applicable to phenomena, but not to noumena. Nevertheless, the Divine Mind cannot be separated from the One. Can you separate the creative power of your own mind from your consciousness? I don’t think so. Your mind’s creative power is integral to your consciousness. Likewise, the attempt to separate the Creative Power (the Divine Mind, God) from the transcendent Absolute (the One, the Godhead,) is a futile exercise. His power of creating is inherent and integral to Him. They are not two. Recall the Biblical dictum: “I am the one Lord. There is no other beside Me.”³

Plotinus spoke of the ‘emanation’ of Soul *from* the Divine Mind, but we mustn’t be deluded into thinking that this connotes an exterior out-flowing, similar to the case of photons of light streaming from the Sun in the material universe. Nothing is *outside of* or *other than* the Divine Mind. The relation of Soul to the Divine Mind is not a spatial one; they are not two. As the various thoughts in one man’s mind exist together in that mind, so do all souls exist together in the Divine Mind. In short, we are merged in God; everything is merged in God. How could it be otherwise? Where else could we be?

We are able to see God ‘reflected’ in and as the phenomenal world around us, but it is only within our own souls that we are able to *know* Him directly. This is because it is the conscious Soul in us that is, in fact, the Divine Mind, the all-pervading Spirit. That self into which we look is truly none other than Him. His Consciousness is our consciousness. We are comprised of His awareness and His Light-energy. He is both our conscious awareness and our form, comprising both the fabric and the sentience of our existence. If we could see into our nature clearly, we would realize that we ourselves are entirely Divine. Nothing else but God exists; every form is His own. No other ‘you’ exists but Him.

God, being so close, is easily accessible to us;
 He is always within the reach of our call,
 Always ready to provide succor in our need,
 And the light of wisdom in our times of darkness.
 Our own soul is the conduit of this accessibility,

This communication, this succor and this wisdom.
 In our own soul, when the chattering of the mind is silenced,
 And all our attention is focused on His presence,
 There He is found in the very qualities of the soul;
 For we are rays from His brilliance,
 Diminished only by our hesitance
 To manifest His light.

He is the air in our nostrils and the earth under our feet.
 He is the light of our eyes and the music in our breast.
 He is the bright awareness that lives as you,
 And He is the storied tale your living tells.
 You dance in His firelight; you float on His sea.
 You breathe by His breathing; you move by His joy.

No matter how far you may gaze into the rolling
 Galaxies cascading above;
 No matter what dark or clownish scenes you dream,
 Or terrestrial landscapes you cross;
 Whether in the depths of the ocean, or on the chilly
 Snow-peaked mountains,
 And even in the abyss of death and darkness,
 You are ever within His close embrace.
 You cannot leave Him, nor scamper from His sight.
 For you are in Him as a fish is in the ocean
 Or a bird is in the sky.
 His love surrounds and holds you,
 And He sees all through your eyes.

NOTES:

1. The word, *noumenon*, or *noumena* (pl.) is intended in the sense in which it was understood in classical Greece, as a derivative of *nous*, or 'mind', and signifies those things that exist solely as mind or thoughts of the mind. According to Sextus Empiricus, '*What is thought [noumena] is opposed to what appears or is perceived [phenomena]*'. (See *Pyrrhonism*, Book I, Chapter 13). This division is specifically applicable when we are speaking of the thought-production of the Divine Mind (e.g., *Nous* in Platonist philosophy): *noumena* are immaterial entities, such as the Divine Mind itself, 'souls', or 'heaven', whose existence can only be apprehended by a special, non-sensory, faculty that some have called 'intellectual intuition', and others refer to as 'spiritual perception' or 'mystical vision'.

The eighteenth-century philosopher, Immanuel Kant, attempted to alter our modern usage of the word, *noumena*, in his book, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant believed that, even if such immaterial entities as *noumena* existed, there was no reliable sensory or non-sensory human faculty by which they could be apprehended and known. He therefore reassigned the word, *noumenon*, which had long meant a mind or mind-born reality, to mean the signification of a thing—not as it appears to our senses and understanding, but as that thing is *in itself*—thus intending to render the word inapplicable as a useful human term or concept. In fact, Kant only succeeded in proving the sad fact that he himself had not been graced with spiritual vision and was therefore unable to speak knowledgeably on the subject of *noumena*.

2. You will have noticed that I used the words “in”, “on”, and “upon” to suggest the relationship of the universe and God. That’s because it is almost impossible to avoid words that suggest a physical relationship between them. As illustration of how ill-suited phenomenally-based language is to describe noumenal realities—such as the relationship of the eternal to the temporal—try to come up with a word in the English language that indicates the simultaneous presence of a noumenal and a phenomenal reality existing in the same place. Shankara called it a “superimposition”; but even that word does not fit the reality perfectly.

3. “I am the one Lord. There is no other beside Me,” from the Old Testament, *Second Isaiah*: 45:4; probably borrowed from the Egyptian “Papyrus of Ani”, dating from the 30th century B.C.E. (Budge, Wallis, *Egyptian Religion*, N.Y., University Books, 1959; pp. 37-40), wherein is found the following text:

“God is one and alone, and none other exists with Him; God is the One, the one who has made all things. ...He has endured for countless ages, and He shall endure to all eternity. God is a spirit, ... the Divine Spirit. He is a mystery to His creatures, and no man knows how to know Him. ... He has made the universe, and He has created all that is in it; He has stretched out the heavens and founded the earth. What His heart conceived came to pass straightway, ... and it shall endure forever.

God, Himself, is existence. He lives in all things and lives over all things. ...He multiplies Himself millions of times, and He possesses multitudes of forms and multitudes of members. God is life, and it is only through Him that man lives. ... God is merciful unto those who reverence Him, and He hears those who call upon Him. He protects the weak against the strong, and He hears the cry of him that is bound in fetters. ...God knows those who

know Him; He rewards those who serve Him, and He protects those who follow Him.”

Time And Eternity

Newton believed in an absolute time; a time which is always the same for everyone in every situation. Einstein demolished that view by showing that the measure of the passage of time is relative to motion—differing by the variation in motion between two perceivers. The Cosmologist, Stephen Hawking, further clarified time’s non-absolute status by noting that “time is just a coordinate that labels events in the universe; it does not have any meaning outside the space-time manifold.”¹ Indeed, space and time (space-time) only come into existence along with the birth of the universe. Modern Cosmologists assert that around fourteen billion years ago, an incredibly large amount of energy unaccountably burst on the scene and explosively expanded to produce the mass-energy that constitutes this entire universe. In that instant when that energy let loose as the “Big Bang” and began to expand as the plasma that would become particulate matter, space and time also came into existence. Before that, space-time did not exist. To the question, “What was when space-time was not?”, the answer is, “Eternity”.

Now, from a purely theoretical point of view, Eternity can be a very daunting concept, one which Cosmologists as a rule refrain from considering. But for those of us who have been privileged to *experience* Eternity directly through what is called Mystical Vision, it is neither a theory nor a concept. We know, with absolute certainty, that it is the underlying foundation, support, and projecting power upon which this universe of time and space exists. We know that time exists only in the universal manifestation, with a recurrent beginning and end, and that in Eternity there is no such thing as time – no past, no present, no future, no projected universe at all. For Eternity is just another name for the absolute Consciousness that is the Ground and support of the universal projection; and it is the source of the (limited) consciousness which sentient beings experience within themselves. Eternity is the upper reach of Existence, to which the mind may be drawn, if God so wills; and there it is seen that time has no absolute existence but exists only as an elemental byproduct of the universal expansion of space projected upon the one eternal Mind. It is a measure, as spatial location is, of the progression of universal manifestation.

This universal manifestation is superimposed upon Eternity, as a dream is superimposed upon the consciousness of a dreamer. One could say that the temporal universe and Eternity exist in separate dimensions – as the dreamer

and his dream-world exist in separate dimensions, levels, or realms of consciousness. Eternity is the highest level of Consciousness; It is experienced by an individual mind that is graciously lifted by the Divine to Its own state. In that state of Grace, the divine Consciousness completely supplants one's limited individuality, raising one's awareness to Its own place, and revealing one's ultimate identity with Itself. This experience of Eternity is very pleasant. It is single, perfect aloneness, blissfully content. It sends forth a new universe in every breath, while in the same alternating breath annihilating the old. It is so simple and unencumbered that it cannot be conveyed in speech. It is the ancient, unnamed God. It occupies its own place, its own dimension, quite sovereign and alone. The temporal array spewed out in each breath offers no distraction or interruption to the sweetness of Its homogeneous peace. It is its own perpetual delight and satisfaction.

The cosmos, quite a different thing, originates from Him, and dissolves in Him; and time derives from Him, though He is utterly beyond time's reach. It is as a dream, emanating from the mind of a dreamer, exists in its own place, depicting a drama, originating, then reaching a culmination, but in no way affecting the dreamer; even though each of the dream characters is, in reality, the dreamer, and once awakened, returns to the awareness of its true source and Self.

This projected 'real' universe of time and spatial extension is nothing more than a dream. We who live within it are all none other than the one Eternal Mind, and on awaking shall once again know our blissfully eternal Self. And even now, in this temporal moment, in this spatial unfoldment of the cosmic dream superimposed upon the eternal Consciousness, we are in truth that one eternal Self, blissfully content, fully awake, in our solitary, timeless, spaceless place on high. And while this imaged time, begun in that first instant of cosmic appearance along with space, marches on, we momentary creatures move to its rhythms without knowing why or whence, yet happily knowing, by the Creator's grace, our everlasting Self beyond time, and singing praise and glory to His name.

NOTE:

1. Stephen Hawking & W. Israel (eds.), *300 Years of Gravitation*, Cambridge University Press, 1989; p. 651; quoted in P. Coveney and R. Highfield, *The Arrow of Time*, N.Y., Ballantine Books, 1991; p. 99.

The Greatest Secret

Only the One, the Godhead, is *eternally* real. The universe, made of His form-producing Energy, appears to be real, but it is only a transient mirage, a colorful illusion. And yet this illusory universe is filled with and enlivened by His all-pervading Consciousness. He is its Soul, its animating power, and is thereby the life and soul of every being in it. All the forms appearing in this universe are made of His Divine Energy, but, alas, the briefly appearing forms in this phenomenal universe quickly change and vanish; in fact, the entire universe is only an illusory appearance, a fleeting mirage; while *He*, and the Energy He contains, lives forever, undivided, unchanged. He alone, the one eternal Consciousness, is eternally real. And *that* is who you must one day realize you are. For that eternal One is the origin and substance of your being, the Soul of your soul, and your only true Identity. It is the one eternal Self you have always been and will always be.

The Maker of The Game

How is it even possible to talk about God when we have so little real knowledge about Him? We are aware that He transcends the universe as pure Spirit, or Mind, or Consciousness, and yet we are also aware that He constitutes the universe itself. He is both our inner conscious Self and the form and substance of everything that we experience. At times we tend to think of Him as *within* us, for we are able to come in contact with Him only within our conscious minds; but, upon reflection, it seems more reasonable to assume that the entire phenomenal universe, including ourselves, is contained in Him; and that our intimate conscious contact with Him is therefore a result of our integral presence *within* Him.

In our philosophy, we hold that the material universe is His creation, made of Himself in some way, perhaps as an emanated substance such as Energy in the form of light transformed into matter. We have ascertained only recently that the latest burst of that emanated divine Light occurred around fourteen billion years ago as 'the Big Bang' or 'Great Radiance'; and we know that, ever since then, the material universe has been expanding. Our mystical perceptions as well as our scientific reasoning leads us to believe that, eventually, this expansion will turn to contraction, and the whole thing will collapse in upon itself, only to begin once again in a similar deliberate outrushing of light turned into mass and energy.

We humans relate familiarly with the phenomenal/material world, but the world of Spirit, or the universal Mind, is much more unfamiliar and remote.

The nature of the relationship between our own individual soul/mind and the transcendent Mind that is God is not at all clear. We feel that there *is* such an intimate relationship, and mystical experience suggests that each of us is integrally connected with that transcendent Consciousness, and, at some level, synonymous with It; but how all this is possible is not even remotely understood. To make matters more difficult, the awareness of His immanent presence is, for many of us, notoriously inconstant and tenuous at best.

We must believe that one day our understanding of His nature will become substantially greater, and we shall become more consciously aware of His immanent presence. At present, we must acknowledge our utter lack of true spiritual knowledge, and our nearly complete reliance on faith and the occasional ‘mystical’ glimpses to guide us. Either our present state is simply a prolonged evolutionary stage of ignorance which will eventually pass in time, or it is exactly the way He intends it always to be. Presently, we do not know with certainty what is the objective of our participation in this adventure—or even whether or not there *is* a definite objective.

