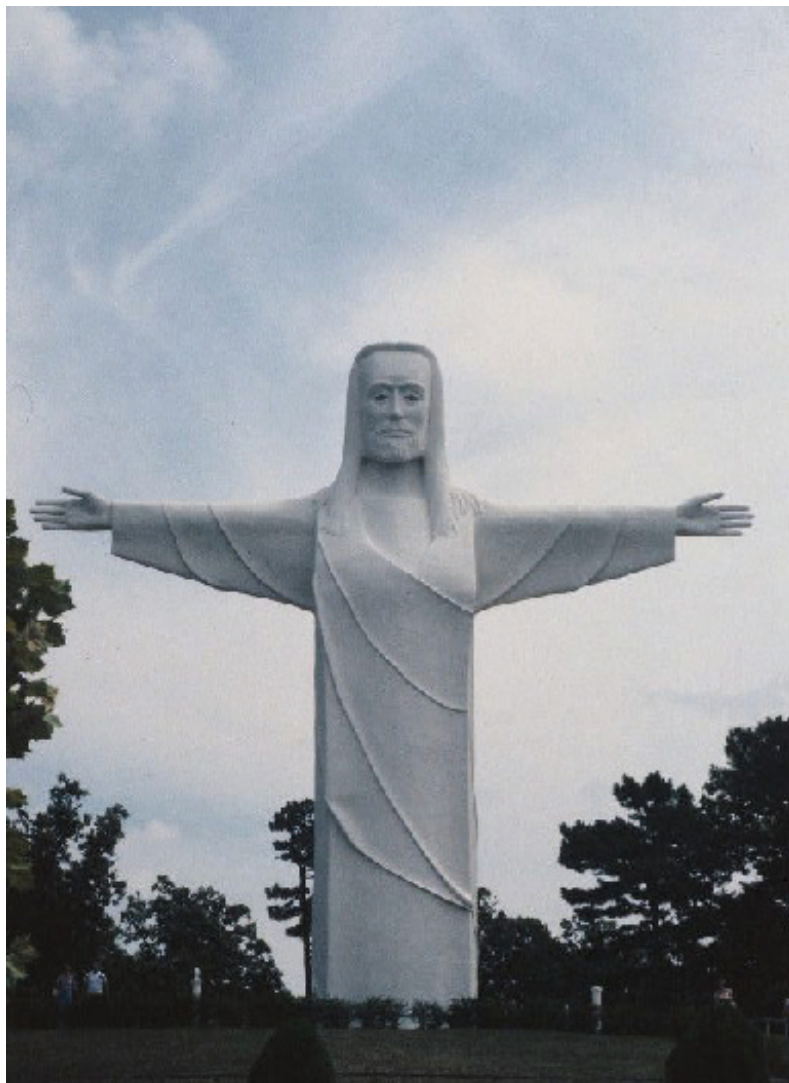


Light and Life

JOURNAL

AN EXPLORATION OF THE SPIRITUAL UNIVERSE

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EDITOR'S NOTES: The cover picture for issue 16 is the huge sculpture of Jesus in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. As I was getting different photographic views of the statue, the photo above resulted, including a strange golden light around Christ's hand and a rainbow arc.

Our essays this month are from an impressive array of philosophers, spiritualists, artists and healers. From whatever diverse path they are on, their sharings show me that we are altogether working for Light and Life, the highest expression of Truth, Beauty and Goodness that can be achieved as mortals of the realm on this planet.

There are as many paths to God as there are souls to walk them, says celestial teacher Will, and I believe her, especially as I see all the wondrous growth in spiritual awareness and activism over the past decade and more. The pace is quickening, accelerating and we are bound to collectively soon be on a path toward global unity of purpose, whether Muslim, Christian, Jew or any other, knowing that we don't have to agree on old dogmatic writings to work successfully for peace on earth for ALL of us.

Hope you enjoy this issue and will Explore the Spiritual Universe with me at www.lightandlife.com.

HUMAN EVOLUTION AT THE CROSS-ROADS; GENETICS, CYBERNETICS COMPLICATE FORECAST FOR SPECIES

By Alan Boyle
MSNBC

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7103668/>

Scientists are fond of running the evolutionary clock backward, using DNA analysis and the fossil record to figure out when our ancestors stood erect and split off from the rest of the primate evolutionary tree.

But the clock is running forward as well. So where are humans headed?

Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins says it's the question he's most often asked, and "a question that any prudent evolutionist will evade." But the question is being raised even more frequently as researchers study our past and contemplate our future.

Paleontologists say that anatomically modern humans may have at one time shared the Earth with as many as three other closely related types -- Neanderthals, *Homo erectus* and the dwarf hominids whose remains were discovered last year in Indonesia.

Does evolutionary theory allow for circumstances in which "spin-off" human species could develop again?

Some think the rapid rise of genetic modification could be just such a circumstance. Others believe we could blend ourselves with machines in unprecedented ways -- turning natural-born humans into an endangered species.

Present-day fact, not science fiction

Such ideas may sound like little more than science-fiction plot lines. But trend-watchers point out that we're already wrestling with real-world aspects of future human development, ranging from stem-cell research to the implantation of biocompatible computer chips. The debates are likely to become increasingly divisive once all the scientific implications sink in.

"These issues touch upon religion, upon politics, upon

values," said Gregory Stock, director of the Program on Medicine, Technology and Society at the University of California at Los Angeles. "This is about our vision of the future, essentially, and we'll never completely agree about those things."

The problem is, scientists can't predict with precision how our species will adapt to changes over the next millennium, let alone the next million years. That's why Dawkins believes it's imprudent to make a prediction in the first place.

Others see it differently: In the book "Future Evolution," University of Washington paleontologist Peter Ward argues that we are making ourselves virtually extinction-proof by bending Earth's flora and fauna to our will. And assuming that the human species will be hanging around for at least another 500 million years, Ward and others believe there are a few most likely scenarios for the future, based on a reading of past evolutionary episodes and current trends.

Where are humans headed? Here's an imprudent assessment of five possible paths, ranging from homogenized humans to alien-looking hybrids bred for interstellar travel.

Unihumans: Will we all be assimilated?

Biologists say that different populations of a species have to be isolated from each other in order for those populations to diverge into separate species. That's the process that gave rise to 13 different species of "Darwin's Finches" in the Galapagos Islands. But what if the human species is so widespread there's no longer any opening for divergence?

Evolution is still at work. But instead of diverging, our gene pool has been converging for tens of thousands of years -- and Stuart Pimm, an expert on biodiversity at Duke University, says that trend may well be accelerating.

"The big thing that people overlook when speculating about human evolution is that the raw matter for evolution is variation," he said. "We are going to lose that variability very quickly, and the reason is not quite a genetic argument, but it's close. At the moment we humans speak something on the order of 6,500 languages. If

we look at the number of languages we will likely pass on to our children, that number is 600.”

Cultural diversity, as measured by linguistic diversity, is fading as human society becomes more interconnected globally, Pimm argued. “I do think that we are going to become much more homogeneous,” he said.

Ken Miller, an evolutionary biologist at Brown University, agreed: “We have become a kind of animal monoculture.”

Is that such a bad thing? A global culture of Unihumans could seem heavenly if we figure out how to achieve long-term political and economic stability and curb population growth. That may require the development of a more “domesticated” society -- one in which our rough genetic edges are smoothed out.

But like other monocultures, our species could be more susceptible to quick-spreading diseases, as last year’s bird flu epidemic illustrated.

“The genetic variability that we have protects us against suffering from massive harm when some bug comes along,” Pimm said. “This idea of breeding the super-race, like breeding the super-race of corn or rice or whatever -- the long-term consequences of that could be quite scary.”

Environmental pressures wouldn’t stop

Even a Unihuman culture would have to cope with evolutionary pressures from the environment, the University of Washington’s Peter Ward said.

Some environmentalists say toxins that work like estrogens are already having an effect: Such agents, found in pesticides and industrial PCBs, have been linked to earlier puberty for women, increased breast cancer and lower sperm counts for men.

“One of the great frontiers is going to be trying to keep humans alive in a much more toxic world,” he observed from his Seattle office. “The whales of Puget Sound are the most toxic whales on Earth. Puget Sound is just a huge cesspool. Well, imagine if that goes global.”

Global epidemics or dramatic environmental changes represent just two of the scenarios that could cause a

Unihuman society to crack, putting natural selection -- or perhaps not-so-natural selection -- back into the evolutionary game. Then what?

Survivalistians: Coping with doomsday

Surviving doomsday is a story as old as Noah’s Ark, and as new as the post-bioapocalypse movie “28 Days Later.”

Catastrophes ranging from super-floods to plagues to nuclear war to asteroid strikes erase civilization as we know it, leaving remnants of humanity who go their own evolutionary ways.

The classic Darwinian version of the story may well be H.G. Wells’ “The Time Machine,” in which humanity splits off into two species: the ruthless, underground Morlock and the effete, surface-dwelling Eloi.

At least for modern-day humans, the forces that lead to species spin-offs have been largely held in abeyance: Populations are increasingly in contact with each other, leading to greater gene-mixing. Humans are no longer threatened by predators their own size, and medicine cancels out inherited infirmities ranging from hemophilia to nearsightedness.

“We are helping genes that would have dropped out of the gene pool,” paleontologist Peter Ward observed.

But in Wells’ tale and other science-fiction stories, a civilization-shattering catastrophe serves to divide humanity into separate populations, vulnerable once again to selection pressures. For example, people who had more genetic resistance to viral disease would be more likely to pass on that advantage to their descendants.

If different populations develop in isolation over many thousands of generations, it’s conceivable that separate species would emerge. For example, that virus-resistant strain of post-humans might eventually thrive in the wake of a global bioterror crisis, while less hardy humans would find themselves quarantined in the world’s safe havens.

Patterns in the spread of the virus that causes AIDS may hint at earlier, less catastrophic episodes of natural selection, said Stuart Pimm, a conservation biolo-

gist at Duke University: “There are pockets of people who don’t seem to become HIV-positive, even though they have a lot of exposure to the virus -- and that may be because their ancestors survived the plague 500 years ago.”

Evolution, or devolution?

If the catastrophe ever came, could humanity recover? In science fiction, that’s an intriguingly open question. For example, Stephen Baxter’s novel “Evolution” foresees an environmental-military meltdown so severe that, over the course of 30 million years, humans devolve into separate species of eyeless mole-men, neo-apes and elephant-people herded by their super-rodent masters.

Even Ward gives himself a little speculative leeway in his book “Future Evolution,” where a time-traveling human meets his doom 10 million years from now at the hands -- or in this case, the talons -- of a flock of intelligent killer crows. But Ward finds it hard to believe that even a global catastrophe would keep human populations isolated long enough for our species to split apart.

“Unless we totally forget how to build a boat, we can quickly come back,” Ward said.

Even in the event of a post-human split-off, evolutionary theory dictates that one species would eventually subjugate, assimilate or eliminate their competitors for the top job in the global ecosystem. Just ask the Neanderthals.

“If you have two species competing over the same ecological niche, it ends badly for one of them, historically,” said Joel Garreau, the author of the forthcoming book “Radical Evolution.”

The only reason chimpanzees still exist today is that they “had the brains to stay up in the trees and not come down into the open grasslands,” he noted.

“You have this optimistic view that you’re not going to see speciation (among humans), and I desperately hope that’s right,” Garreau said. “But that’s not the only scenario.”

Numans: Rise of the superhumans

We’ve already seen the future of enhanced humans, and his name is Barry Bonds.

The controversy surrounding the San Francisco Giants slugger, and whether steroids played a role in the bulked-up look that he and other baseball players have taken on, is only a foretaste of what’s coming as scientists find new genetic and pharmacological ways to improve performance.

Developments in the field are coming so quickly that social commentator Joel Garreau argues that they represent a new form of evolution. This radical kind of evolution moves much more quickly than biological evolution, which can take millions of years, or even cultural evolution, which works on a scale of hundreds or thousands of years.

How long before this new wave of evolution spawns a new kind of human? “Try 20 years,” Garreau told MSNBC.com.

In his latest book, “Radical Evolution,” Garreau reels off a litany of high-tech enhancements, ranging from steroid Supermen, to camera-equipped flying drones, to pills that keep soldiers going without sleep or food for days.

“If you look at the superheroes of the ‘30s and the ‘40s, just about all of the technologies they had exist today,” he said.

Three kinds of humans

Such enhancements are appearing first on the athletic field and the battlefield, Garreau said, but eventually they’ll make their way to the collegiate scene, the office scene and even the dating scene.

“You’re talking about three different kinds of humans: the enhanced, the naturals and the rest,” Garreau said. “The enhanced are defined as those who have the money and enthusiasm to make themselves live longer, be smarter, look sexier. That’s what you’re competing against.”

In Garreau’s view of the world, the naturals will be those who eschew enhancements for higher reasons, just as vegetarians forgo meat and fundamentalists forgo what they see as illicit pleasures. Then there’s all

the rest of us, who don't get enhanced only because they can't. "They loathe and despise the people who do, and they also envy them," Garreau said.

Scientists acknowledge that some of the medical enhancements on the horizon could engender a "have vs. have not" attitude.

"But I could be a smart ass and ask how that's different from what we have now," said Brown University's Ken Miller.

Medical advances as equalizers

Miller went on to point out that in the past, "advances in medical science have actually been great levelers of social equality." For example, age-old scourges such as smallpox and polio have been eradicated, thanks to public health efforts in poorer as well as richer countries. That trend is likely to continue as scientists learn more about the genetic roots of disease, he said.

"In terms of making genetic modifications to ourselves, it's much more likely we'll start to tinker with genes for disease susceptibility. Maybe there would be a long-term health project to breed HIV-resistant people," he said.

When it comes to discussing ways to enhance humans, rather than simply make up for disabilities, the traits targeted most often are longevity and memory. Scientists have already found ways to enhance those traits in mice.

Imagine improvements that could keep you in peak working condition past the age of 100. Those are the sorts of enhancements you might want to pass on to your descendants -- and that could set the stage for reproductive isolation and an eventual species split-off.

"In that scenario, why would you want your kid to marry somebody who would not pass on the genes that allowed your grandchildren to have longevity, too?" the University of Washington's Peter Ward asked.

But that would require crossing yet another technological and ethical frontier.

Instant superhumans -- or monsters?

To date, genetic medicine has focused on therapies that work on only one person at a time. The effects of those therapies aren't carried on to future generations. For example, if you take muscle-enhancing drugs, or even undergo gene therapy for bigger muscles, that doesn't mean your children will have similarly big muscles.

In order to make an enhancement inheritable, you'd have to have new code spliced into your germline stem cells -- creating an ethical controversy of transcendent proportions.

Tinkering with the germline could conceivably produce a superhuman species in a single generation -- but could also conceivably create a race of monsters. "It is totally unpredictable," Ward said. "It's a lot easier to understand evolutionary happenstance."

Even then, there are genetic traits that are far more difficult to produce than big muscles or even super-longevity -- for instance, the very trait that defines us as humans.

"It's very, very clear that intelligence is a pretty subtle thing, and it's clear that we don't have a single gene that turns it on or off," Miller said.

When it comes to intelligence, some scientists say, the most likely route to our future enhancement -- and perhaps our future competition as well -- just might come from our own machines.

Cyborgs: Merging with the machines

Will intelligent machines be assimilated, or will humans be eliminated?

Until a few years ago, that question was addressed only in science-fiction plot lines, but today the rapid pace of cybernetic change has led some experts to worry that artificial intelligence may outpace Homo sapiens' natural smarts.

The pace of change is often stated in terms of Moore's Law, which says that the number of transistors packed into a square inch should double every 18 months. "Moore's Law is now on its 30th doubling. We have never seen that sort of exponential increase before in human history," said Joel Garreau, author of the book

“Radical Evolution.”

In some fields, artificial intelligence has already bested humans -- with Deep Blue’s 1997 victory over world chess champion Garry Kasparov providing a vivid example.

Three years later, computer scientist Bill Joy argued in a Wired magazine essay that we would soon face challenges from intelligent machines as well as from other technologies ranging from weapons of mass destruction to self-replicating nanoscale “gray goo.”

Joy speculated that a truly intelligent robot may arise by the year 2030. “And once an intelligent robot exists, it is only a small step to a robot species -- to an intelligent robot that can make evolved copies of itself,” he wrote.

Assimilating the robots

To others, it seems more likely that we could become part-robot ourselves: We’re already making machines that can be assimilated -- including prosthetic limbs, mechanical hearts, cochlear implants and artificial retinas. Why couldn’t brain augmentation be added to the list?

“The usual suggestions are that we’ll design improvements to ourselves,” said Seth Shostak, senior astronomer at the SETI Institute. “We’ll put additional chips in our head, and we won’t get lost, and we’ll be able to do all those math problems that used to befuddle us.”

Shostak, who writes about the possibilities for cybernetic intelligence in his book “Sharing the Universe,” thinks that’s likely to be a transitional step at best. “My usual response is that, well, you can improve horses by putting four-cylinder engines in them. But eventually you can do without the horsepart,” he said. “These hybrids just don’t strike me as having a tremendous advantage. It just means the machines aren’t good enough.”

Back to biology

University of Washington paleontologist Peter Ward also believes human-machine hybrids aren’t a long-term option, but for different reasons.

“When you talk to people in the know, they think cybernetics will become biology,” he said. “So you’re right back to biology, and the easiest way to make changes is by manipulating genomes.”

It’s hard to imagine that robots would ever be given enough free rein to challenge human dominance, but even if they did break free, Shostak has no fear of a “Terminator”-style battle for the planet.

“I’ve got a couple of goldfish, and I don’t wake up in the morning and say, ‘I’m gonna kill these guys.’ I just leave ‘em alone,” Shostak said. “I suspect the machines would very quickly get to a level where we were kind of irrelevant, so I don’t fear them. But it does mean that we’re no longer No. 1 on the planet, and we’ve never had that happen before.”

Astrans: Turning into an alien race

If humans survive long enough, there’s one sure way to grow new branches on our evolutionary family tree: by spreading out to other planets.

Habitable worlds beyond Earth could be a 23rd century analog to the Galapagos Islands, Charles Darwin’s evolutionary laboratory: just barely close enough for travelers to get to, but far enough away that there’d be little gene-mixing with the parent species.