It may well be that our collective ignorance regarding God's purposes is a necessary requirement to assure the trust and faith on which our individual judgment and responsibility must rely. To be absolutely certain of His will and overly confident of His presence and Grace might in fact diminish our individual merit and detract from the adventure of life as He intends it. But, of course, speculating on God's purposes or motives is a very uncertain and unverifiable business. His intentions are what they are, and, despite the presence of hints occasionally granted, and the occasional glimpses of our divine Identity, we are each clearly responsible for our own judgment in this three-dimensional adventure called “life”, and responsible also for the quality of our own individual relationship to the Master and Maker of the game. I feel certain, however, that, over the course of time's evolution, each of us shall eventually reach the finish line and attain lasting certainty of our eternal Identity in Him. Therefore, to all a heartfelt God bless and Godspeed!

The Purpose of God's Creation

It seems to me that the summit of divine evolution comes when God, living and experiencing *as* a human soul in a human body, awakens to the truth that all this is Himself, that He is and has always been the one all-pervading Existence. God gets to experience the joy of this revelation not once, but billions of times in countless different forms over an immense span of time and space. That, I believe, is the hidden purpose of His universal

manifestation: to slowly evolve as human souls over lifetimes in utter blindness of ignorance, and then, in a time of His own choosing, to suddenly awaken each of these beings from within themselves to the greatness and beauty and joyfulness of His own limitless and unfathomable being. The thrill of enlightenment multiplied billions of times, the sudden unveiling of His perfection in billions of souls that turn out to be Himself—this is His evolutionary game! This is the answer to the question, 'Why does He do it? What is the purpose of His Creation? I believe it is for this long prepared and frequently experienced Joy! It is an awesomely involved adventure, a prolonged drama, played out on countless far-flung stages, in countless unsuspecting hearts. each one culminating in Joy—the ever-new and unimaginable Joy of the discovery of one's own unbounded Self. What an exquisitely marvelous and satisfying game He has devised! Praise God!

The Only One

The false 'I'—the individual person we think we are—doesn't really exist! It's merely a mental phenomenon, an imaginary being. The true 'I'—the only one who really exists—is the all-pervading Spirit. That is your only true identity. You are That. I am That. We imagine that we have a separate and distinct identity, but it is the one Spirit alone who is living as you and as me. So—can you grasp it? When the sage asks you to inquire “Who am I?” he's asking you to become aware of the divine Reality who is the true and everlasting identity of everyone.

Though you are unable at this time to know your Self as all-pervading, the truth is that you are in the clouds, and you are in the gritty soil. You are the pulse of the turtle; you are the clanging bells of joy that thrill the hearts of all who know joy. It is you that stirs in the heart as a rising song; it is your love that flows throughout the world. Here, there, everywhere, it is you alone who exists.

Whether you objectify that all-pervading Divinity as other—as 'He'—or know that divine Self as 'I' within, the divine Reality is all there is in this world and beyond. 'He' and 'I' are the same. It's true: 'I' and 'the Father' are one. Say it in your heart, and know it is true. Whatever name stirs you to remembrance of the one divine Spirit—sing that name in your heart and let the blissful awareness of His endless presence continually fill your soul.

This Is The Truth

This is the truth: Nowhere is there anything other than God.
 This world is a drama performed by one actor in a multitude of roles.
 We, His distinctly variant roles, are nothing but Him!
 What can we do but dance to His tune?
 He has made Himself into all these worlds and all these beings,
 And we are but His manifold forms.
 Though we appear to be independent entities,
 Our characteristics and our inclinations are all programmed by Him,
 And enacted by Him.
 Everything being done is being done by God!

Whatever is to be done in the future will also be done by Him;
 And so, glory be to God—in the highest and in the lowest!
 Glory be to the One who lives as you and who lives as me!
 Waves on His ocean, we think we're distinctly our own,
 Unaware that we're forever inseparable from Him.
 Calling Himself "I", He lives us, He breathes us.
 Only in the depths of His Grace are we able to know Him.

We do not see the transcendent God, and yet we see His handiwork. It is only natural, therefore, that we think of God as being somewhere else, far above us, as a king is above his subjects. Since ancient times, when primitive men roamed the earth, God has been regarded as a transcendent overlord, separate from this world and its creatures, who dwells in some distant yet ever-present heavenly realm. But what marvelous news! When He finally lifts the veil and reveals Himself to His devotee, God is seen to be all-pervasive! He is seen to be the very fabric of one's being, the sole Identity of everyone. It is this knowledge that illumined Jesus, prompting him to declare 'I and the Father are one!' This was not the result of Jesus' unique paternity, nor was it some wild fantasy by which Jesus was deluded; it was the revelation of the hidden truth by which Jesus became enlightened!

To a devoted person who calls out lovingly to His God, it is not immediately apparent that he himself is a manifestation of God; but when God reveals Himself within, that person knows his own deathless Self, his own oneness with God, and knows that nothing else exists in this world but that One. God has spread Himself out as this vast universe, and He is immediately present as our own selves, accessible through our own conscious minds. God is the life that lives you; He flows through that life in every breath. He is the joy that thrills your soul, and He is the sweet awareness of Being that fills you. Remember Him and praise Him in every thought and word and

know every moment that He is manifest as you, that you are nothing else but His own divine Self.

Look Around You!

Without any doubts, this world, this vast universe, is made *by* God, *of* God, and resides *in* God. For there is no other Reality but Him. God is the one all-inclusive Spirit, or Mind, in whom everything and everyone has its being. This truth has been clearly revealed through Grace to countless individual souls in an enlightening inner vision. If there was something else—something other than Him, it is in that divine inner vision that we would learn of it. But it is there, in that divine revelation, that we learn that we are made of God-stuff, that there is nothing else! We learn that it is the One Great Mind who brings all to light, and that it is He in whom everything resides and of whom everything consists. There, by His Grace, we learn our oneness with Him. There, two-ness cannot even arise as an imagination. You will be happy to know that, by searching for Him within, you too can experience His Grace. You too can know Him as the one and only Reality and solve this great riddle of Nonduality conclusively for yourself.

Look around you! Do you not see that every blade of grass is bursting with Consciousness? Do you not see that every chunk of gravel is alive with Consciousness? Do you not see how perfectly timed the planets move, how the Sun and moon tell the unveiling of the moments in your life?

O what good fortune is this—to see with the eyes of the Divine, to bathe in the bliss of His living presence, to delight in the heavenly breezes wafting in the summer light! Look around you!

All Things Move Together of One Accord

*All things move together of one accord.
Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.¹*

Sometimes we forget that all that exists in this world is created and controlled by God. All things do indeed move together in accord with His divine Will; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain. This is an unmistakable truth experienced by the mystic, and I understand that for all others, it is not at all evident, and must remain merely a matter of faith. It is so easy to be misled and to forget the infallibility of the Divine Will, because oftentimes the affairs of the world appear to our

limited vision to be in error, or random, and ungoverned by His just and perfect Will. But time will prove all things right. His evolutionary plan and His vision will be vindicated in the end. Therefore, hold this faith above all: that everything is connected to His purpose, and all is ordered and occurs according to His will. Praise God!

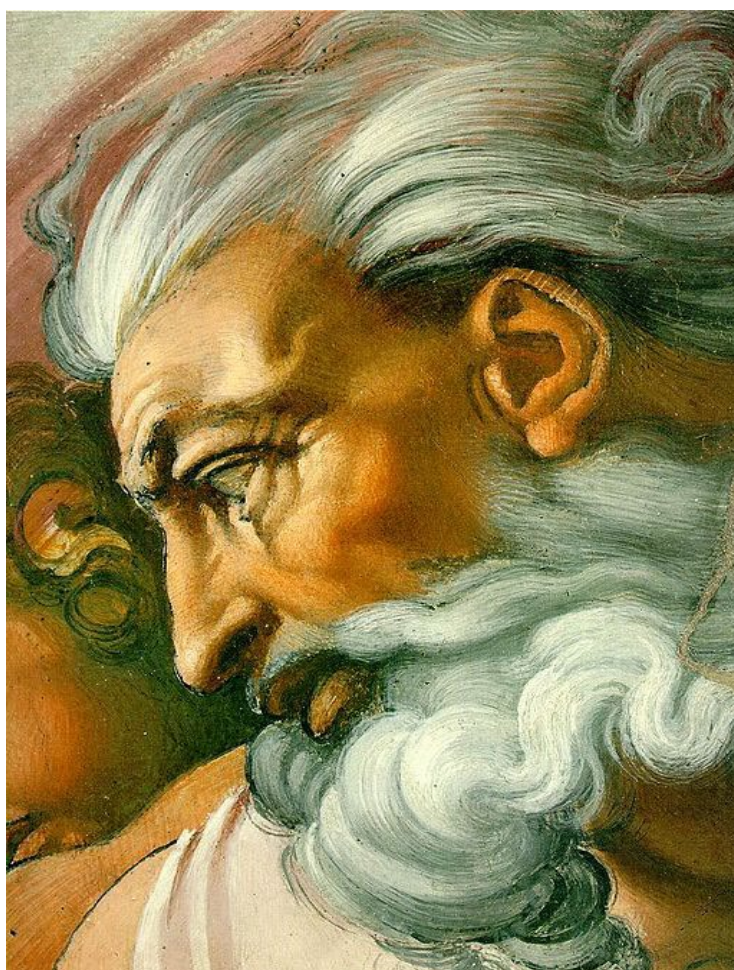
NOTE:

1. from “Song of The Self” by Swami Abhayananda, in *The Supreme Self*, South Fallsburg, N.Y., Atma Books, 1984.

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11. HOW GOD MADE THE WORLD

by Swami Abhayananda



How God Made The World ¹ (6-7-2013; last revised 7-12-21)

Existence

The ‘creation’ of the world appears to have been accomplished by a great bursting forth of God’s essence—which we call “light”—occurring around fourteen billion years ago. There is abundant scientific evidence to suggest that an immense field of high-frequency light suddenly appeared and transformed itself into particulate entities which combined to constitute the many observable forms that make up our world. Over time, stars, planets, oceans formed, allowing for the eventual accommodation of God’s life and consciousness in every field and stream. In short, God produced a world of form from Himself; and since it is contained within Himself, every particle of it is inhabited by His Consciousness. Clearly, He is all, and all is He.

When we speak of God, we must understand that we are speaking of an infinite, eternal, and omnipotent Mind. It follows therefore that whatever is manifested by Him—i.e., ‘the Great Radiance’ and the ensuing ‘material’ universe, including ourselves—is necessarily a *mental* creation, existing only as an imagination within that Divine Mind. In other words, this universe and all within it is a figment of God’s imagination. He is the only one who really is; and all these forms and all these “I’s” exist within that one infinite Mind, and for that reason are permeated by Him—just as our own thought-forms are permeated by our own conscious minds in which those thought-forms are created and exist.

A personage in a dream is not only permeated with the consciousness of the dreamer, that personage is *made of* the consciousness of the dreamer. He is essentially *identical* with the consciousness of the dreamer. In just the same way, we are not only permeated by God’s Consciousness, we are *made of* His essence; we are projections of His light. And our consciousness is essentially identical with the Consciousness of God. When we look deeply within ourselves, we discover that we are manifestations of the one Mind, and essentially identical to the one Mind. For, just as a dream-person looking within to inquire who he is, would discover that he is in fact the dreamer, so do we, inquiring within, discover that we are the limitless Mind in whom all things and all beings exist.

‘But how,’ we might wonder, ‘could an entire universe that appears so substantial and physical be a mere imagination, a Mind-born

projection of Thought?’ And the answer might be found in the recent results of science’s continuing investigation into the nature of matter. The science of physics, for all its denial of the supernatural origin and nature of the universe, has done more in the last one hundred years to dispel the notion of the substantiality of the material world than all the theologians throughout history. During that time, the discoveries of physicists have reminded us of the declarations of the Upanishads that the appearance of matter, i.e., the phenomenal universe, is an illusion, a product of Maya, the creative power of the One (*Brahman*). Contemporary science has shown that the universe does indeed consist of an Energy that transforms into material particles; but these material particles are really nothing more than submicroscopic electromagnetic impulses, mere ‘points of Energy’, interacting in such a way that the appearance of substance is produced—forming, in other words, an illusory world.