“If we get off to the stars, then yes, we will have speciation,” said University of Washington paleontologist Peter Ward. “But can we ever get off the Earth?”

Currently, the closest star system thought to have a planet is Epsilon Eridani, 10.5 light-years away. Even if spaceships could travel at 1 percent the speed of light -- an incredible 6.7 million mph -- it would take more than a millennium to get there.

Even Mars might be far enough: If humans established a permanent settlement there, the radically different living conditions would change the evolutionary equation. For example, those who are born and raised in one-third of Earth’s gravity could never feel at home on the old “home planet.” It wouldn’t take long for the new Martians to become a breed apart.

As for distant stars, the SETI Institute’s Seth Shostak has already been thinking through the possibilities:

IT WAS JUST MY ECOMAGINATION: GE KICKS OFF GREEN INITIATIVE

By Amanda Griscom Little
Grist Magazine, May 2005

<http://www.grist.org/news/muck/2005/05/10/little-ge/index.html>

- Build a big ark: Build a spaceship big enough to carry an entire civilization to the destination star system. The problem is, that environment might be just too unnatural for natural humans. "If you talk to the sociologists, they'll say that it will not work. You'll be lucky if anybody's still alive after the third generation," Shostak said.

- Go to warp speed: Somehow we discover a worm-hole or find a way to travel at relativistic speeds. "That sounds OK, except for the fact that nobody knows how to do it," Shostak said.

- Enter the Astrans: Humans are genetically engineered to tolerate ultra long-term hibernation aboard robotic ships. Once the ship reaches its destination, these "Astrans" are awakened to start settling a new world. "That's one possibility," Shostak said.

The ultimate approach would be to send the instructions for making humans rather than the humans themselves, Shostak said. "We're not going to put anything in a rocket, we're just going to beam ourselves to the stars," he explained. "The only trouble is, if there's nobody on the other end to put you back together, there's no point."

So are we back to square one? Not necessarily, Shostak said. Setting up the receivers on other stars is no job for a human, "but the machines could make it work." In fact, if any other society is significantly further along than ours, such a network might be up and running by now. "The machines really could develop large tracts of galactic real estate, whereas it's really hard for biology to travel," Shostak said.

It all seems inconceivable, but if humans really are extinction-proof -- if they manage to survive global catastrophes, genetic upheavals and cybernetic challenges -- who's to say what will be inconceivable millions of years from now? Two intelligent species, human and machine, just might work together to spread life through the universe.

"If you were sufficiently motivated," Shostak said, "you could in fact keep it going forever."

Last night, General Electric Chair and CEO Jeffrey Immelt canoodled with Congress members and industry top brass at a swish cocktail party on Pennsylvania Ave. in Washington, D.C., celebrating the launch of "ecomagination," an initiative he announced earlier in the day to ramp up development of clean technologies and lighten the company's Goliath-like environmental footprint.

Guests nibbled organic canapés and sipped wine produced by a solar-powered California vineyard (equipped with GE's own photovoltaic panels) as they perused exhibitions of the company's new technologies --- here a life-sized model of a hybrid-engine train and a state-of-the-art wind-turbine blade, there a super-efficient washing machine and a sophisticated diorama of coal-gasification technology.

After a speech in which Immelt announced that "it's no longer a zero-sum game -- things that are good for the environment are also good for business" and vowed that GE was embarking on this initiative "not because it is trendy or moral, but because it will accelerate [economic] growth," he presented a series of "ecomagination" television ads that will be airing nationwide over the next several months.

One spot in particular, which Immelt described as "a play on how to make coal sexy again," elicited hearty applause from guests such as James Connaughton, President Bush's senior environmental adviser. It features scantily clad models dusted with soot and shoveling coal in a dingy mine as a voiceover announces, "Now, thanks to emissions-reducing technologies from GE, the power of coal is getting more beautiful every day."

It's part of an explosive marketing campaign (costing roughly \$90 million, according to an Adweek estimate) that also included eight-page advertising inserts in yesterday's Wall Street Journal, Washington Post,

and New York Times. The print ads featured splashy visuals -- a smokestack sprouting leafy branches and an airplane engine resembling the spiraling core of a conch shell, for example -- and sparse but lofty text.

Gimmicky as the fetching coal miners and nature-machine imagery may sound, don't assume that it's all a greenwashing snow job. Granted, there are more than a few environmental skeletons in the GE storage room that might call for creative PR, not the least of which is the long-running Hudson River controversy in which the company dumped scads of toxic chemicals into the New York waterway and went to great lengths to shirk financial responsibilities for the cleanup. But the "ecomagination" program in fact reflects an admirably broad and ambitious effort to pioneer next-gen clean technologies, lower the company's emissions, and boost its energy efficiency.

Immelt is pledging to double GE's research-and-development investments in eco-friendlier technologies from \$700 million in 2004 to \$1.5 billion in 2010. That's more than 10 times the 2005 federal R&D budget for solar and wind combined, and equivalent to the total amount of current annual venture-capital investment in clean-technology development in the U.S., according to Joel Makower, founder of GreenBiz.com. And Immelt aims to double revenues from cleaner technologies in the next five years -- from \$10 billion in 2004 to at least \$20 billion in 2010.

He has also committed GE to reducing company-wide greenhouse-gas emissions by 1 percent and improving energy efficiency by 30 percent by 2012. These numbers may sound trifling -- and indeed are lower than what would be required under the Kyoto Protocol -- but they are no small step for a company that ranks as the single biggest industrial behemoth in the world (in terms of market value) and that would otherwise see a whopping 40 percent increase in greenhouse-gas output by 2012, according to its current growth projections.

Gloom Raider

The goals were developed in partnership with the World Resources Institute, a green think tank, whose president, Jonathan Lash, chaired President Clinton's Council on Sustainable Development. The GE initiative "is enough to make even a gloomy environmental-

ist hopeful," Lash said at the launch event for "ecomagination," and went on to call Immelt "not only a visionary, but in the absence of coherent national policies ... encouraging energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, he is just plain gutsy."

Lash even had respectful things to say about GE's continued emphasis on "clean coal" and nuclear technology. "Five years ago, I had to struggle to suppress my gag response to terms like 'clean coal,'" he told Muckraker, "but I've since faced the sobering reality that every two weeks China opens a new coal-fired power plant. India is moving at almost the same pace. There is huge environmental value in developing ways to mitigate these [plants'] emissions" with coal gasification and sequestration of carbon-dioxide emissions.

On the issue of nuclear power -- of which Immelt is a strong advocate, as GE manufactures nuclear reactors -- Lash said, "Global warming is the most pressing environmental problem humankind has ever faced. I wouldn't push any potential solution off the table, and I think nuclear has to be a part of the carbon-free energy mix."

Lash applauded, in particular, Immelt's insistence that his company's voluntary effort is by no means a substitute for federal action: "Industry cannot solve the problems of the world alone -- we need to work in concert with government," Immelt said at the launch event, and went on to encourage federal leaders to begin by "clarifying policy" and "committing to market mechanisms."

When Muckraker pressed Immelt to clarify his stance on specific policies -- would he endorse a federal renewable portfolio standard (RPS) requiring that a certain percentage of the nation's electricity come from renewable sources? Does he support a cap-and-trade emissions program such as the one called for by the McCain-Lieberman Climate Stewardship Act? -- he was adamantly vague. He expressed general support for the RPS concept, acknowledging that "Europe has been a leader in renewable energy" largely because "they have clear set goals [of] 12 percent renewable energy by 2010," but later suggested that the U.S. apply the concept differently with a "floating" rather than specific target -- whatever that means. And though he refused to speak directly to the McCain-Lieberman bill or other proposals for carbon caps

-- "I am a business guy, I'm not here to write policy" and "my job is not to set regulation," he snapped during the press conference -- he did concede that "we live in a carbon-constrained world where the amount of CO2 must be reduced" and that "real goals or targets whether voluntary or regulatory are helpful because they drive innovation."

A GE staffer told Muckraker that Immelt had meetings with both Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Connaughton yesterday, so he's clearly not too much of a business guy to hobnob with environmental-policy architects. And the fact that the company kicked off its sustainability initiative in Washington, D.C., a stone's throw from the White House, rather than New York City, the nation's financial center, indicates a desire to influence policy and lawmaking.

There's also a solid bottom-line incentive for Immelt to put his weight behind carbon caps: GE stands to benefit from increasingly strong environmental regulations and, indeed, from climate change itself -- both present opportunities for product innovation. "Big, long-term successful companies have been able to spot really huge changes and be on the right side of them," Lash told Muckraker. "Immelt believes he is going to operate in a carbon-constrained world and he will have the technologies that the world wants and needs to buy" -- from wind, solar, and nuclear equipment to desalinization plants that could ease of the pains of drought.

Immelt cast the company's motives in a more altruistic light, quoting Thomas Edison, who more than a century ago founded the company that would become GE: "I never perfected an invention that I did not think about in terms of the service it might give to others ... I find out what the world needs, then I proceed to invent."

Of course, if Immelt can merge altruism and profitability by selling technical fixes for the many challenges posed by global warming, more power to him. The stakes today are certainly far higher than they were in Edison's time.

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THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT NEW AGE MUSIC

By PAUL ADAMS

Some musicians I know are not comfortable with the term "New Age Music." I mean, what is really new about it? Can we be that presumptuous to believe we somehow have a magical music that does something no other music has done? Perhaps not. But there are a few characteristics and distinctions I thought I would explore.

It was Andreas Vollenweider who first introduced me to what was being called "New Age Music." It was a wonderfully eclectic mix of romantic instrumental music that had the rhythm, drive, and vitality of Rock. BUT, with something different. Something deeper, and something a bit well - joyous. Something that expanded my listening experience.

Guess this "jived" with my 60's sensibilities and happened about the same time I discovered the wonderful music coming from the Windham Hill label. Specifically the minimalist piano of George Winston, the guitar of William Ackerman, and the beautiful synthetic textures of now famous film composer Mark Isham. The year was 1981.

This was music that invited one to read between the lines, yet it was more accessible and perhaps less clinical than classical. While it was soothing in the background, it was more than Muzak. It seemed to be something that actually stimulated the environment. It was then that I realized that I had heard this years before. 1974 to be exact. I was studying Ethnomusicology at Southern Illinois University and heard the most wonderful guitar music in the background of the art museum. It turned out to be Robbie Basho, a very eclectic guitarist connected to what was called the new "American classical guitar" movement as represented by John Fahey, Leo Kottke and others. Robbie offered the finger style approach of Fehey, but the structure could be almost like a meditative Indian Raga.

Well, THAT'S when I realized that , no, the first time I heard this deep soothing music was when I discovered the music of Ravi Shankar (Of coarse, via The Beatles.). It didn't settle into a 3 minute format

that mourned lost love of teenage angst heard on the radio. This was something deeper. AND, it was really starting to penetrate the western world. The great violinist Yehudi Menuhin did a number of albums with Ravi called West Meets East . A dynamic and incredible fusion of eastern and western music that at once thrilled, as well as invited the audience to meditate or focus on ones sense of spirit. The great Jazz flutist Paul Horn came along with his wonderful recordings done in The Taj Mahal. His improvisations took advantage of the wonderful and mystical natural reverberations of the building itself. These melodic explorations floated and haunted one into a deep sense of inner searching.

Later I head about Paul Winter and his explorations of using music with the sounds of nature and wild life. This wasn't just a blend of soothing sounds from the environment, but an interaction of sound WITH the environment. His work in utilizing a sort of "call and response" with animals in the wild was quite unique (He experimented by actually playing with wolves and hump backed whales. He found they would "interact" with his short melodic phrases). Even though Paul was considered a "Jazz musician," his compositions with The Paul Winter Consort were more melodic and romantically based. It focused on melody, beauty, and passion, rather than a purely abstract dance of the harmonic spectrum heard within jazz.*

In reading about this music that stretches outside the previously mentioned three minute format, I realized that ignoring classical music would be unfair. Classical is a sophisticated musical form that definitely allows room for inner exploration and expansion (As does Jazz.). I discovered that some New Age music fans found classical to be a bit clinical. It didn't always have those romantically based repeated "hooks" or melodies that resolved, and pulled at the heartstrings. Perhaps it wasn't as accessible. With its exploration of tension and resolution, Classical is a form that expresses the complete sphere of the human existence - from great heights, to utter tragedy. Just as non verbal sound can be used by people in communication (Facial expression, hand movement, a stance), music can also use non melodic and non harmonic sound to make a point. In other words, it expresses all of the emotional sphere from positive to negative. I believe many of those that are drawn to New Age music want less expression of tension, and more of an expression

of resolution and peace. In the defense of formal classical music, we live in a world of duality. There is no dark without light, no happy without sad. That's why I accept that music isn't always there to message the pool of positive human emotion.

BUT, the purpose of using music to enhance positive experiences is completely valid. It can be a valuable tool in helping one learn to deal with tension, and LACK of resolution in ones life. So I completely understand the viewpoint. I remember seeing the movie THE NATURAL with Robert Redford and Glenn Close. I was so taken by the nobility and serene beauty and grace of Glenn Close's character that it was hard for me to see her in THE RAZORS EDGE where she played a sociopath bent on destruction. But, as an artist, I understood her desire to be able to use her skills in a wide range of roles. She wanted to express the completeness of her craft.

Back To The Roots

Of course the 70's and early 80's brings to mind the impact of Brain Eno. Although formal music had it's representatives of "ambient - ish" music - say by Erik Satie, Gorecki, Schoenberg and others, it was Brian that brought it to greater prominence (One would also note Harold Budd, Steven Halpern, Kit Watkins, Steve Roach, Robert Rich, Michael Stearns, and others in this genre.) Brian was able to rely on his own natural sense of what "felt" right - of what created and affected mood. Stephen Halpern would take a more clinical approach exploring the left AND right brain. I am over simplifying here, but like many in the east, he was curious to utilize music that tuned in to the bodies natural rhythm, and use it for a process of healing and stress reduction.

In the early twentieth century, painters became bored with reality. After all, the camera was around and "painted" reality quite well. Painters then sought to portray something more than a surface impression. They sought to paint or portray what lies beneath the human experience. This lead to vast explorations of the abstract. Their use of color, image, and shape, was able to create the same background wash that Eno did musically. You might not have been able to dance to it, or sing along a repeated melodic line, but you just "felt" that this was something beautiful, like the wash of soft blues blending into gray, and

evolving into a bright sun. AND, these aural images left a lot to the imagination. They didn't say "I want you to think about this specific event, object, or story." It created an atmosphere that allowed one to be independently creative. It was in effect, music that stimulated thought, and allowed the listener to experience his own inner sense of being. The last four decades have also brought to the forefront the use of "new instruments" such as the synthesizer. Perhaps it's most well known composer is Wendy Carlos who's "Switched On Bach" (and subsequent albums) opened a new horizon for painting on the musical canvas.

Matched with the continued evolution of technology, these sophisticated new "synthesizers" have allowed the composer a completely new pallet of colors to use in the compositional process. Of course, the "multi track" recorder has made quite a difference, and Mike Oldfield utilized it to the extreme with TUBULAR BELLS, his soundtrack for the movie THE EXORCIST. He showed 1.) how an unusual and unique piece of music can sell (Something most record industry executives have forgotten.) and 2.) what one man can do with a single recorder. One can't ignore the impact of Vangelis (And his work with Jon Anderson). Especially with his Oscar winning theme for the movie Chariots Of Fire. Lastly Enigma actually had a "massive" hit on regular radio. Pretty unusual. Their music has a sense and feel of "groove" as well as mysticism and hit the radio waves quite hard.

A Brief Influence of Radio

It can't be omitted that Public Radio became a vehicle for the exposure of some of this new music. Hearts of Space championed some of the best and most adventurous ambient/Space ambient music. It then grew into a label and expanded it's play lists beyond that considered just space music. Musical Starstreams grew into a similar vein but initially focused on commercial radio that dared to expand their horizons. ECHOES became another well known syndicated radio show known to offer the public something that enriched the musical pallet of listeners. Then came "The Wave" and what grew into instrumental music with a more commercial bent.

Presently. Satellite radio such as XM and Sirius have forged open a wide area and it remains to be seen how this AND the new internet stations such as LIVE 365

will do. I'm betting of a strong survival. The great thing about this movement within radio, is that it will continue to ensure a home for music the corporate world has ignored. Now, there are even marriages forming between independent producers AND satellite radio as is evidenced by Hearts of Space also being regularly broadcast on XM radio.

More past inspiration

During the 60's and 70's what some termed "art rock" or "progressive rock" came about. These musicians sought to merge many musical styles, and to expand the boundaries of rock & roll. Groups like Yes, King Crimson, Pink Floyd, Caravan, Genesis, Gentle Giant, Tangerine Dream, Happy The Man and Gong, utilized many musical forms within popular music of the time. Elizabethan Recorders, a fusion of Jazz and Classical, as well as the creative use of time, rhythm, and melody, were utilized. Some could be a bit "in your face", and some could be gentle with a sense of mysticism at it's core. BUT, the name of the game was the shedding of limits and the championing of expansion and experiment. The name of the game was to use music to explore "within." In 1980, the music industry started to shift back into the 3 minute format. It is my belief that the record companies were not successful in selling "art" music, and money seems to be a prime motivator.

Going back in time.

Of course if we were to follow this pattern back in time we will see a connection to music that has been with us throughout the ages. Think of Howard Hanson's Romantic symphony. Think of Aaron Copeland, Beethoven, Mozart, Ravel, Debussy, Erik Satie, and of coarse early music - especially Gregorian Chant. If we were to take a cultural "hop", we would also speak of Buddhist chants, Native American Flute and drumming, Japanese Shakuhachi flute, Javanese Gamalan and much more. All of these fantastic cultures "tap" into the reservoir of the human spirit and the rhythm of the earth.

Mickey Hart , drummer for THE GRATEFUL DEAD, has written on this subject in his book Planet Drum. AND, there has been an explosion of groups using drumming as a tool for exploring that "sense of unity" deep within us all. Arthur Hull travels the

world creating drum circles for various companies and organizations. He uses the drum as a tool and metaphor to show people how to work together, cooperate, and create on a deeper more global and communal level. Rhythm can embrace and surround you. It can be your partner in dance, creation, productivity, and spirit.