How do these “points” or “fields” of Energy, these so-called ‘wave-particles’ that began as “photons” of light, manage to produce the illusion of form and substance? In the hot, dense environment in which they began, the intensely energetic photons of which that initial radiation consisted collided with one another and spontaneously transformed into particles such as quarks and electrons—which combined to form protons and neutrons—which combined to form atoms; and the atoms combined to form molecules, which combined in vast numbers to form perceptible gases, liquids, and solids in a variety of sizes and configurations.²

The elementary ‘particles’ themselves are unimaginably tiny: according to the physicists of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, “protons are 100,000 times smaller than the simplest atom, hydrogen; and quarks are 10,000 times smaller than protons. For comparison, if a hydrogen atom were six miles across, a quark would still measure less than four-thousandths of an inch.”³

Clearly, the atoms of which all perceivable gases, liquids, and solids consist, are mostly empty space in their interior. In fact, physicists tell us that all of what we call *Matter* is 99.999999999999 percent empty space; the other infinitesimal part seems to be nothing more than energy wavelets and intangible forces. Subatomic wave-particles consist of insubstantial electromagnetically charged impulses held in proximate “orbits” about one another by invisible forces to form the appearance of much grander substantial entities. And these appearances are multiplied in infinite profusion and variety as if by some magician’s hand, to appear before our eyes as a multitudinous world of objects. And so, this ‘material’ world, this phenomenal reality of ours, is a marvelous magic

show of truly immense proportions!

This Light, these particles and forces—what a marvelous universe they make! How real it all seems! A great burst of Light, and all congeals into a universe of form and color, intelligence and emotion, *sturm und drang*. Time drags the whole process out, making it all seem quite natural, making it seem, from the perspectives of our individual lives, a long and gradual evolution. But, from God's eternal perspective, His Mind-born creation is accomplished in its fullness in an instant.

Is this Light-energy by which God forms the universe simply the substance of His Thought—or what is analogous to Thought in a Divine Mind? Who can say? Ultimately, all radiation consists of vibratory movement at various levels of frequency within a specific medium. But in the case of the universal continuum, the medium is divine and unknowable. We have identified a whole array of different 'wave-particles' that make up the material world, but that does not mean that these constituent entities are really separate substantial 'things' in themselves. We have simply given names to the common impulses and forces inherent in God's Light-illusion, as one might examine and give names to the cohesive thought-constituents within a dream. This world-appearance does indeed seem substantial; but it is God's illusion—as the light-circle produced by a whirling flame is an illusion.

In the aggregate of trillions of these illusory wave-particles, a vast, complex, visual illusion is produced—which, by reflecting millions of photons onto our retinas, produces electrical impulses in our brains, which in turn produces an image to our conscious minds; while the gentle forces produced by the motion of electrons presents a tactile sensation in another section of our brains, and is interpreted in our minds as the sensation of touch, confirming our impression of substantial form. But it is only a marvelous masquerade of light—God's light; and it is all His grand illusion.

Consciousness.

Now, let us discuss consciousness. Over three thousand years ago, sages of Egypt and Israel proclaimed that life and consciousness was inspired or otherwise instilled into man by God's breath; and that this 'breath' or 'spark' of God's Consciousness constituted one's "soul". Some others, like Plato and Plotinus, thought that God's conscious "Soul" was not infused exclusively into man, but into the entire universe, guiding and regulating every aspect of it from within. To this day, these age-old concepts constitute the framework of our theology and the imagery of our religious imagination. Our minds continue even now to operate in these established patterns, utilizing these ancient conceptualizations, to which we have become habituated for so long.

But, as we have already suggested, there is another, perhaps more accurate, way of viewing the permeation of man and matter by God's conscious Spirit: not by seeing it as an "infusion" or "inspiration", but rather as the 'containment' of the phenomenal universe within the one Mind. Consider how our own individual human consciousness permeates our thoughts and dream-images. Our thoughts and mental images are permeated by our consciousness because these thoughts and images are contained *within* our conscious minds. May we not conclude that, likewise, the Consciousness of God, the Divine Mind, permeates the universe because the universe is contained *within* God? After all, where else would a Divine Mind's creations exist but *within* Himself? ⁴

There is one Consciousness. It is the Consciousness of the One Mind. And every object in this phenomenal universe exists within that one conscious Mind, is constituted of that Mind, and partakes of that one Divine Consciousness to the degree that it is capable. The various objects of this manifest universe move and operate, not by individual forces or laws of physics, but in and by that One.⁵ When the individual mind becomes illumined by that Consciousness, and experiences its identity with it, it is able to see that: "all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain." Who, then, is doing what? In Him we live and move. In Him one Will operates throughout. And we, mere dust motes dancing in His sunbeam, are swallowed and encompassed in His light.

The Divine Mind, which is the source of Consciousness, is beyond time and space, and all manifestation; It is the eternal Identity of all that exists. It transcends the universe, while constituting its essence—as a dreaming mind transcends its dream-images, while constituting their

essence. Consciousness is not the property of matter, or of any individual being. It is not produced by any material process; but rather is a Divine stream of Intelligence filling the entire universe. It is the fundamental nature of Being, the foundation of the phenomenal universe, and the light of awareness filling it.

By following our own consciousness back to its Source, we are able to discover that one Self.⁶ That Self is God. He is the one Source of the material universe, and He is the life and awareness pervading it. But, of course, we must come to know Him for ourselves. Our soul/mind must be illumined by the eternal Light itself and drawn into Its hidden depths. We do not come to know God through arguments and proofs, but by His grace. And though we may associate grace with this or that religion, it is universal and originates in God. To obtain that grace, all men focus their minds on Him through prayer and contemplative longing, and He shines His Light on whom He will. Those who have received that grace, realize beyond all doubt that their bodies are His light-forms, and that they are animated and made conscious by the all-pervading presence of His living Consciousness.

The personal consciousness that we regard as our “soul” derives its existence and its inherent bliss from the Consciousness of the Divine Mind in whom it exists. But souls *do* have a semblance of individual existence. While the Divine Mind, the Self, is universal and without characteristics of Its own, It manifests as a multitude of individual psyches, or souls. Each of these individual souls possesses its own unique characteristics and evolves from birth to birth toward the knowledge and awareness of its one true eternal Identity. The individual soul is therefore a pretended, or imagined, identity of the Self, whose only actual and realizable Identity is the one indivisible Mind.

Each individual soul is confined to a body that defines the extent of its individual being in the phenomenal universe. We regard what is not within that bodily limitation as “outside” of us and “other” than us. But God has no body or any limit to His extent. There is no “outside” of Him; no “other”. Even if He were to create an outside, it would be within Him. God is an infinite, eternal Mind; He transcends space and time. Space and time are His creations, and they exist within Him. *Whatever* He creates is within Him. We, and the entire universe, exist within Him. Our own minds are limited; each one has its own perspective and considers itself to be the “subject”; and what is external to it is regarded as the “object”. But in God’s divine Consciousness, subject and object are one. He is unlimited and undivided. His Consciousness pervades everything and

everyone.

We must understand that the separation of body and soul, of Matter and Spirit, exists only in the temporal world of appearance. In the Eternal (the Divine Mind), this duality, this separation, does not exist. In the Divine Mind, they are indistinguishable. Like water and ice in a glass, they are separable in appearance though they are one in essence. Those who have 'seen' into their own eternal reality have realized that their body and soul, their consciousness and their form, are one living reality in God. The mystic, therefore, while experiencing his identification with the Divine Mind, experiences himself, not simply as Soul, but as an illimitable awareness that is *both* universal Soul *and* universal Energy/Matter. In the Divine Mind, the unmanifest Light and the manifested Light together form all that is. Ultimately, they are one, as they both derive from the same One, and are resolved in the same One.

We are made of the Consciousness and Energy of God. His Consciousness manifests as our conscious soul, and His Energy is sent forth as light to establish the material universe at the 'Big Bang', 'Big Burst', 'Great Radiance', or whatever you wish to call it. And the ultimately true Origin, Source, and Father of that field of Consciousness and Energy, alone exists. All that exists is His. It is His projection, His exuberant radiance. Nothing else exists but that One. Our sense of 'I' too is Him. 'I' am the one and only 'I' that is. My consciousness is His consciousness. My body, as well as the whole universe, is His manifest form. I am in Him, and He is in me. I and the Father are one.

If you ask a beam of sunlight, "Who are you?" it will answer, "I am the Sun." If you ask a wave on the sea, "Who are you?" it will answer, "I am the ocean." If you ask a soul, "Who are you?" it must answer, "I am the One in all. I am He who alone exists now and forever. I am the light of the one Sun; I am a wave on the one Sea; I am a living breath of the one Life. I am in all that is seen or unseen. I am the One in all."

Jesus said, "I am the Light that is over all things. I am all: From me all has come forth, and to me all returns. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."⁷

Unfortunately, there are many who believe that this is a truth that applies only to one unique historical figure; but it is a *universal truth*, a truth for all, and a truth to be realized: *I* am not merely this body, not just this spark of consciousness, nor merely the entire manifested universe; I am the Source of

the universe, and the universe itself. I am both the subject and the object. There is nothing else here but I AM. Listen to what the great Shankaracharya said:

The fool thinks, 'I am the body'. The intelligent man thinks, 'I am an individual soul united with the body'. But the wise man, in the greatness of his knowledge and spiritual discrimination, sees the Self as [the only] reality, and thinks, 'I am Brahman'.⁸

I am that Brahman, one without a second, the ground of all existences. I make all things manifest. I give form to all things. I am within all things, yet nothing can taint me. I am eternal, pure, unchangeable, absolute.

I am that Brahman, one without a second. Maya, the many-seeming, is merged in me. I am beyond the grasp of thought, the essence of all things. I am the truth. I am knowledge. I am infinite. I am absolute bliss.

I am beyond action; [I am] the reality which cannot change. I have neither part nor form. I am absolute. I am eternal. Nothing sustains me, I stand alone. I am one without a second.

I am the soul of the universe. I am all things, and above all things. I am one without a second. I am pure consciousness, single and universal. I am joy. I am life everlasting.⁹

You and I—we are alive in God. Become awake and sense Him—within you, around you, constituting your body and your awareness, the earth, the heavens. This ocean of existence is His. Nothing exists outside of God. To know God is to know your Self. It is to know the originating Mind of the Father, the One. It is to know the Source of all existence, the Source of all consciousness, and the Source of all bliss. What will you do with this knowledge? Praise Him in your thoughts, and in your words and in your actions. Find your delight in Him—seeing only Him, loving only Him, praising only Him.

God, being so close, is easily accessible to us;
He is always within the reach of our call,
Always ready to provide succor in our need,
And the light of wisdom in our times of darkness.
Our own soul is the conduit of this accessibility,
This communication, this succor and this wisdom.

In our own soul, when the chattering of the mind is silenced,
 And all our attention is focused on His presence,
 There He is found in the very qualities of the soul;
 For we are rays from His brilliance,
 Diminished only by our unwillingness
 To manifest His light.

He is the air in our nostrils and the earth under our feet.
 He is the light of our eyes and the music in our breast.
 He is the bright awareness that lives as you,
 And He is the storied tale your living tells.
 You dance in His firelight; you float on His sea.
 You breathe by His breathing; you move by His joy.

No matter how far you may gaze into the rolling
 Galaxies cascading above,
 No matter what dark or clownish scenes you dream,
 Or terrestrial landscapes you cross,
 In the depths of the ocean, or on the chilly
 Snow-peaked mountains,
 And even in the abyss of death and darkness,
 You are ever within His close embrace.

You cannot leave Him, nor scamper from His sight.
 For you are in Him as a fish is in the ocean
 Or a bird is in the sky.
 His love surrounds and holds you,
 And He sees all through your eyes.

Bliss

There is one spiritual issue on which science, secular society, and the various religious traditions all agree: the freedom and accountability of the human will. The ancient Jews were keenly aware of the fact that it was man's free will that allowed for the disobedience of God's will, as illustrated in their Biblical 'garden of Eden' story. Later, Christians declared that God sacrificed His own son on the cross to redeem 'believers' from that earlier 'Fall from grace'. Other spiritual teachers, such as the Buddha, Shankara and Plotinus, also postulate the human 'will to separateness' as the instigator of human suffering. Here, for example, is Plotinus' take on man's Fall:

What can it be that has brought the souls to forget the Father,
 God, and, though [they are] members of the Divine and

entirely of that world, to ignore at once themselves and It? The evil that has overtaken them has its source in self-will, in the entry into the sphere of process, and in the primal differentiation with the desire for self-ownership. They conceived a pleasure in this freedom and largely indulged their own motion. Thus, they were hurried down the wrong path, and in the end, drifting further and further, they came to lose even the thought of their origin in the Divine.¹⁰

The Jews, Christians, the Buddha, Shankara, Plotinus—all put the blame for human suffering upon the separative will of the individual. And rightly so, no doubt; for in the Divine Itself, there is no suffering. Had the One no hand, then, in the creation of the defiant soul? Must we not wonder if anything at all comes to pass that is not of His doing? The soul's ability to will freely—had He no hand in that? May it not be that our embodied existence in this spatio-temporal world is also His doing? Is it not possible that this going forth into the school of separate existence is, as the Vedantists assert, His play or sport? And is it not possible that we are sent forth into this material school to prove and improve, to be tested and to evolve in His knowledge, in His joy? It is indeed we who create suffering through ignorance and error; but it is He who comprises the essence of this soul with its capacity for willing, and it is He who fashioned this universal school for the soul's correcting. Can we imagine that He was ignorant of the outcome?