Presently on our planet, there is a concept of globalization, as well as the shrinking and redefining of borders. We are not just separate countries and cultures. We are one people, and music is integrating these various cultures within the structure of its form. Oregon was a band that really caught my attention. Their multicultural mix of music was always played with an astounding level of musicianship. As I said in the first paragraph, some musicians don't like the term "New Age". It's detractors felt the level of musicianship was well - if not sub par - perhaps a bit pretentious. Oregon was a band that really helped show that introspective music can be the real thing. Shadowfax (From Windham Hill) was another band that offered this solid level of musicianship. Armen Chakmakian formerly with Shadowfax is now releasing solo material that follows in the tradition of global/New Age-ish music that stands solid. Peter Gabriel has done much to champion "world Music" with his REAL WORLD label. It offers us music from many traditions such as Pakistan, India, Africa, and much much more. Clannad and Enya have provided great musings from Ireland. We are coming closer together, and these various cultural influences are an important part of what we call New Age Music. Popular musicians such as Paul Simon, Sting, and Led Zeplin have utilized world music in some of their work. Jai Uttal offers a remarkable blend of western jazz with his interest in the Hindu tradition. Ottmar Liebert championed a form of guitar he dubbed Nouveau Flamenco. We are starting to look back and appreciate cultures that have been somewhat ignored. With the popularity of artists like R.Carlos Nakai and Douglas Spotted Eagle, the Native American musical tradition has left quite an impact within the New Age music community. The Aboriginal music of Australia has also achieved quite a bit of attention. Hopefully, we are learning to appreciate what was once almost lost. The spirit of Native Australian and Native Americans could not be destroyed or ignored. It's purity of truth and being was too powerful. We are looking to our roots. We are looking to find that part of

ourselves we have not been able to find materially or physically. This inner searching may have allot to do with what most consider to ne New Age Music.

The Power of Music

Does what we call New Age music have an effect? Can it affect what we feel and think? Can it help create bodily change? Was I just imagining that listening to Robbie Basho in the art museum was somehow enhancing the experience? No. For me, it WAS enhancing it.

Today, what is considered to be New Age music is quite vast. Some believe it must be music that enhances a spiritual experience. It enhances meditation or stress management. Music that touches the heart and brings a feeling of warmth and comfort. Some believe it has an even deeper effect on the mind and body, and that some music can actually connect with spiritual as well as physiological aspects of our being. There is no doubt that music has a long history of being used in conjunction with spiritual practices. Whether used in ancient shamanic practices or church services, it IS an enhancement to the experience. Still others may look at it in more clinical or artistic ways. Whatever your leaning, what is called New Age Music, like any music or artistic experience, is dependent upon the person listening or observing the experience. Our own experiences integrate with music to create this physiological and psychological impression. WE are a part of the process of music.

Like all music, there is good and bad. Honest and dishonest. Some music may offer more richness and a sense of craft and art. It may also stimulate and perhaps even expand boundaries. Still, other music may be less imaginative and rely on cliché and over use what is currently popular in order to stimulate sales. BUT, New Age music (Or any music for that matter.) needs the listener, and what the listener adds to the equation, to accomplish it's purpose. Does the music stimulate and touch the listener? Does it help or aid the listener in achieving the musical experience he or she seeks? Is it an aid of their path?

The political implications of globalization are vast. It might be wise for us to utilize what is termed as "New Age Music" as one vehicle to develop and evolve humanistically. The conjoining of societies, cultures,

and religions dictates that we mature within, to temper through the changes that this technical evolution and globalization demands. Technology is a rocket ship of advancement, and all we can do is “hang on” for the ride. Hopefully we can use music in our attempts to allow interpersonal and cultural maturity to evolve keep pace with today’s technological explosion .

There are various genres within what is termed “New Age Music.” Here are a few:

Ambient
Meditation
Contemporary Instrumental
World Fusion
Native American
Electronica
Smooth Jazz
Environmental sounds and Music with environmental sounds
Acoustic (Solo piano, Solo Guitar, etc)
Space Music

New Age Reporter. Essential for those wanting to follow the genre and for artists wanting to track their music. Good information. Find out where this music is being played. Support them.

New Age Labels and artists

Philip Aaberg
Acoustic Alchemy
Afro Celts
Paul Adams
Ancient Future
Paul Avgerinos
Alex DeGrassi
American Grammaphone
David Arkenstone
Patrick Ball (Harpist, storyteller and good fellow)
Bruce Becvar
Jamie Bonk (He’s quite the guy today. Watch out)
Harold Budd
Richard Burmer
Clannad
Craig Chaquico
Celestial Harmonies
Ken Davis
Douglas Spotted Eagle
Jean Michel Jarre
Deep Forest

Constance Demby
Deuter
Bill Douglas
Domo Records
David Hoffman
Earthsea Records
ECHOES (Syndicated Radio Program)
ECM Records
Enigma
Brian Eno
Enya
John Fahey
Peter Gabriel
Jeff Greinke
Global Pacific Records
GTSP Records
Mickey Hart (Can you say Grateful Dead?)
Kitaro
Michael Hedges (Guitarist - YES, Guitarist.)
Hearts Of Space (Record Label and syndicated radio show)
Higher Octave
Paul Horn
Mark Isham
David Lanz
Loreena McKennitt
Michael Hoppe
Steven Halpern
Peter Kater
Lakefront Records
Liquid Mind (Chuck Wild)
Ray Lynch
Eric McCarl
Keiko and Kazu Matsui (Quite a musical family)
Musical Starstreams (Syndicated Radio Program)
R. Carlos Nakai
David Nevue
Mike Oldfield (“Those Tubular bells...”)
Terry Oldfield
Ottmar Liebert
Narada
New Albion
David Nevue
New Earth Records
Oregon
Patric Ohearn
Pauline Oliveros
Raven Records
Robert Rich
Real Music

Real World Music
Secret Garden
Ravi Shankar
Steve Roach
Sequoia Records (David & Steve Gordon)
John Serrie
Miriam Stockley (She's a pistol)
Suzanne Ciani
Shining Star
Silver Wave
Sonic Images
Soundings Of The Planet
Spotted Peccary
Michael Stearns
Suzanne Teng
Tingstad & Rumbel
Ralph Towner
Triloka
truartrecords.com
Jai Uttal
Vangelis
Kit Watkins (Monster)
Wavform Records
Andreas Vollenweider
Windham Hill
George Winston
Paul Winter Consort
Yanni

Paul Adams has a web site where he has his 8 albums, photos of the musical instruments he builds, and writing.

His newest and fondest project with Ray Charles arranger David Hoffman is THE NEURONS.

PALMISTRY: "Switching on the Ability"

By T. Stokes
Consultant palmist

As a child, growing up in the 1950's in East London, I lived in a haunted house. It was a scary old place, 200 years old, and had once been used as a butcher shop and slaughterhouse, and the feel of death still permeated the whole place, Alone in my bed at night, my room came alive with visitors my parents and siblings

could not see. I had many eerie encounters in that house, strong visions of past happenings. My mother was afraid of my abilities and her fears scared me.

When my father returned from World War II, I was born in the baby boom soon after, and sent to attend a Roman Catholic orphanage school. It was a frightening place for a seven year old boy, but it's also where my innate inner wisdom, began to bear fruit and then, emerged in a magical moment.

One day, we were lined up for lunch. The nuns barked out orders as if we were in the army. "Forward, march! Stand at ease!" We stood at strict attention as the boy at the head of the queue turned and raised his hand to ensure silence for the head nun. My mind's eye was instantly drawn in and transported to a place where vision upon vision were transposed onto his hand. I watched in awe as his life unfurled with a quick flash of pictures and swirling colours. I felt a surge of emotion and joy as I saw him with a white flower in his buttonhole. The movie blipped forward to when he was older, heavier, with small children. I felt his humour, love, anxiety, worry, deep grief and pride...all the emotions of his life revealed to me in mere seconds. I was stunned. I stood with my bony knees quaking. I was both confused and upset by what I saw. The strange thing is, this lad who had switched me on was named Hobbs, which in medieval English meant small devil or sprite. Exactly what my mother thought of my earlier visions.

This was my turning point. These children, who used to ignore me, would now line up on the playground to have me read their hands. I could visualize future careers, self image, family... all worries would be exposed to me. Suddenly, I, a scrawny, malnourished, unloved and ugly child, when switched on, was the playground celebrity.

My superstar status did not sit well with the nuns. The head nun overheard me saying to be kind to trees as they were live creatures too, she pulled me by me ear into her office, locked the door and smugly demanded me to read her palm. I was terrorized by these black cloaked creatures, who shrieked curses at us, but I saw her life in her palm and through a shaky voice told her she had been in a bad relationship with a violent man who left her when the baby was born dead. She had come to the convent to find peace and solace.

She was momentarily dumb struck, her trembling hands thrust into her mouth as her eyes bulged at me. When she regained her composure, she promptly thrashed me with a stick. The beating did not stop my innate gift.

I have been reading palms for the last fifty years, hand prints sent to me from all over the world. One of my most intriguing memories is when I read hands to raise money for children at a special school in Essex county in England some 25 years ago. I do not remember faces but I never forget a hand. Among the people lined up for a reading, was an old school colleague, now as she told me, a popular actress.