We are but waves on His infinite ocean; and while the wave's suffering of separation from the ocean might seem real enough to the wave, that separation is actually an illusion. Once the wave realizes its true nature, all suffering disappears. We are in a similar situation: unknowing, we suffer; knowing, we rejoice. It is not existence that constitutes suffering, but existence in delusion. When we awake to our Divine existence, all suffering vanishes. Is this not the message of all who have seen the truth?

All creatures, down to the smallest microbes, and up to the great apes, have the power of will; but only the creature known as man has the ability to know his Source and Ground as Spirit, and strive to overcome his merely fleshly impulses. Is that circumstance only accidental, or is there a purposeful evolution at work here? Man is the culmination of God's purposes; and only he is able to find within himself the eternal One. It's true that, in following his own appetites and cravings, man brings himself to know suffering; but even though the expanse presented before him is broad and vast and his opportunities many, experience leads him inexorably to wisdom; the Divine in him leads him eventually to Itself. The soul, being of Divine lineage, cannot long refuse the lure and fragrance

of its homeland. By its own power, or rather by the power of the Divine in it, the soul stirs and awakes in its proper time, follows the trail of bliss leading it home, and at last is illumined by the inner light of God to know the One in whom it lives, and from whom it has never been separated.

The separate identity you thought was your own, the body and soul you thought was yours, is in fact God's. There is no yours. That illusory separate identity, or individual ego, common to all embodied souls, is an extremely subtle and deceptive mirage. It masks the nondual reality, and it is dispelled only by the grace of God. This ego is a veil blinding us to and separating us from the awareness of our true Self, our Godhood; and it is a veil only He, the Divine Mind, can lift.

What *is* this ego that stands to block our view of eternity? How impossible it is to comprehend! It can't be grasped or dispelled or even held up to the light of knowledge. It seems that it is an imposed ignorance that automatically accompanies embodiment. In effect, it is our Lord who casts this dust in our eyes, blinding us to our true eternal Self; and He alone has the power to dispel it. No matter how we try to escape the ego's limiting perspective, we are steadfastly caught in its grip. It separates us out from our limitless being, squeezing us into a narrow individuality, hiding from us God's face and our own divinity in Him. We can only raise our eyes to Him in love and longing, praying that He will soon return us home once again to His all-inclusive awareness.

God's grace cannot be earned or deserved. It is freely given and may descend upon you at any time. It is experienced as an awakening to the Divine presence in yourself and in the world, and it fills your heart with a new love and joy, stirring your mind to a new understanding of the spiritual nature of life. When God's grace awakens you, your mind begins to turn gratefully to God, and a physical pleasure, like a chill rising up the spine, occasionally reminds you of His inward presence. In your desire to draw nearer to God in worshipful devotion, you spend long hours in contemplation and prayer. And in the moment when you become completely surrendered in silence to that Divine presence, He may lift from your mind the veil of separation and reveal that you and He are one. In that moment you will know the reality of God's immediate and all-embracing presence, the untranslatable, inconceivable, gladness of unlimited being that requires no explanation, no concepts, no theories, but clearly and self-evidently *is*. And you will live the rest of your life in the blissful awareness of the Truth.

Knowledge

When He reveals Himself in you, you will know that ‘He’ alone is, that ‘you’ are but one of His forms; and you will declare:

O my God, even this body is Thine own!
 Though I call to Thee and seek Thee amidst chaos,
 Even I who seemed an unclean pitcher amidst Thy waters —
 Even I am Thine own.

It will be immediately and abundantly clear to you that you are to God as a wave is to the ocean, as the mountains and the valleys are to the earth, as a pebble is to stone:

Does a wave cease to be of the ocean?
 Do the mountains and the gulfs cease to be of the earth?
 Or does a pebble cease to be stone?
 How can I escape Thee?
 Thou art even That which thinks of escape!

When He reveals Himself, the semblance of a separate identity vanishes in the One who alone is.

Even now, I speak the word, “Thou”, and create duality;
 I love, and create hatred;
 I am in peace, and am fashioning chaos;
 Standing on the peak, I necessitate the depths.

All such dualities are but mind-creations, each invention bringing into existence its opposite as well. These dualities exist only in the separative individual mind; when He merges your mind in His, all dualities are dissolved in His oneness. And you will know that:

Now weeping and laughing are gone;
 Night is become day;
 Music and silence are heard as one;
 My ears are all the universe.

All motion has ceased; everything continues.
 Life and death no longer stand apart.
 No I, no Thou; no now, or then.
 Unless I move, there is no stillness.

This is the Mind of God. Your separate mind is merged into His.

Nothing to lament, nothing to vanquish,
 Nothing to pride oneself on;
 All is accomplished in an instant.
 All may now be told without effort.
 Where is there a question?
 Where is the temple?
 Which the Imperishable, which the abode?

Here, the distinction between the imperishable Spirit and the bodily abode no longer exists. There is no separation here; in God there is only the One, the All. He is life. He is the source of joy, and He is also the source of our unknowing.

I am the pulse of the turtle;
 I am the clanging bells of joy.
 I bring the dust of blindness;
 I am the fire of song.
 I am in the clouds and in the gritty soil;
 In pools of clear water my image is found.

Look at your reflection! Is it not an image of God's manifest glory?

I am the dust on the feet of the wretched,
 The toothless beggars of every land.
 I have given sweets that decay to those that crave them;
 I have given my wealth unto the poor and lonely.
 My hands are open — nothing is concealed.

See how we chase after the things of the world that only crumble eventually to dust in our hands, while turning our backs on all that is eternal sweetness and light. The choice is ours, and ours alone.

All things move together of one accord;
 Assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.
 The Sun stirs the waters of my heart,
 And the vapor of my love flies to the four corners of the world;
 The moon stills me, and the cold darkness is my bed.

Perfect justice permeates all in a perfect unfolding, in a perfect rhythm; and every ending is followed by a new beginning.

I have but breathed, and everything is rearranged
 And set in order once again.
 A million worlds begin and end in every breath,
 And in this breathing, all things are sustained.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. This article is a condensation or capsulization of my book, *Body And Soul: An Integral Perspective (Third Edition)*, currently available on amazon's Kindle.
2. The question, 'How did God create the universe?' is one that is unanswerable. But, the most plausible theory, suggested by an enormous amount of evidence—that God produced from within Himself a great Light (an electromagnetic field) potentially containing all material forms and their evolutes—is here offered as the most probable beginning to the history of the universe:

Light is a unique form of energy, neither wave nor particle, though it can appear in either guise. It is not a substance, but an intangible and indefinable *essence* that some have likened to a mental rather than a physical reality; and yet all that we perceive as the physical, 'material' world is made of it. This 'stuff' called *light* is miraculously endowed with the ability to transform itself into what we call 'material' particles; and, even though we can describe and predict this transformation, it is clearly an *a priori* capability that can only be described as "miraculous". We may justly say, therefore, that this Light, which contains the potentiality of all forms, is God's Creative Power, the substance of His imagination—though scientists prefer to call it, 'the electromagnetic spectrum'.

This great Light, or electromagnetic field, became the universe of form in a quite amazing and miraculous fashion: The sudden burst of what we call electromagnetic energy from the Mind of God nearly 140 million centuries ago was a roiling, boiling maelstrom of light and heat, which some later referred to as 'the Big Bang'. Though it was solely God's Light, it would have appeared as an immense ball of fire, fiercely intense as it transformed into material particles for the building of a universe.

Physicists describe this "Big Bang" as an immense burst of Light in which an inconceivably dense and intensely energetic swarm of light-particles (photons) danced in close proximity and incessant flux, colliding with each other, producing particles and antiparticles in pairs, which then, themselves

colliding, annihilated back into high frequency electromagnetic radiation, and then back to particle-antiparticle pairs again, in rapid succession.

Such Energy-to-Matter and Matter-to-Energy transformations would have alternated in rapid flux in those first moments. Expanding at the speed of light, some of that Energy would have been converted to particle-antiparticle pairs, most of which would have been annihilated, and some of the remaining matter in the form of quarks, along with their interacting gluons (what is called a *quark-gluon plasma*), would have eventually combined to form protons and neutrons. This quark-gluon plasma (QGP), theorized to have been produced in the first few microseconds of the ‘Big Bang’, was recently reproduced at the Brookhaven National Laboratory by colliding gold ions at nearly the speed of light in their Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider, a 2.4 mile-circumference “atom smasher”, thereby creating a “liquid matter” (QGP) at a temperature of “about 4 trillion degrees Celsius”—about 250,000 times hotter than the center of the Sun. (from Brookhaven National Laboratory, reported by Physorg Newsletter, February 15, 2010; www.physorg.com.)

It is asserted by physicists and cosmologists that the production of particle-antiparticle pairs by the initial high-frequency radiation (which we call gamma radiation) occurred in the first few seconds at temperatures in excess of 10^{12} K (a trillion degrees Kelvin). This is regarded as the ‘heavy-particle era’, during which particles such as protons and antiprotons were created. Shortly thereafter, the universe entered the ‘light particle era’. As the temperature of the early universe decreased along with the energy of the photons, the rapidly spreading photons were no longer capable of converting to heavy particles like protons and neutrons but were capable of producing only lighter particles such as electron-positron pairs.

The highest frequency radiation, Gamma radiation, is radiation that reaches a frequency of 10 exahertz, or 10^{19} Hz, with a wavelength less than 10 picometers, and energies from 400 GeV (billion electron volts) to 10 TeV (trillion electron Volts). Since energy and mass are interconvertible ($E=mc^2$), energy converts to mass, and mass converts to energy. In that immense “fireball” at the beginning of time, trillions upon trillions of photons of gamma radiation collided, and each of these photons converted to a particle-antiparticle pair. So long as the energy of the photon is equal to or exceeds the mass of the particles produced, this conversion occurs. The reverse process also occurred: for example, the mass of an electron-positron pair equals 1.02 MeV (million electron volts); when such a pair collides, it is annihilated, and in its place are two photons of at least 0.51 MeV each.

When highly energetic photons collide, they convert to matter, becoming a

particle-antiparticle pair, such as a proton and an antiproton, or an electron and a positron. These two members of a symmetrical pair possess opposite electric charges, and annihilate upon contact, turning back once again to light (photons). One would expect that, this being the case, every matter-antimatter pair would have annihilated over the course of time, and that consequently there would be no material universe. However, there *is* a material universe. And so, we must assume there was an asymmetry that found its way into this process, sparing approximately one matter particle in every 10 billion produced, which matter particles now constitute what is our material universe. Why and how this asymmetry should exist, however, has not yet been explained.

All of this conversion, or transformation, of Light to Matter took place within the first few moments after the initiation of “the Big Bang” or “Great Radiance”. After that, as the nascent universe expanded, the temperature (the energy of the photons) became too low to continue to produce particle-antiparticle pairs. And after about one million years, as the temperature reduced to about 3000 degrees Kelvin, the period of ‘recombination’ commenced, as the remaining nucleons (protons and neutrons) began to capture electrons to form neutral atoms, such as those of hydrogen, deuterium, and helium. (See Michael Zeilik, *Astronomy: The Evolving Universe*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, ninth edition; pp.470-475.)

These atoms of hydrogen and other gases collected in clouds; and these gas-clouds, reaching a large enough volume, were affected by the gravitational force (that Einstein says is a function of the geometry of spacetime), which, in turn, drew such gas nebulae into a density great enough to initiate nuclear fusion; and thus stars, and whole galaxies of stars were born. In the interior furnaces of these stars, heavier elements were created; and when the cores of the stars collapsed, the stars exploded into space; and their remnants formed into a second generation of stars, like our sun and its satellite planets. And, of course, all of this began with a great burst of light!

It seems likely as well, that what we call *spacetime* is a correlate of light and its innate proclivity for very rapidly spreading itself in all directions. Where there is extension, there is *space*; where there is a sequence of events, there is *time*. And while time and space are relative to the speed of light, light itself, the primary ‘stuff’ of the universe, is the sole constant by which time and space are measured. Like Einstein, we can describe and measure it, but we struggle unsuccessfully to know and understand just what it is unless we are aware that it is the very substance of God’s Creative Power.

3. “Large Hadron Collider could reveal our origins”, April 19, 2010 by Roger S. Boyd, copyright 2010 McClatchy-Tribune Information Services; appeared April 19, 2010 in PhysOrg Newsletter, www.physorg.com/news190869267.html.