She took my card and I promised to read for a few of her friends. One evening, she picked me up in a sleek, posh car and as we were driven out in the wilds of Essex, she asked if she could blindfold me. I was surprised but complied. The blindfold was removed as we arrived at a luxurious estate with landscaped grounds. As we entered, I noticed that the oak panelled hall was almost as big as my whole house!

The people inside were a mix of royalty, the rich and famous. Some I recognised and many I did not. One fancy woman introduced herself, wagging a diamond on her finger as big as my eyeball. I could never imagine such wealth and ostentation in my wildest dreams.

As the evening continued, I met a beautiful young woman with a shy smile and read her palm. The evening ended and I was again blindfolded for my journey home. I have been asked many times what I said to the shy lady that was to become Princess Diana, but the confidentiality of the psychic is no different to the promise of the priest and the psychiatrist, for a good psychic is a good deal of both. I will only say her hand showed she suffered from anxiety and worried what others thought of her. But it also showed a feminine sensitivity which she viewed as a detriment. I thought it was a lovely feature.

I have never spoken at length of Diana's readings, although at my talks I do show some famous hand-prints if they are relevant. One day I may even publish her hand-print.

Palmistry is often associated with gypsies and other charlatans, and this is unfortunate. As a skilled reader,

I can reach into a soul and enumerate the difficulties seen, and offer advice. Most of my job is counselling. Your current rung on the ladder of life on which you stand, is the most important even though many just want to view their future.

The hand contains many secrets, some from long ago.

Secrets you Hold in your Hand

1. Effects of past karma
2. Childhood joys and traumas.
3. Emotional patterns that burden you.
4. Illness
5. Your career destination
6. Intellectual landscape
7. Soul purpose
8. Emotional motivation
9. Compatibility and relationship
10. General future trends

T. Stokes is a popular palmist who lives in central England. He is available for palm readings by post or email, contact him at palmist@fsmail.net. He also does spirit and psychic lectures, and has performed numerous healings and exorcisms around the UK.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following my contact with Ted Stokes, I expressed some doubt about palmistry being a spiritual activity and asked some questions. Here is his reply:

Hi Jim, Thank you for allowing me to speak. If I can help people to see things from a broader spectrum, I will be happy.

Question One asks if palmistry is a spiritual science. It is considered both an art and a science, it is a mirror to the soul, the emotions, the health, in fact all that pertains to the person in all facets. The soul type, because there are types, and the assessment of the chakras, are part of any reading, and how they affect the person.

(2) For many years I have been at the forefront here in Britain of a movement against psychic fraud, both personal, postal and telephone. It is an uphill battle.

In fact with a member of parliament I drew up the present guidelines, to try and change the law. I have also lobbied for certification and a code of ethics for all readers, and spiritual advisors.

Some 30 years ago I gave a demonstration at my spiritual centre of how a fraud works, many insisted it must be genuine, and would not accept it as fraud. There are rules to follow if you want a genuine reading, these must be understood (email me for this).

(3) At my spirit lectures I always recommend further reading. Two such books are by Allen Kardec, "The Spirits Book" and "The Mediums Book." Always raise your thoughts to the highest. Some spiritual people deny the lower realms, but I believe in knowing what can go wrong, as it has often been me to put things right afterwards.

Education is vital to know the signs to watch for. This is actually more controversial than palm reading and my articles in the periodicals, "Voice and View," "Psychic News" and "psychic world" have alerted people to what can happen, many do not want to know, some deny any lower spirits exist.

(4) Unfortunately palmistry is all things to all men, from the gypsies to the party hustler, A good place to start to know what palmistry is is to read Carl Jung and Julius Spear's studies on "psycho-chirology" which is the mind and hand linkage, Charlotte Wolfes' book, "The Human Hand" is also very good.

(5) I can remember making certain decisions before birth about my life to be. Bear in mind that insurance companies can tell by examining the D.N.A not only what diseases you will develop but when, they can even tell the approximate length of life pretty closely. This data has been seized on by the British C.B.I (Confederation of British Industry) to know who to employ and who not to. Some lines do change and some do not.

Palmistry is a valuable tool in counseling and advice, but one man's path is not another's, we need to tailor advice to hand, You mention free will ... no simplistic answers here, our parentage, schooling, religious instruction, medication and experience will all influence us against free will, Carl Jung said: "Any degree of learning will narrow horizons" e.g. the more we know

the less we know, the deeper the education the less free one is to arrive at an opinion. It could be said the opinion makes the decision. not you. (look up reductionism)

(6) Yes, guidance is always there for us from spirit. I do feel strongly that we need our own contact with spirit, and not through sectarian priests or authority figures. I have always tried to teach people to look inside themselves for answers, not from outside.

With my work at the alternatives clinic I have said that just as an athlete can train his body, so we can train our mind and spirit to achieve great feats.

Finally you say "surely we are making the future daily with our free will" "Where was this free will when we develop heart disease or cancer, or when loved ones are struck down with depression, alcoholism crime and such like, or when we are thrown out of work, For me and what I see, some things are laid down and some are not, that is where palmistry can help, but remember what a palmist does not say can be more important than what they do, because tact, care and diplomacy are all.

But talk achieves little, why don't I put my ability where my mouth is? Send me anonymous handprints, and I will give you the life. Let me know if we can do this

Very best wishes T.Stokes

EDITOR'S NOTE: If a reader would like to submit handprints to Ted, send them to me. Send e-mail to jimcleveland@tds.net.

Asian Tsunami Hails Ecological Collapse

Rising seas, coastal development, over-population and loss of mangroves and coral reefs make such natural disasters more likely and deadly.

Earth Meanders,
<http://www.environmentalsustainability.info/>

By Dr. Glen Barry
November 28, 2004

Asia's recent utterly tragic tsunami was caused by a natural earthquake, but worsened by human activities. The reactionary anti-Earth right has been quoted several times in recent days as saying it was only a matter of time until environmentalists blamed the catastrophe on global warming and other environmental causes. Well here goes...

There is nothing new in tidal waves and storm surges hitting coastlines. This has shaped and molded both coastal geography and plant communities forever. This is why traditional peoples rarely lived right on the beach, preferring to reside back a bit. This tidal wave was so damaging because of commercial coastal development, Asia's perilous over-population, and destruction of protective coastal ecosystems such as coral reefs (by over-harvest, climate caused bleaching, and dynamite fishing) and mangroves (particularly for shrimp farming).

The Asian Tsunami is indicative of the types of problems that global warming can and will exacerbate. It is known conclusively that climate change is raising sea levels, at least 10-20 cm over the past century, and it is expected this century's increases will be even greater. There is no doubt that all else equal, higher sea levels would contribute to greater damage from such waves. Simply - if you stand up quickly in a full bathtub, it is more likely to overflow than if half full.

Rising sea levels - in the absence of protective coral reefs and mangroves, and presence of recent human coastal developments - guarantee that any tidal wave will prove maximally destructive. As Jeff McNeely, chief scientist of the Swiss-based World Conservation Union (IUCN), explains: "When a tsunami comes in, it first hits the coral reef which slows it down, then it hits the mangroves which further slows it down. It may get through that but by then a lot of the energy has already been dissipated."

This tidal wave is the most recent "natural disaster" indicative of ecological collapse commencing on a planetary scale, first exhibiting itself particularly hard in Asia. This is because Asia is unrivaled in terms of intensive land alterations and ecological destruction over millennia. This is anything but an aberration, as deadly flooding and droughts have become routine in deforested areas of the Philippines, Indonesia and China.

Simply, Asia's current population can not be sustained given current natural capital and spiraling climate change. Asian ecosystems have overshot their carrying capacity, and we are witnessing what happens when humans live without regard to ecology. Lasting social recovery and ecological sustainability throughout Tsunami impacted coastal Asia will depend upon restoring mangroves, coral reefs and other natural coastal ecosystems, while restricting coastal development.

More systematically - in Asia, and indeed globally - failure to address climate change, deforestation and over-population means massive man-abetted natural disasters will increasingly become the norm.

This observation is made with utmost respect and concern for current and future victims of ecocide. Humanity has long abused the Earth - and we continue to do so at great risk. The Earth does not belong to us, we belong to the Earth. As goes the Earth will go humanity.

Earth Meanders is a series of personal essays regarding environmental sustainability and related matters. Opinions expressed are those of the author. An archive of past writings can be found at: <http://earthmeanders.blogspot.com/>

THE CENTER FOR CHRIST CONSCIOUSNESS OFFERS GENERATIONAL HEALING

The Center for Christ Consciousness is a healing center for the soul. Our purpose is dedicated to helping people access their inner divinity. We guide people to achieve that state of higher spiritual awareness known as "Christ consciousness."

Most of the barriers to achieving this state of consciousness reside in the deep emotional wounding and physical imbalances our mind and bodies have been subjected to over the course of our lifetimes and beyond. At the CCC, we offer a healing process orchestrated through spiritual energetic power that goes deep into your genetic memory affecting both physical and emotional patterns. **GENERATIONAL HEALING** delves into the deepest part of our human system of consciousness, where our unconscious

memories of the past from many generations affect every part of our being from our thinking and feeling experiences to our bodies' physiological responses. Through Generational Healing, we become liberated so we can tap freely into our divine nature.

The action of Spirit enters into embedded belief systems and generational past life experiences and re-patterns our mindal structures: our DNA is altered, and we are planted into a new substance for our mind to feed upon – living truth. Once our minds are nourished on truth, the errors and lies of who we felt we have been no longer have any fuel to feed them. They wither away. The reality of who we are as a dearly beloved child of a loving Divine God-Source shines forth from within, and we have more access to our true nature to follow the divine blueprint for our lives and we grow into Christ consciousness.

After experiencing Generational Healing over time, you will feel a greater range of mental clarity, emotional stability, and energetic creativity as you increasingly and permanently are freed from feelings of unworthiness, guilt, shame, anger, impatience, and all other emotions that diminish your true self.

Generational Healing is effective because it uses the most powerful energy in the universe – divine love. Only Spirit has the power to free you from generational embedded belief systems and feelings.

This process differs from other healing because in Generational Healing you receive, through faith, the healing God desires for you. Unlike processes where you must discover for yourself where your blocks are, in Generational Healing, your Inner Spirit knows where all things are in your mind. With tender and gentle spiritual power, the blocks are removed when a person comes to a session without trying to analyze what is occurring, and just receives what Spirit has to offer. It is this simple.

While the simplicity of what Generational Healing offers may sound too good to be true, it is important to understand that it is the attitude of your heart to be in a place of faith (trusting Spirit to be in control of your healing) that allows you to receive the gift of true, deep, and lasting healing.

Many times in approaching healing, the intellect stays

in the driver's seat. This directly interferes with what Spirit wants to do in you. After all, who knows you more intimately than you know yourself – your Inner Spirit! And this Spirit has all of the love and healing power contained within that you will ever need. In receiving Generational Healing, you are purely trusting that this is true.

No matter what beliefs you hold against yourself that prevent you from living the life of your dreams, in your Inner Spirit resides the truth. Trust the Divine Source within to give you the healing you deserve. In Generational Healing you can relax, let go, and watch miracles come into your life!

While the individual's role in Generational Healing is to receive, this is a very complex undertaking that Spirit activates to change the structure of your thinking and feelings processes. Visit the Center for Christ Consciousness website at www.ctrforchristcon.org and follow the links to the Human System of Consciousness and the Human Evolutionary Nature for more details on this process.

The exquisite design of our mindal environment is truly the working of a wonderful Creator. We are now at the time in our planetary history to understand how we are intelligently put together by loving divine beings in whose image we are made!

The CCC offers Generational Healing and you can make an appointment for a phone session with Center Director Donna D'Ingillo by contacting her through the website or at donnadingillo@earthlink.net.

TOP TEN STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGIES FOR 2020 **Battelle Memorial Institute**

<http://www.battelle.org/forecasts/technology2020.stm>

Technology experts at Battelle think they have 2020 vision. They don't mean perfect eyesight today. They're talking about the ability to see the world of 2020.

A team of top scientists and engineers at Battelle, a world renowned technology organization based in Columbus, Ohio, has compiled a list of the ten most strategic technological trends that will shape business

and our world over the next 20 years. And what do the Battelle experts see?

They see a world of microscopic, cancer-eating machines, cloned human organs, designer foods, and computers everywhere -- maybe even embedded in your clothes and under your skin.

“The 20th century was the time of big technologies, mass production, mass wars, and mass politics,” says Stephen Millett, thought leader and manager of Battelle’s technology forecasts. “But in the years ahead, new technologies will become much more personalized, and they will closely affect almost every aspect of our lives.” Millett adds, “We see advances in information and biological technologies bringing us into a more intimate relationship with nature and with each other. From cloned human organs, to personalized public transportation, to computers and sensors embedded in our bodies, we will become intertwined with technology.”

The 2020 technology forecast follows a series of 10-year forecasts Battelle initiated in 1995. “Those lists are turning out to be quite prophetic, and maybe even a little tame,” says Will Kopp, a futurist with Corporate Communications, of the forecasts that predicted technologies such as multi-fuel automobiles and flat-screen, high-definition television.

“With the dawning of a new millennium, it’s valuable to look ahead a little further and identify powerful technology trends.”

Battelle’s list of the Top Ten strategic technologies for 2020:

1. Genetic-based Medical and Health Care
2. High-power energy packages
3. GrinTech (Green Integrated Technology)
4. Omnipresent Computing
5. Nanomachines
6. Personalized Public Transportation
7. Designer Foods and Crops
8. Intelligent Goods and Appliances
9. Worldwide Inexpensive and Safe Water
10. Super Senses

1. GENETIC-BASED MEDICAL AND HEALTH CARE. Over the next 20 years, we will witness an

explosion of medical technology originating from genetic research, giving us the ability to detect and correct many genetic-based diseases before they arise—possibly even in the womb.

A wide range of new pharmaceuticals that originated from genetic research will come onto the market in the next 20 years, leading to treatments, cures, and preventive measures for a host of ailments. They may range from treatments for life-threatening diseases to psychological disorders to cosmetic problems.

Most incredible, some of these treatments will be personalized to meet the unique needs of an individual’s genetic makeup.

“Your doctor might have a record of your genetic makeup,” says Eric Majewski of Medical Products, “and he or she might be able to prescribe medications, diets, or other treatments to fit your own particular needs. It will really be the ultimate in individualized care.”

Battelle forecasters say genetic research also will lead to cloned human organs within 20 years. These organs will be grown and used in transplants.

2. HIGH-POWER ENERGY PACKAGES. Developments such as highly advanced batteries, inexpensive fuel cells, and micro-generators of electricity will make many of our electronic products and appliances highly mobile. Decentralized power sources will be extensive, affordable, and environmentally clean.

These new, high-power, distributed energy systems will provide backup if not primary energy sources for appliances, homes, and vehicles. In the transition to fuel cells, we will see further improvements in batteries—perhaps linked with solar power and small generators fueled by natural gas.

3. GRINTECH (GREEN INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY). Global crowding, fears of global climate change, and mountains of garbage will thrust environmental concerns to the forefront of consumers and industry around the world. Technology will provide the answers, with new systems that eliminate rather than reduce waste.

“The integration of a variety of technologies is the

key here,” says Gerry Stokes, Associate Director of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory. “We’ll be using advanced sensors, new materials, computer systems, energy systems, and manufacturing technologies to eliminate waste and make our products completely recyclable.” GrinTech will be especially important in agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and transportation systems.

4. OMNIPRESENT COMPUTING. Computers will be everywhere. We will be in constant contact with very miniature, wireless, highly mobile, powerful, and highly personalized computing with network access. Such computers may first appear on the market as watches or jewelry with the power of a computer and cellular phone. Later, we will have computers embedded in our clothing and possibly implanted under our skin.

5. NANOMACHINES. Microscopic machines, measured in atoms rather than millimeters, will revolutionize several industries and may perform a wide range of jobs for us -- from heating our homes to curing cancer.

Battelle researchers see the medical industry as the most important area for nanomachine technology by 2020. “We may be able to develop nanomachines that will go into your body and find and destroy individual cancer cells while not harming healthy cells,” says Battelle Senior Research Scientist Kevin Priddy.

Nanomachines also could be used to deliver drugs to highly localized places in the body, to clean arteries, and to repair the heart, brain, and other organs without surgery.

6. PERSONALIZED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION. The continuing growth of cities will further stress our transportation infrastructure. Yet, Battelle researchers say an aging population with concerns about safety, convenience, and independence will help maintain a high demand for personal vehicles.

The challenge is to integrate many individual cars within a coordinated and optimized public transportation network. “Realistically, public transportation systems like trains and subways are the most efficient way to move people around in a dense urban setting,” says Millett. “But many of us don’t want to give up our cars. So, technology will help us turn our cars

into what will almost be personalized public transportation.”

New information technology in your car will work with a central traffic control system to guide you through the quickest route to your destination. Traffic jams and road rage will decline substantially as people drive their cars to remote parking areas and take highly advanced -- and comfortable -- trains into central cities and between cities.

7. DESIGNER FOODS AND CROPS. Grocery store shelves will be filled with genetically engineered foods that are environmentally friendly and highly nutritious. Through genetic engineering, researchers will develop crops that resist diseases and pests, greatly reducing the need for pesticides and other chemicals. Battelle predicts that most food sold in supermarkets will come from genetically engineered fruits, vegetables, and livestock. Nearly all cotton and wool for our clothing will be genetically engineered.

Even lawns could be genetically engineered to need less fertilizer and pesticide and -- best yet -- grow more slowly.

8. INTELLIGENT GOODS AND APPLIANCES. Advances in quantum computing will lead to smaller, more powerful computers and electronics that will add amazing intelligence to appliances and other products. These products will likely include telephones with extensive phone directories, intelligent food packaging that tells your oven how to cook the food inside, refrigerators that help make out your shopping list and tell you where to get the best price on the food you need, and maybe even a toaster that won’t burn your toast.

9. WORLDWIDE INEXPENSIVE AND SAFE WATER. Within the next 20 years, clean drinking water could become an expensive commodity around the world. However, before water shortages become critical, technology will answer the challenge, with advanced filtering, processing, and delivery of potable water. Desalination of water and water extraction from the air are two possibilities.