4. That we exist in God is not a new idea. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (written circa 500 B.C.E.), the Lord, Krishna, says, “By Me, in my unmanifested form, are all things in this universe pervaded. All beings exist in Me; I do not exist in them.” (*Bhagavad Gita*: 9:4); and in the Christian scriptures, the apostle Paul says, “In Him we live and move and have our being.” (*Acts* 17:28). The entire universe exists within God. He produces the appearance of universal matter from Himself, within Himself. And while it appears that the Spirit and Matter are two substances intermingled, it is all only Himself, and so He remains one Being forever. He empowers the universal appearance within Himself, and the dynamic universe continually evolves to more fully express the glory of His Being.

5. The classical ‘mechanistic’ way of conceiving the universe regarded all the things, particles, and individual beings as separate independent objects and creatures that interacted in accordance with physical ‘laws’. The illumined way of conceiving of the universe regards every particle, object, and living being as inseparably united in an integral conscious continuum of which all particles, things, and beings are constituted. Everything that once appeared to be random (the propitious outcomes of merely blind forces)—including the *quanta* that seemed to be governed by laws of probability—is now seen to be acting in mutually harmonious accord within an interdependent whole conceived and contained within the one Mind. “All things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain.”

6. The most amazing and most wonderful aspect of this new way of seeing the universe is the recognition that every individual mind is a limited version of the one Mind and is capable not only of establishing an open connection to the one Divine Mind, but of actually experiencing its identity as that one all-pervasive Mind.

7. Saying of Jesus, from *The Gospel of Thomas*, 77.

8. Shankaracharya, *The Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*, trans. by Swami Prabhavananda & Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood, Vedanta Press, 1947; p. 58.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

10. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.I.I: “*The Three Initial Hypostases*”.

12. MIND AND MATTER

(Compiled of articles from *The Mystic's Vision* by Swami
Abhayananda.

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Idealism And Materialism

These days, one doesn't often hear the terms, *Idealism* or *Materialism* bandied about, but these two traditionally opposing philosophical worldviews were once topics of heated concern. These two starkly differing views of the nature of reality have been at odds with each other for twenty-five centuries beginning with Pythagorus, Xenophanes, Anaxagorus and Socrates on the idealist side, and Thales, Leucippus, and Democritus on the materialist side. For centuries, idealists held that *Mind* is the primary reality of which matter is an evolute; materialists held that *Matter* is the primary reality of which mind is an evolute. Science gathered its forces solidly on the materialist side, while the spiritual philosophers and mystics stood squarely on the side of idealism. Every mystic who ever lived has declared the idealistic viewpoint, stating that the ultimate reality underlying all phenomena is unquestionably noumenal, i.e., a transcendent Mind. There are no materialists among mystics.

Idealism suggests that the universe is of the nature of an *idea*; that its substance is *thought*—the thought of the one eternal Mind. Mysticism, therefore, is an idealist point of view which also asserts the possibility of the *direct* apperception of the ultimate reality in a rare, profound, and purely introspective experience, wherein an intimate knowledge of the noumenal Source and the nature of the universe and human existence is acquired. This “mystical experience”, say those who have known it, reveals the formless noumenal Source, the groundless Ground of all physical and mental phenomena, which is seen to constitute everyone's original and eternal identity. Such an experience seems to have been first spoken of in the West in ancient Greece among the populace taking part in the “mystery religions” such as the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries (whence mysticism gets its name); and later formed the basis of the philosophical position of such seers as Socrates and his lineage of disciples, Plato, Philo Judaeus, and Plotinus. In the East, mysticism made its appearance in the writings of Lao Tze, the Upanishads, and the early Buddhist texts, and later in the Middle East with the teachings of Hermeticism, and the rise of Christianity and Gnosticism, all of whose central figures claimed an intimate, mystical knowledge of the

noumenal Source.

The materialism of the early Greeks, such as Leucippus and Democritus, on the other hand, tended to regard all of reality as consisting of small indestructible particulate entities, called *atoms*, which aggregated together to form all the varied shapes and individual beings that are perceived through the senses. While materialistic science may be said to have originated with the early Greek philosophers cited above, it had to struggle in the West for many centuries against the strictures of religious doctrine, and only began its cultural ascendancy in the West from the sixteenth century onward, influenced by such philosophers as Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant, and the works and accomplishments of scientists such as Galileo, Isaac Newton, and Johannes Kepler. By the twentieth century, the empirical method, associated with the materialistic viewpoint, had become synonymous with science. From that time forward an emergent ‘scientism’ became the established ‘religion’ of our Western civilization. And, while there were always a few maverick idealists among the ranks of scientists, the vocal majority utterly rejected the slightest hint of mysticism or idealism, confirming their faith in a solely material reality, and holding as firm doctrine that the universe came into being and is sustained through “natural,” that is to say, purely material, processes.

Today, however, our understanding has changed; the materialism of the ancients no longer has a role in the modern world. The philosophical position of materialism was once regarded as diametrically opposed to the position of idealism, but today, we have come so far in revising our understanding of the nature and substance of Matter that the positions of materialism and idealism no longer seem so distant from one another. In the 1930’s, as developments in the newly formulated Quantum theory began to reveal some of the more unexpected aspects of Matter, one scientist, by the name of James Jeans, foresaw the coming changes that these developments in physics would bring to our philosophical views, and, understanding that the distinction between materialism and idealism was rapidly diminishing, he wrote in his book, *Physics And Philosophy*, the following:

“A ...revolution has occurred in physics in recent years. Its consequences extend far beyond physics, and in particular they affect our general view of the world in which our lives are cast. In a word, they affect philosophy. The philosophy of any period is always largely interwoven with the science of the period, so that any fundamental change in science must produce reactions in philosophy. This is especially so in the present case, where the changes in physics itself are of a distinctly philosophical

hue; a direct questioning of nature by experiment has shown the philosophical background hitherto assumed by physics to have been faulty. The necessary emendations have naturally affected the scientific basis of philosophy and, through it, our approach to the philosophical problems of everyday life. Are we, for instance, automata or are we free agents capable of influencing the course of events by our volitions? Is the world material or mental in its ultimate nature? Or is it both? If so, is matter or mind the more fundamental? Is mind a creation of matter or matter a creation of mind? Is the world we perceive in space and time the world of ultimate reality, or is it only a curtain veiling a deeper reality beyond? ¹

And in his book, *The Mysterious Universe*, Jeans suggested that recent scientific discoveries show that:

the stream of knowledge is heading toward a non-mechanical reality. *The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine.* Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter; we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as *the creator and governor of the realm of matter*—not of course our individual minds, but the Mind in which the atoms (out of which our individual minds have grown) exist as thoughts.” ²

And in his lecture to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1934, entitled, “The New World Picture of Modern Science”: he said:

The new physics obviously carries many philosophical implications, but these are not easy to describe in words. They cannot be summed up in the crisp, snappy sentences beloved of scientific journalism, such as that materialism is dead, or, that matter is no more. The situation is rather that both materialism and matter need to be redefined in the light of our new knowledge. When this has been done, the materialist must decide for himself whether the only kind of materialism which science now permits can be suitably labeled materialism, and whether what remains of matter should be labeled as matter or as something else; it is mainly a question of terminology.

“What remains is in any case very different from the full-blooded matter and the forbidding materialism of the Victorian scientist. His objective and material universe is proved to consist of little more than constructs of our own minds. To this

extent, then, modern physics has moved in the direction of philosophic idealism. Mind and matter, if not proved to be of similar nature, are at least found to be ingredients of one single system. There is no longer room for the kind of dualism which has haunted philosophy since the days of Descartes.³

What then is Matter? We can easily state what it is not: it is *not* a phenomenal substance made of solid indestructible particles; we know that! But it not so easy to say what it *is*. ‘Mind’, ‘Matter’, ‘Energy’, ‘Space’—these are names we have given to certain elements of this transforming panorama of mental and physical perceptions in which we find ourselves; but it is no longer possible to say where one begins and the other ends, for it now appears that there is but one indivisible reality—“one system”, as Sir James Jeans describes it—of which Mind and Matter are both ingredients. Scientists today don’t know what to call it, and simply refer to it as “the universal continuum”. Those of a mystic bent do not hesitate to call it “God”, and to say, “We live in God. He is the only one, and He contains everything. He is alive and consciously awake, and everything moves and acts in unison with His will.”

“Matter”, it turns out, is a misnomer; there is only the one indivisible system, or Mind of God—appearing as distinct objects, as quanta, as scientists, as their laboratories, as distant stars, as bursts of celestial light. There is nothing that is not God. He is both Mind and the apparent objects of the world that we once thought of as Matter. Your body too is God; but more importantly, He is the very Consciousness that is aware *as* you! And it is that very awareness that is capable of directly experiencing through His illuminating Grace the clear and amazing truth that all this is God!

The question we now have to ask is: ‘If Matter and Mind are in fact indistinguishable ingredients in one indivisible system, then how does materialism differ from idealism?’ The long-held belief in the opposition of these two positions now appears to have been nothing but a long-held misunderstanding of the nature of Matter. The two positions, if not yet in total agreement, are at least no longer in clear opposition! But does this mean that, since materialism and idealism now seem to be compatible, science and mysticism are therefore also reconcilable?

No. Science and Mysticism are two very narrowly defined and mutually exclusive categories of knowledge. Science deals in tangibly objective sense data and does not comfortably extend to less tangible subjective mental states. The very definition of science limits its focus to only that which may be empirically verified. And that requirement assures that science will

probably always tend to have a phenomenal bias and will grant little credence to noumena experienced in a subjective and physically unverifiable state of awareness.

Science and Mysticism represent knowledge obtained through two radically different methodologies: they can come up with common results, and, although unlikely, can agree on their implications; but they will always remain divergent methods of knowledge-gathering. Science represents the ordering of *external* observations of phenomena perceived by the senses in the normal waking state; mysticism represents the *internal* observation of noumena intuitively perceived by the mind in a highly extraordinary, but well documented, contemplative state. They are really two different *kinds* of knowledge, referred to as *science* and *gnosis*. *Science* is from the Latin *scientia* (knowledge), derived from *scire* (to know), and usually denotes the organization of objectively verifiable sense experience; *Gnosis* is a Greek word, also meaning knowledge, but denoting an inwardly “revealed” knowledge unavailable to empirical science.

The difficulty is that advocates of phenomenally based science not only refuse to acknowledge the validity and relevance of *gnosis*, but do not even recognize the possibility of its existence. Today, science is still so steeped in the antiquated materialistic perspective (based on a false understanding of what ‘matter’ is) that scientists and, through their influence, “educated” members of the public, routinely regard all those who hold to an idealistic view as unfortunate misguided members of the superstitious, ignorant and uneducated masses. Those who are labeled as *mystics* are held in especial disdain and are the subjects of frequent ridicule in our materialist-oriented culture. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, colleges and universities around the nation have been instilling this arrogant prejudice in the youth who flock to them for their one-sided technological educations. One has to wonder if we are not due at this time in our history for a return of the cultural pendulum to a fresh idealism, one that is informed by both science *and* gnosis.

It seems to me that we are now at a crucial period in our cultural history when the valid findings of science need to be balanced with the equally valid findings of gnosis. The two must be acknowledged as correctives to one another, as coequals in the endeavor to accumulate meaningful and relevant knowledge of our world and the nature of our own existence. It is necessary to make a real attempt to come to terms with these two very different ways of knowing, to bring clarity to the present differences between the worldview which each promulgates, to point out the areas of possible rapprochement, and perhaps light the way to a universally shared recognition

of science and gnosis as *complementary* aspects of a comprehensive knowledge in a greatly expanded vision of the vast potentialities of human experience.

NOTES:

1. Sir James Jeans, *Physics And Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1942; a full reprint of this book may be found at:
http://www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/history/Extras/Jeans_Part_I.html
2. Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, New York, Macmillan Co., 1931, pp. 83-84.
3. Sir James Jeans, from his address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science, entitled, *The New World Picture of Modern Science*. A transcript of this talk may be found at:
http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/BA_1934_J2.html

Where Consciousness Comes From

For a long time now, the emphasis in physics on empirical knowledge of physical reality in general and of subatomic matter in particular tended to diminish attention to the existence of non-material, non-objective aspects of reality, to the extent that such subjective realities as mind, thought, and consciousness were scarcely regarded as existing at all. Today, however, these subjective realities are not only acknowledged but studied and researched as valid subjects of interest. And since consciousness appears to be integrally related to thought or mind, various branches of science have focused on discovering the origin of consciousness. At first glance, the circumstantial evidence for the appearance of consciousness in simple life-forms would seem to imply the existence of consciousness going back to the earliest Paleolithic times, at least. However, some contemporary neurobiologists have reached the conclusion that consciousness only came into existence with the advanced evolution of biological forms and is a product (an epiphenomenon) of complex neural activity in the brain; and that, being a manifestation of a material process, consciousness itself is nothing more than a *material* phenomenon.

There are others, however, who assert the primacy of Consciousness as the source and substance of the universal Creative Energy of which the entire universe of matter (including brains) is constituted. The strong inferential evidence of an intelligent source for the origin of the cosmos would seem to imply that an eternal Consciousness prefigured even the Big Bang. This position goes back thousands of years and is reflected in the various

religious views of the origin of the cosmos by a conscious Creator, and in the Platonist philosophical tradition as well. That position was later reiterated in the philosophical view of René Descartes (1596-1650), who asserted that mind (spirit) and matter were two separate *kinds* of existents comprising man—both emanating from God (the divine Mind), but with differing characteristics. This was the basis of the well-known philosophy of Cartesian dualism, which holds that these two categories are inviolably separate and distinct entities: one, the Divine uncreated part of man (the mind or spirit); the other, the divinely created form-manifesting part (the body). Though this philosophy offered no essential modification to earlier Platonist thought, it was the product of a careful rational introspection that proved appealing and persuasive to many of its time.

The overwhelming scientific materialism of the nineteenth century found no place, however, for the *soul*, and presumed to repair the conceptual mind-body split with the belief that all that exists is solely material, including mind; and that such a thing as ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’ does not exist. This seems still to be the position of contemporary materialist science. The scientific thesis (though rarely formally expressed) continues to be that there is no God, no soul, and that mind and consciousness are merely manifestations of the material activities of neurons and synapses in the brain.

In describing the origin of the cosmos, today’s materialist scientists start with the assumption of the *a priori* existence of a material object called a ‘singularity’, in which an infinitely dense mass of plasmic energy became somehow crammed into an infinitesimally minute speck of potentiality. Then, due to some random quantum fluctuations, that mass burst its bounds, exploding outwardly to become the expanding universe of space, time, matter and invisible forces. This is the theoretical picture that current science paints. Scientists of a materialist bent do not even question what produced this singularity, i.e., why there is something rather than nothing, and how it happened to be. Furthermore, these materialistically inclined scientists are placed by this theory in the uncomfortable position of being required to explain how conscious life emerged or evolved from the cooled remains of this boiling soup of inanimate primal plasmic mass/energy.

Today, in the early part of this twenty-first century, despite the implausibility of their theory of the origin of the universe, scientists—Physicists, Cosmologists, and Neurophysicists—are busily pursuing the assumption that consciousness somehow arose a few million years ago as an ‘epiphenomenon’ of the self-organizing activity of brain cells and neurons; i.e., consciousness just popped out of biological tissue by some as yet unknown process of spontaneous manifestation, and is basically a

phenomenon arising from the neurological activity of biological matter. Here is a statement of that theory by John Searle, a well-known contemporary professor of philosophy, who states:

Consciousness is a biological feature of the human and certain animal brains. It is caused by neurological processes and is as much a part of the natural biological order as any other biological feature. ¹

Others, more cautious, say merely that:

Consciousness indubitably exists, and it is connected to the brain in some intelligible way, but the nature of this connection necessarily eludes us. ²

Another says:

I doubt we will ever be able to show that consciousness is a logically necessary accompaniment to any material process, however complex. The most that we can ever hope to show is that, empirically, processes of a certain kind and complexity appear to have it. ³

Nonetheless, over the years leading up to the present, little progress has been made in the attempt to formulate a detailed and satisfactory theory of the material origin of consciousness. In the opening paragraphs of a recent book of memoirs (2006) by Nobel prize-winning Neurobiologist, Erich Kandel, a hopeful and promising picture of future progress is offered:

The new biology of mind ...posits that consciousness is a biological process that will eventually be explained in terms of molecular signaling pathways used by interacting populations of nerve cells. ... The new science of mind attempts to penetrate the mystery of consciousness, including the ultimate mystery: how each person's brain creates the consciousness of a unique self and the sense of free will. ⁴

But then, in the latter part of the book, he admits that:

Understanding Consciousness is by far the most challenging task confronting science. ...Some scientists and philosophers of mind continue to find consciousness so inscrutable that they fear it can never be explained in physical terms. ⁵

What we do *not* understand is ‘the hard problem’ of consciousness—the mystery of how neural activity gives rise to subjective experience.⁶

...Biological science can readily explain how the properties of a particular type of matter arise from the objective properties of the molecules of which it is made. What science lacks are rules for explaining how *subjective* properties (consciousness) arise from the properties of objects (interconnected nerve cells).⁷

As I have stated repeatedly in the past, this search of materialistic science is a misguided one, and can only lead to a dead end; for in order to understand how consciousness arises in biological forms one must put first things first: consciousness does not inexplicably arise from neural activity in the brain; Consciousness is the intrinsic nature of the Divine Mind in which this universe exists, and that very Consciousness is implicit in the entire universal manifestation, being all-pervasive, and therefore naturally becoming evident in the evolutionary development of earth’s biosphere. Once we understand that all forms in the universe are manifestations of the one universal Consciousness, we will then be able to better understand our own nature and understand our intimate relationship to the Consciousness of the universal Mind. The acknowledgement of the universality and divinity of our own conscious Self will eventually require a radical transformation in the thinking of all men and women of science which, though it may take centuries in which to unfold, will usher in a truly golden era of Enlightenment.

Today, we look back on the contemporaries of Copernicus with the advantage of hindsight and wonder how the intelligentsia of that time could possibly have failed to perceive that the earth travels about the sun, and not vice versa. Once the truth is known, the errors of the past seem so obviously unsupportable. Once the light shines, the preceding darkness is clearly recognized. One day, when it is readily recognized and acknowledged that the world of space, time, matter and energy arise from the Divine Consciousness, men will wonder how it could possibly be that once seemingly intelligent people thought that consciousness was an epiphenomenal product of biological matter.

It must one day be universally understood that Consciousness is the primary, the original, reality—beyond time and space, and all manifestation; It is the eternal Ground and Identity of all that exists. It transcends the universe, while constituting its essence—as a dreaming mind transcends its dream-

images, while constituting their essence. Consciousness is not contained within matter, nor is it the property of any individual being. It is not produced by any material process; but rather is the underlying Source of all matter and all processes. It is the fundamental nature of Being, the foundation of the phenomenal universe, the Light of the Projector which flashes its images in the space-time dimension which we know as ‘the world’. The projected human images on this screen are unable to perceive that Light, for they are in It and of It. They can only come to know that eternal Consciousness through the gift of a divinely produced revelation by which they will discover that their own consciousness is in essence the one Divine Self, the one eternal Consciousness that is the sole Being in all existence.

In that revelation they will realize that the phenomenal universe is made of a primal energy that is radiated or projected by the Light of the one Divine Consciousness.⁸

Jesus of Nazareth is one who experienced that divinely produced revelation, and realized the truth:

“Jesus said, ‘The world’s images are manifest to man, but the Light in them remains concealed; within the image is the Light of the Father. He becomes manifest as the images, but, as the Light, He is concealed’.”⁹

We may find a clue to this understanding by pondering the nature of our own minds, since, as has often been said, we are images of God. Consider the nature of our dreams: the consciousness of the dream-character is really the consciousness of the dreamer, is it not? And what of the body of the dream-character? Is it not a projected image produced by the dreamer’s mind, and consisting also of consciousness? By analyzing this clear analogy, one may begin to have a notion of how this universe came to be. But, of course, in order to know it fully, one must realize it for oneself; one’s mind must be illumined by the eternal Light itself and drawn into Its hidden depths. To obtain that grace, all men focus their minds on Him through prayer and contemplative longing, and He shines His Light on whom He will.

NOTES:

1. John Searle, professor of philosophy at U.C. Berkeley, quoted by Richard Restak, *Mysteries of the Mind*, Washington D.C., National Geographic, 2000; pp. 71-72.

2. Colin McGinn, *The Mysterious Flame*, quoted in R. Restak, *Ibid.*; p. 85.
3. Jeffrey Satinover, *The Quantum Brain*, N.Y., John Wiley & Sons, 2001; p. 220.
4. Eric R. Kandel, *In Search of Memory: The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*, N.Y., W.W. Norton & Co., 2006; pp. 9-11.
5. Kandel, *Ibid.*; p. 377.
6. Kandel, *Ibid.*; p. 382.
7. Kandel, *Ibid.*; p. 381.
8. When God revealed Himself to me, I realized that He breathes the universe into existence and withdraws it again in a repeated cycle. In recent years, after this article was originally written in 2006, I have speculated in various writings that some fourteen billion years ago the divine breath of the Creator became manifest in time and space as a burst of high-frequency electromagnetic energy, or radiation—at levels of intensity in the *gamma* range or above—which scientists currently refer to as ‘the Big Bang’. This theory seems to me a likely one—much more likely than the materialist theories of contemporary science—and is explained at length and in detail in several of my later articles, including ‘The Phenomenon of Light’, ‘How God Made The World’, ‘Recent Theological Developments’, and ‘First Light’—which may be found at my website: www.themysticsvision.com.
9. James Robinson, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 1977; 83, p. 135.

Where Matter Comes From

Over the centuries since the time of Jesus and Plotinus, many others have also experienced the unitive vision of God, but our metaphysical understanding has changed very little. What *has* changed is our understanding of the origin and nature of the material world.¹ Ancient Greek thinkers found the subject too daunting, and simply accounted for the existence of the material world by positing an unoriginated sea of Chaotic matter, which the divine Thought (*Logos*, *Sophia*, *Psyche*) then permeated, bringing organization and life into it by Its power. But the last few centuries of our current era have seen a worldwide focus on the discovery of the secrets of nature, most especially through the study of *physics* and *astronomy*. In the twentieth century, Hubble’s discovery that the universe is expanding led to the formulation of the concept of a definite *beginning* to our universe approximately fourteen billion years ago, and Einstein’s realization that energy and matter (mass) are interconvertible gave a solid explanation for the manner in which the universe of matter came into being, and impelled science into the forefront of a rare advancement in our philosophical understanding.

Most of us, when asked, “What is matter made of?” would answer, “It is made of elementary wave-particles, such as quarks—which constitute protons and neutrons—and leptons such as electrons and neutrinos. But if we were asked, “What are these various particles made of?”, we might answer, “No one knows.” However, that would be incorrect. Physicists know very well that all these wave-particles are made of energy—electromagnetic energy—or more succinctly, light-energy. *All matter*, the entire universe, came from the initial burst of *Light* that we refer to as “the Big Bang”.² The question of where that universe-originating light-energy came from, however, is still a controversial matter of opinion.

Clearly, there was a sudden immense burst of electromagnetic energy where prior to it there had been nothing; and that energy coalesced into the wave-particles that make up our material world. Philosophers can no longer hold to the notion of an eternal *universe*; there *was* a creation moment, and the ultimate ‘stuff’ of the universe is now revealed: it was light—an inconceivably large burst of high-frequency light (which we refer to as ‘electromagnetic radiation’)—that almost immediately began converting to material wave-particles.³ Up to the point of that empirical discovery, philosophers speculating on the origin of matter were free to imagine many possible scenarios; but now speculation is dead. Matter is converted light; that matter and light-energy are interconvertible is a proven fact. And material particles, when collided at high velocity, convert back into light (photons). Since Einstein, what previously had seemed two different things—energy and matter—were now seen to be one.

Though so much of what passes as ‘science’ today is merely the passing fashion of the moment or a speculative theory that can never be substantiated, the current understanding among scientists that all matter is an evolute of an original light is one which seems to allow of no possible future refutation. That energy and matter are interconvertible, and that the light-energy of the so-called ‘Big Bang’ of fourteen billion years ago transformed into the quarks and leptons that make up the entire world of matter is a discovery that is so incontrovertible, so uncontestable, as to effectively put an end to all future speculation as to what our world is made of.

And so, for the first time in history, after centuries of philosophical inquiry and intense scientific exploration, we now know with certainty exactly what the material world is made of. Physicists have announced it, astronomers have proclaimed it, and technicians have proven it without a doubt in their laboratories; and yet hardly anyone in the world seems to be aware of the fact that *everything is made of light*. Even those physicists

who describe how the primordial photons of light transformed themselves into material particles do not seem to fully grasp the significance of the fact that *everything in the universe is made of light*.⁴

Despite the fact that scientific thinkers believe that that pristine burst of light was a ‘natural’ phenomenon (whatever that means), and spiritually oriented people are certain that the light came directly from God, the fact remains that an unimaginably immense blast of high-energy light flashed at the dawn of time in a nascent universe, and each photon of that light became a matter-antimatter pair that contributed to make the phenomenal universe of form and substance that we live in today, where *everything is made of that light*.⁵

Everyone has heard of the ‘Big Bang’, and of how all forms of energy and all material particles were produced from that initial ‘fireball’ of high-energy photons; and yet, in the minds of many, there is still the burning question: ‘Where did that abundance of light come from?’ Scientists have concluded that the light from which the world of matter is made had to have come from the explosion of an unstable super-dense chunk of matter which they call a “singularity”, while people of religious or spiritual beliefs have understood since the most ancient of times that that light was caused by an act of God. That the matter that constitutes this physical universe was produced by an initial high-energy burst of Light around fourteen billion years ago is accepted by the entire scientific community; the empirical evidence for this conclusion is formidable and incontestable.

Physicists and cosmologists of integrity have declared that this is as far as science can reach, that to extrapolate farther back than that would be nothing more than conjecture and supposition—certainly not science. Nonetheless, some scientists have reached beyond the empirical evidence into the realm of unfounded speculative theory and have declared that the *cause* of that burst of Light was the explosion of a submicroscopic speck of matter that existed prior to the manifestation of the universe, a speck that contained all the mass of the universe within it. And often this is declared with a straight face.

On the other hand, those who have experience of God’s presence, regard science’s discovery that an ancient originating Light was the source of the entire material universe to be a delightful confirmation of the Divine Creation that has been famously heralded by the wise of ages long past. It is clear, however, that neither the speculation of the theoretical scientists nor the tradition of the religions is subject to incontrovertible proof; we can only weigh the two positions and see which seems to us the more credible.

Can we really accept that a tiny rock is the ultimate creative Force from which sprang the entire vast living universe? Or perhaps the tiny rock is not the Creator, but rather the Creator, having decided to make a universe, first put the whole thing into a tiny speck, and then had it all burst forth somehow. Did *life* exist in the rock prior to its existence in the universe, or did life spontaneously arise once the rock exploded? Well, you see how difficult it would be to defend such an originating principle. But such difficulties do not arise if we assume that the same God whom we know in our hearts was also the originator and fabricator of the universe and all its living variety.

If we accept that an all-pervasive Spirit ('God' for short) breathed forth or otherwise manifested an immense burst of light-energy that possesses the capacity and propensity to 'evolve' into wave-particles in time and space, constituting the elements of our universe, then why couldn't He have similarly predisposed the resulting matter to produce living bodies by a further evolutionary development? And why couldn't those first primeval living bodies, such as bacteria and eukaryotes, be predisposed to evolve further into larger creatures, such as fish and fowl, mammals, primates, and eventually humans? ⁶ Somewhere along that chain of evolution, why couldn't consciousness and self-awareness emerge as well from the initial predisposition programmed into that divine light from the very beginning?

How could we possibly doubt that that *Light* is a miraculous energy that proceeds from the power of God? At its highest frequencies—such as that produced in its original appearance that we call 'the Big Bang'—it has the ability to convert to electrically charged wave-particles that make up the atoms of every known or unknown substance that has existed through time and provides the energy of every known or unknown invisible force or field of force appearing in the universe at both the microscopic and the macroscopic level. That is to say that, not only did that Light produce all the matter in the universe, but it produced the force of gravity, the so-called weak and strong forces that bind matter into cohesive entities, and all the electric and magnetic forces that exist in every wave-particle and produce so many effects on earth and beyond. These electrical charges are not only produced in every particle of matter, constituting its properties, but they also constitute every chemical reaction governing our digestion and metabolism, and every electrical impulse such as the firing of axons in our system of nerves, the firing of neurons in our brain, the beating of our heart, and the blinking of our eye. Everything—every visible or invisible thing and every perceivable or imperceptible variety of energy owes its existence to that initial Light. How can we believe, as some scientists

profess to believe, that the Light, containing in its potentiality an entire universe such as this one, is the result of a random accident?

And yet, in the view of some materialistic scientists, this efficient mechanism of matter-energy interactions provides evidence that every bit of the functioning of man and the universe can be accounted for without the need to postulate a supernatural origin or underlying spiritual support. By some process of selective reasoning, they are able to ignore the question of where that light came from, how it manifested, and how it happened to distribute itself as discreet particles and electrical charges in just the proper “fine-tuned” relationships to form so inconceivably complex a cosmos of form and awareness.

Be that as it may, it is certain that any physical or metaphysical theory framed in the twenty-first century must begin with the certain premise that the origin of all matter is light—regardless of whatever one might speculate was the cause of that burst of light. And, even if it had not been revealed to every enlightened soul that the material world is a manifestation of Divine energy, if we were to apply the rule of Ockham’s razor, which suggests that we shave away unnecessary assumptions, the simplest and most obvious attributable cause of that burst of light is the Divine Creator. The assumption that the explosion of an unstable and super-dense chunk of matter (a singularity) was the cause is simply an unwarranted, irrational, and unjustified supposition.

But those of a materialist bent could scarcely be expected to concede that that Light came from a supernatural Source; they could be expected rather to fight against this notion with all the powers of their imagination. “The light resulted from the explosion of a single densely compacted speck of matter,” they said; “a ‘singularity’”. Never mind that it was now necessary to explain where *that* came from. For these people, that was the end of the line, the final explanation. Their position is reminiscent of the dismissive attitude of those people who held that the world was supported by a giant turtle, and who, when asked ‘What supports the turtle?’ answered, “It’s turtles all the way down.”

Today, it is common knowledge that all wave-particles of matter were born from the high-frequency electromagnetic energy released in the ‘Big Bang’ event of fourteen billion years ago; and that it was those wave-particles that evolved into the stars, our world, and all that we know as matter and energy. However, an important question arises: ‘Did the qualities of life and consciousness exist intrinsically in the light-energy and in the wave-particles that arose from it [as many scientists believe], or was there an

infusion or *suffusion* of a divine consciousness into that primordial matter that served to purposely organize and arrange those wave-particles toward the presently evolved state of life and consciousness that we know and experience today?’ And what should we call such a principle? Anaxagorus called it “Thought”; Heraclitus, and later Philo, called it “Logos”; the author of *The Wisdom of Solomon* called it “Sophia”, or “Wisdom”; Plotinus called it “Psyche”, or “Soul”.

No matter what word we use to denote this principle, it is necessarily a divine, consciously governing and organizing Spirit akin to the “Thought” or “Will” of God, acting in and through all the universe. There are no other alternatives: for either that initial Light itself was and is purposeful, living and conscious, or that purposeful living Consciousness acts within and through that light but is distinct from it. And since both light-energy and matter in its pre-organic state seem to be inert, we must assume that they are also not conscious, nor do they intrinsically contain the seed of consciousness. It would seem, therefore, that we are forced by the evidence to conclude that an invisible living Consciousness operates *within* and throughout the material universe, guiding its operations, advancing its evolution, and bringing Its own life and consciousness to light in the living creatures appearing on at least one planetary body orbiting the star we call the Sun.

Philosophers and sages from the beginning of time have declared that, in addition to the light from which all ‘things’ are made, there must be a conscious deliberate force at work in the world that functions as the organizing principle of design, and as the source of life and awareness—a conscious force which has been referred to as “Spirit” or “Soul”. Materialists deny that such a universal principle exists—even though by doing so, they tend to deny the existence of their own intelligence; while the mystics, seers, and all the worshipers of a transcendent-immanent God affirm the principle of a divine “soul”, and stake their lives and actions upon it, living to give expression to the Divine source within them.

That the universe began in a sudden burst of light is unquestioned; but that light did not burst forth from a “singularity” into which all the matter of the universe had been compressed. Rather, that initial abundance of light burst forth from another kind of ‘singularity’: the energy potential of the eternal Mind, who is both the universe’s Creator and the universal Soul pervading it. Who else could produce an Energy that transforms itself into substantial forms as material particles along with the purposeful forces required to establish such a universe? Who else could pervade that universe as Mind, and animate each fully evolved form with a living

consciousness? Who else could fill the universe with His own Consciousness, imbuing living beings with distinct identities and an individualized self-awareness?

Clearly, that eternal Mind or Spirit that we call ‘God’ is the source and power of all that is. He has produced all these bodies and their evolutionary developments from His all-powerful light; and He is the inner Soul permeating all matter which we identify within ourselves as ‘I’. Indeed, all is He, and all glory is His. What else might we imagine exists? Who else might we imagine ourselves to be?

All the material universe and all the forces operating within it are evolved from His outspreading light, breathed forth nearly fifteen billion years ago. Yet this immense burst of light-energy would have remained but a teeming chaotic mass, random and lifeless, without His conscious direction, without His indwelling Spirit. His manifestation of a material universe is plainly evident to us; but His guiding Spirit is subtle and hidden from our view. We may infer the existence of that subtle Spirit by observing Its effects in the universe and in ourselves; but It is known directly and with certainty only when He reveals Himself as our inner Self.

So, as I hope I have made evident, there are *two* different ways in which the one Creator-God manifests: (1) As the Mind, Spirit, or Soul that permeates all matter and which constitutes the limited mind, or soul, of each individual sentient being, and (2) As the producer of the light-energy that transforms into the material particles that make up the physical universe. So that, with these two aspects of Himself, He constitutes both matter and Spirit, both body and soul; thereby constituting all that exists. Though some might object philosophically to what appears to be a dualistic perspective, I would point out to those objectors that, since both the substance of the material universe and the indwelling Mind, or Spirit, both derive from one and the same supreme Being, there is, in fact, no duality, but rather an undeniable Nonduality—or, if you prefer, a Unity. That the one God manifests in these two different ways does nothing to detract from His singularity.

There is one other issue I wish to resolve: and that is whether the light-energy that the Creator produces to form the material universe is His own substance or a second substance other than Himself. I maintain that the great burst of light-energy which formed the vast universe is a projection of His own power and is therefore identical with His own essential Being. He did not borrow some other substance to make the physical cosmos; from where would He borrow it? No; He breathed forth that active light-

energy from Himself. Though the universe is *not synonymous with* the supreme Consciousness, it is a projection of His inherent power and does not belong to any other category than Himself. It emanates from Him and is therefore of His Being.

Both the light-energy that transforms into the material universe and the indwelling Spirit, or Soul, derive from the same Divinity; and yet they are not the same. They are different in quality and characteristics and are distinct and obviously separable from one another. Though His Light-Energy is eternally inherent in His Divine Being, the *forms* that evolve from His light-energy are subject to entropy and dissolution. They appear for a brief time; and when those material forms cease to function as viable entities, the indwelling Spirit departs. The forms of His light-energy are therefore transient and subject to decay and dissolution; while His Creative Energy, along with the Spirit, or Soul, continues to exist eternally. It is immortal.

Now, to the question of *how* the Spirit, the Soul, the Divine Consciousness “permeates” the material world: Some ancient philosophers posited a *pneuma* that the Creator breathed into man exclusively, constituting the human soul; others suggested that the Divine Consciousness fills the entire universe as a numinous and all-pervading intelligence. Accumulated evidence—both from empirical and mystical sources—supports the latter premise. An all-pervasive consciousness may be inferred from the “fine-tuning” effects evident throughout the cosmos, though such an all-pervading Intelligence remains undetected by our technological instruments. It is witnessed directly, however, by the human mind, or soul, during what we call “mystical” experience.

During the “mystical” experience, the individual mind (or soul) is drawn into union with God, the Divine Consciousness, and perceives through and as that Divine Consciousness, seeing from the perspective of that Divine Consciousness. While seeing from God’s perspective, the all-pervasiveness of the Divine Mind is experienced and known. In such awareness, that Divine Consciousness is revealed to the soul as both the initiator of the creative act of universal manifestation *as well as* the living Spirit pervading it. Though this knowledge (*gnosis*) is not what we consider to be ‘empirical’ knowledge, it *is* experiential knowledge. It is knowledge obtained from a transcendent perspective and carries a certainty for the experiencer far above any mere temporal knowledge.

‘Very well,’ you may say; ‘but just *how* does the Divine Consciousness pervade the material universe? How can I picture it or form a conception

of it?’

I don’t believe it can be pictured, since that Divine Consciousness is an invisible and noumenal reality. But we can conceive of it by way of analogy: He is present within this world as our individual consciousness is present within our thoughts and dreams. Our thoughts and dreams are within our minds; and because of that, they are permeated by our own consciousness. In this same way, God is present within us and within this world, because this world exists within Him.

This universe, fostered by His light, exists *within* Him, as our thoughts exist within our human minds. He is all-encompassing. When the “Great Radiance” of God’s light burst forth as an expanding universe of time and space, of substance and form, where must that ‘Radiance’ have occurred? It had to have occurred in the Mind of God! Where else could you put a universe when there is nothing outside of that Divine Mind, when nothing exists or *can* exist but that all-encompassing Mind?

And so, without the need for an “infusion” of the spark of life and consciousness, this world, by virtue of its presence in the Mind of God, is naturally and effortlessly suffused with His conscious living presence. And what we speak of as the ‘soul’ of individuals is simply His all-encompassing conscious presence as it exists in creatures. The inclusion of the universe within the Divine Mind obviates the need for an *infusion* of God’s presence as ‘soul’, since His life and consciousness are inherently the very Ground, substance, and support of the world, and constitute its very being. It is this realization that prompted St. Paul to declare, “In Him we live and move and have our being.”

Some people speak of “intelligent design” in the universe, as though God were similar to a human craftsman or architect who had thought out and prepared a blueprint prior to building the universe. But a little reflection on the nature of God reveals that He is neither a maker of blueprints nor a builder. What He *is* is an unfathomable Intelligence, the all-pervading Mind in which the universe exists, and by whose power it operates. God does not stand apart from the universe, like a builder fashioning a building; He does not “fine-tune” the universe as an object separate from Himself; rather, the universe exists within the Mind of God, and every single speck of it is controlled and coordinated by His will.

Though we have given names to all the various forces comprising our universe, such as ‘electromagnetic fields’, the ‘force of gravity’, the ‘strong’ force, and the ‘weak’ force; all these are simply manifestations of

the cohesion inherent in His Mind-born creation. We have also named the material particles mysteriously formed from His light, such as ‘quarks’, ‘protons’, and ‘electrons’; but these also are simply the evidence of the scintillating effusion of His imagination. Only in these last centuries have scientific investigators come to understand just how inconceivably evanescent and indescribable these sub-microscopic particles really are.

As dream-stuff responds to our human will, the stuff of this universe, produced from Himself, responds to His will. And, since He transcends the confines of space and time, those evolutionary changes that, from our human perspective, require eons for their accomplishment, He accomplishes in an instant. Because His Consciousness is all-pervading, all things move together of one accord; assent is given throughout the universe to every falling grain. What appears to our eyes to be random and uncaused is, in fact, the unfoldment of His will.

Consider: If an invisible and omnipotent Mind caused the decay of one particle of uranium and left a second particle intact, would it not appear to those witnessing it that what had occurred was the random spontaneous decay of a particle? And if that same invisible and omnipotent Mind caused a gene in a strand of DNA to mutate, would it not appear to those examining that DNA that what had occurred was the random mutation of a gene? How would one be able to distinguish such a caused event from a random one? All is occurring within that one Consciousness. He has only to breathe, and a million worlds begin and end; and in this breathing, all that is contained within this universe is nourished and sustained.

This body that you regard as your own is actually His—as pebbles belong to the earth, as waves belong to the ocean. In accord with His purpose, the sun daily stirs the waters of your heart, and the vapor of your love flies to the four corners of the world; while at night the moon stills you, and the cold darkness is your bed. All is in accordance with His design. He is the life-pulse of every creature; and when the clanging bells of joy exult within you, it is His joy; the fire of song that inspires you is also His. Even the obscuring dust of unknowing that blinds us to His presence is brought by Him. He is in the clouds and in the gritty soil; and if you bend over a pool of clear water, you may see on the water’s surface the reflection of His face.

How does He pervade every particle of this universe? He is the Mind from which the universe took birth, and the universe exists within Him. ⁷ All is contained in Him. In Him, there is no I or Thou, no now or then. In Him, life and death are undifferentiated. And that transcendent deathless Self is

our eternal identity. So, you see, there is nothing to vanquish, nothing to lament, and nothing on which to pride oneself. In Him, and by Him, all is accomplished in an instant.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Of course, not everyone agrees with the notion of a material universe. Some believe it was never created. Since there is no way to prove the existence of the universe outside of our mental perceptions of it, every few centuries someone frames the theory that the entire physical universe has no actual being outside that interior perception, that it exists solely in the human mind. It is a theory that has been postulated by the eighth century Indian mystic-philosopher, Shankara, by certain Buddhist philosophers, by the eighteenth-century English philosopher, George Berkeley, and by certain popular modern thinkers. But it is a theory that is at once contradicted by the fact that man (*homo sapiens*) did not exist prior to two million years ago—modern humans (*homo sapiens sapiens*) did not exist until around 200,000 years ago; and life, even in its most rudimentary stage, did not exist on this planet prior to around four billion years ago. However, the universe itself is around fourteen billion years old—clearly older than man—and therefore could not have been *originated* in the mind of man, or in the consciousness of any living creature, since the nature of time does not allow an effect to precede its cause. The only continuous consciousness capable of producing the appearance of the universe is that of the eternal Mind of God. Therefore, the theory of a humanly subjective production of the phenomenal universe will not be considered here.
2. According to the current scientific evidence, around fourteen billion years ago the universe was created by a great burst of light that some call “the Big Bang” and others prefer to call “the Great Radiance”. In order to produce an entire universe as vast as this one, that light had to have been at the highest end of the energy spectrum. The most energetic light in the electromagnetic spectrum is that with the highest frequency, and shortest wavelength; that radiation is referred to as “gamma-rays”, a term coined by Ernest Rutherford in 1903.
3. Gamma-rays, or gamma radiation, is radiation that reaches a frequency of 10 exahertz, or 10^{19} Hz, with a wavelength less than 10 picometers, and energies from 400 GeV (billion electron volts) to 10 TeV (trillion electron Volts). Since energy and mass are interconvertible ($E=mc^2$), energy converts to mass, and mass converts to energy. In that immense “fireball” at the beginning of time, trillions upon trillions of photons of gamma radiation collided, and each of these photons converted to a particle-antiparticle pair. So long as the energy of the photon is equal to or exceeds the mass of the

particles produced, this conversion occurs. The reverse process also occurred: for example, the mass of an electron-positron pair equals 1.02 MeV (million electron volts); when such a pair collides, it is annihilated, and in its place are two photons of at least 0.51 MeV each. In “the Great Radiance”, particle-antiparticle creation and annihilation were occurring at once on a grand scale. A full explanation of this process in the creation of the material universe may be found in my earlier book, *Body And Soul*; and for a more expertly scientific explanation, see Michael Zeilik, *Astronomy: The Evolving Universe*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, ninth edition; pp.470-475.

4. The medieval English philosopher, Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253) theorized that primeval matter was expanded to form the universe by the impetus of light. But he had not the benefit of the knowledge introduced much later by Einstein that light and matter are alternate forms of the same thing. Regarding light and matter as two distinct categories, he understood that light, since it “diffuses itself in every direction,” provides a likely medium for the extension of matter in all dimensions.

“Thus light, which is the first form created in first matter, multiplied itself by its very nature an infinite number of times on all sides and spread itself out uniformly in every direction. In this way it proceeded in the beginning of time to extend matter which it could not leave behind, by drawing it out along with itself into a mass the size of the material universe.” (Robert Grosseteste, *On Light*, trans. From the Latin by Clare C. Ried, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Marquette University Press, 1942, 2000; p. 11.)

From our vantage point today, it seems quite amazing that Grosseteste came so close to anticipating the astrophysics that only emerged seven hundred years after him. His theory influenced his Oxford student, Roger Bacon (1214-1292) as well, though both still held to an Aristotelian cosmology consisting of spheres within spheres. Neither could guess that it was the light from the Divine that actually transformed or converted into the material particles that constitute the universe of form, and which, through its expansion gave birth to space and time.

5. When gamma radiation photons collide, they convert to matter, becoming a particle-antiparticle pair, such as a proton and an antiproton, or an electron and a positron. These two members of a symmetrical pair possess opposite electric charges, and annihilate upon contact, turning back once again to light (photons). One would expect that, this being the case, every matter-antimatter pair would have annihilated over the course of time,

and that consequently there would be no material universe. However, there *is* a material universe. And so, we must assume there was an asymmetry that found its way into this process, sparing approximately one matter particle in every 10 billion produced, which matter particles now constitute what is our material universe. Why and how this asymmetry should exist, however, has not yet been explained.

6. Many believe, as the respected Biologist, Michael Behe, believes, that the propensity for ‘life’ was pre-programmed into the evolution of matter from the beginning:

“I am not saying the origin of life was simply an extremely improbable accident. I am saying the origin of life was deliberately, purposely arranged, just as the fundamental laws and constants and many other anthropic features of nature were deliberately, purposefully arranged. But in what I’ll call the “extended fine-tuning” view, the origin of life is merely an additional planned feature, culminating in intelligent life. The origin of life is simply closer to the very same goal that the other, more distant anthropic features (laws, chemical properties, and so forth) were also put in place to bring about.” (Michael J. Behe, *The Edge of Evolution*, New York, Free Press, 2008; p. 216.).

7. For another perspective on the question of the constituency of the universe, please see my Article, “All This Is God.

From Light To Universe

Cosmologists and astrophysicists tell us that the temperature of the Cosmic Background Radiation (CBR) throughout the universe is currently 2.7 degrees Kelvin. Extrapolating from that current temperature allows scientists to roll back the clock to surmise the temperature of the universe at the moment it originated—what we refer to as the Big Bang, or Great Radiance. No one was there to see the moment the universe originated, but, from the evidence provided by the Cosmic Background Radiation that remains today, it is surmised that the universe began as a great burst of Light, sometimes referred to as “the primeval fireball” for lack of a better term. No one knows just what this primeval fireball was like—except that it consisted primarily of photons (particles of high-frequency electromagnetic radiation), that it was very hot (more than 10^{12} degrees Kelvin), and that it was rapidly expanding and cooling to become the material universe we know today.

Now, putting aside for a moment, the question of where such a great burst of Light may have come from, most people are easily able to imagine that the origin of the universe appeared as a great Light in the form of a “primeval fireball”. Such a “fireball” is quite easy to imagine; but few, it seems to me, understand the process by which that Light, that high-frequency radiation, *became* the material objects of our world. This process, though understood by so few, is really easy to understand once it is explained. And once it is understood, you will have the key to comprehending the formation of our entire universe of forms.

Here is how it is explained by distinguished professor of Astronomy, Michael Zeilik, in his widely used college textbook, *Astronomy: The Evolving Universe*:

At some time in the primeval fireball, the energy of photons was so high that their collisions produced particles. This process occurs when the energy in the colliding photons equals or exceeds the mass of the particles produced. Sounds bizarre? The result comes directly from Einstein’s relation between matter and energy ($E=mc^2$). It does not restrict the *direction* of the transformation: matter can become energy, or energy can become matter.¹

So, given a couple of colliding photons with enough energy, they can easily produce a particle of matter or antimatter². It is not magic; but it is nevertheless amazing: Photons (packets of Light), by colliding with one another, spontaneously transform into particles of matter or antimatter.³ Photons of electromagnetic radiation at a frequency in the gamma range such as existed in great density in the first moments of the Big Bang had sufficient energy to transform into matter or antimatter particles simply by running into each other. In countless such collisions, the photons were mutually annihilated, and, in their place, was a proton, or neutron, or electron, depending on the volume of energy they contained. In the early maelstrom of high-frequency radiation at the time of the universe’s creation, there was a continual transformation back and forth, from energy (photons) to matter (elementary particles) and from matter back again to energy, as the photonic collisions continued. But as the universe expanded, and the temperature of its contents cooled, the radiation and the matter became stabilized and compartmentalized as separate and continuous states: matter and energy—disguising the fact that matter and energy consist of but one common and identical Light.

The universe wasn’t made in a day, or even seven days; but there were

several distinct stages in the production of the material of our phenomenal universe: Professor Zeilik divides the production of matter/antimatter in the early universe into four eras: a **heavy-particle era**, a **light-particle era**, a **radiation era**, and a **matter era**. The earliest period, the **heavy-particle era**, is that period when the temperature of the universe was greater than 10^{12} degrees Kelvin, and the production of massive particles and antiparticles dominated. The **light-particle era** was when the temperature had reduced to around 10^{12} degrees Kelvin, and particles of lighter mass (such as electrons, and neutrinos) were produced. The **radiation era** occurred when the temperature dropped to the point where the photons no longer had the energy to create new particles. Radiation was then the main form of energy. The **matter era** is the era in which we now live, when the energy of matter (as the amount of mass, in a cubic meter of space) is about a thousand times greater than that of radiation.

So, all matter (and antimatter as well) that forms our current universe came from that original high-frequency light—is, in fact, that light itself in an altered or transformed state! And this brings us back to the consideration of the question, “Where did that originating Light come from?” But you probably already know the answer to that question. And you probably also know that, since that Light was produced by and lives *within* the Divine Consciousness, that Light contains the animating power and life-giving Consciousness of its all-powerful Source, to whom belongs all praise now and forevermore.

NOTES:

1. Michael Zeilik, *Astronomy: The Evolving Universe*, 9th edition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002; p.471.
2. Antimatter has the same properties as regular matter except that it has the opposite electrical charge. When a particle of matter and a particle of antimatter collide, they annihilate, and in their place is an equivalent amount of energy in the form of a photon. From light to matter, from matter to light.
3. If there is magic, it is in the originating Light that can appear now as energy, now as matter. This is the secret of creation; this is how everything in the universe, including our own bodies, was created from the great Light.

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