“Our most important technological challenge of the next two decades may be developing new ways to make clean water plentiful

and inexpensive around the world,” Kopp says.

10. SUPER SENSES. One of the hot technologies today is virtual reality. In 20 years, though, we will be marveling over “enhanced reality.” Using sensors and electronic or genetic technology, we will be able to implant devices that will allow us to hear better than ever before or see farther or in the dark. Gerry Stokes says the technology will first be used to enhance hearing. “Baby boomers have lived in a very noisy world -- with rock music, airplanes, construction equipment, lawn mowers, and other assaults to their hearing. And as they age, we’ll see a rash of hearing problems,” Stokes says. “We’ll be able to repair that damage, but why stop there? Why not make their hearing better than it’s ever been?”

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Battelle, headquartered in Columbus, Ohio, focuses on technology development and commercialization and product development. With 7,500 employees at more than 60 locations, Battelle develops technologies and products for industry and government. Annual revenues are approximately \$1 billion. For more information on Battelle and its technology forecasts, visit Battelle’s website at <<http://www.battelle.org>.

The Demiurge and the Wisdom Dialogue

The Gnostic Revolt Against the God of Judaism

by Mark Gaffney (with footnotes)

Editor’s Note: See Mark’s book on the wisdom of the Nassennes in the Light and Life Library.

They teach the insidious doctrine
that there is another God besides the Creator.
—Irenaeus, Against Heresies

For many heretics have said that the God
Of the Old Testament is one,
and the God of the New Testament is another.
—Ambrose, On the Holy Spirit, I, 4

In the first centuries of our era, Gnostic Christians

overthrew the Jewish God Yahweh and attributed the work of Creation to a lesser deity, or demiurge, known as Ialdabaoth (also spelled Yaldabaoth, or Jaldabaoth). The word has been translated as: “begetter of Sabbath,” a pejorative pun for YHWH Sabaoth, one of the names of Yahweh in the Old Testament.¹ The fact that Ialdabaoth turns up in the Nag Hammadi Library and is mentioned in the Naassene Sermon, i.e., the Refutation of All Heresies compiled by Hippolytus, raises important questions that Christian scholarship has never satisfactorily addressed, among them: Did Jesus teach or ratify the demiurge concept?

Origins Within Judaism

Most scholars regard the demiurge as a Gnostic rebellion against Judaism.² But the rebellion was not a simple phenomenon. Certainly it was not always a matter of either/or. While many Gnostics summarily rejected the Old Testament, not all did. At least one Gnostic sect, the Jewish-Christian community of the Naassenes, based in cosmopolitan Alexandria, retained the Old Testament. The Naassenes are especially important because they claimed to have received their spiritual ideas from James the Just, the brother of Jesus.

Another question is simply: Why did the Gnostics rebel against the God of the Jews? The fact is partially explained by historical events, namely, the three failed Jewish revolts against Roman rule. The first and best known of these was the Jewish War of 66-73 AD. A second less well-known uprising was put down during 115-117 AD, during the rule of Trajan. And a third and final insurrection, the Bar Kokhba rebellion, was crushed in 135 AD. There is no doubt that these failed political revolts against Rome seriously undermined the prestige of Yahweh. For which reason the Gnostic demiurge could date to anytime after 70 AD, the year of the cataclysmic destruction of the famous temple of Herod.³

But political history does not tell the full story. The devaluation of Yahweh was also rooted in a process of religious reform that had been underway within Judaism for centuries, and which only attained its full fruition in the person of Jesus. To understand this reform, and how it came about, we must look to the Old Testament, in particular, to the seminal book of Job. (Many scholars have sought answers in Genesis,

which is understandable, given that the demiurge is associated with Creation, but with less satisfactory results.)

Most Christians probably assume that the God of the Hebrews in the days of Abraham was the same as the God of Moses and, furthermore, that this God was also equivalent to the Father mentioned by Jesus with such love and devotion. Any such assumptions are false, however, but not because God changed. God's nature, being absolute and eternal, never changes. What does change is human understanding.

The human conception of God, the God concept, has changed many times over the course of history and will continue to evolve in the future. In a famous essay called "The God of the Fathers," first published in 1929, the Old Testament scholar Albrecht Alt explored whether such a transformation had occurred at the time of Moses. Alt found clues in the Pentateuch suggesting that the Elohist scribe had amended the earliest accounts to bring the more archaic God-concept of the early Hebrews, the God of the patriarchs, in line with the later (and more pure) monotheism of Moses. Alt's paper touched off a lively debate among biblical scholars that continues to this day. 4

The reform I am about to discuss is another example of the sort of evolution observed by Alt. The need for reform of the Old Testament God-concept was real enough. While some Old Testament passages describe Yahweh as merciful, loyal, forgiving, and benevolent, he is at least as often portrayed as jealous, grouchy, wrathful, irritable, proud, boastful, unforgiving, temperamental, cruel, vengeful, and even bloodthirsty, prepared to sanction cold-blooded murder or mass slaughter, including the annihilation of entire cities.

Given the numerous examples of God-sanctioned mayhem in scripture, it is no wonder that discriminating readers have sometimes doubted whether this same Yahweh can inspire our confidence and trust, to say nothing of love, devotion, respect and emulation. Oftentimes, fear and trembling seems a more likely human response. And while fear of divine retribution can be a powerful force for good, and, at times, perhaps, a necessary motivator, if the goal is to uplift humanity from a moral standpoint, the example set by Yahweh in the Old Testament falls short of inspirational (to say the least).

The Book of Job

The Old Testament Book of Job, whose author is unknown, has two main themes: the question of evil, and the character of Yahweh. Many scholars rightly regard Job, along with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, as representative of the high-water mark of the Old Testament.⁵ The central part of the book is a series of poems that was probably composed sometime in the fifth or sixth century B.C.E. Part folk tale, prophetic oracle, hymn, lamentation, didactic treatise, and epic,

Job makes use of almost every genre in the Bible. The question it raises is no less pertinent today: Why does evil flourish while good people suffer? The answer the story provides broke sharply with Judaic tradition, and for this reason Job was surely controversial in its day. Tradition held that God would eventually reward the good man, regardless of his sufferings. Like the prophet Jeremiah, however (see Jeremiah 13:14, 24–25 and 15:6–7), the author of Job adopts a much more pessimistic outlook that probably reflects the bleak aftermath of the conquest and destruction of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar in the early sixth century B.C.E. Although the precise composition date of Job is not known, the book is obviously from the time of exile or later.⁶

The story openly portrays Yahweh in league with Satan. God torments the good man (Job) despite the fact that he keeps the Law and lives a morally upright life. Job's many trials are the work of Satan, Yahweh's servant (or possibly his son), who whispers false accusations in God's ear and receives permission to punish Job in order to test him and expose the wickedness allegedly concealed in his heart.

Job's flocks are stripped from him, his servants are slaughtered, and his sons and daughters are killed in a mighty whirlwind. He himself is stricken with a terrible wasting disease that causes great suffering and brings him to the edge of the grave. Job's body literally becomes an open wound. To make matters worse, Job's wife and his friends also turn against him: His wife urges him to curse Yahweh and to abandon all faith in God; meanwhile, his friends make superficial religious cant and castigate Job for having the temerity to maintain his innocence. One after another they admonish him, insisting that because Yahweh is punishing him, ipso facto, he must be guilty. They advise him

to submit quietly to his sufferings, which obviously have been ordained by God.

But Job will have none of it. Like a rock he holds fast to principle. Stubbornly he maintains his innocence and insists upon justice. Yet, at the same time, he remains faithful to Yahweh, refusing to condemn or even criticize the Almighty.

What is shocking about the story is the ease with which Yahweh succumbs to Satan's false witness about Job's alleged faithlessness. Being omniscient, Yahweh should be able to easily verify Job's goodness and constancy. But instead he hands Job over to Satan with a single proviso: "He is in your power," Yahweh says. "But spare his life."

Though Job remains faithful throughout, before his terrible ordeal is done he curses the day of his birth. No less shocking is Yahweh's failure to acquit Job even after his innocence has been established. There is to be no moment of truth and no justice under heaven. Instead of vanquishing Satan for making false accusations, Yahweh turns on the victim. Instead of offering solace and comfort to the innocent, he badgers Job and bullies him, sneers at him with rhetorical questions, and then confronts the hapless man with a mind-boggling display of divine wrath.

In the end poor Job is beaten down and brought to his knees. But how can it be otherwise, given Yahweh's overwhelming might? The rod of God is an awesome thing. In the end Job is reduced to a stuttering simpleton. He repents, even though he is innocent, and admits that he has been talking about things far beyond his ken. Having seen the omnipotence of Yahweh, he is prepared to eat dust. In this vein Job responds: "What reply can I give to you, I who carry no weight?" (Job 40:4; 42:2) In a final prose epilogue Yahweh shows a loving touch by restoring Job's health and property, but there is no mention of restoring his dead servants and children. Indeed, the somewhat cheery conclusion feels out of step with the rest of the composition, as if a later scribe who was no less shocked than we by Yahweh's repulsive behavior added it to redeem God's tarnished image.

Indeed, so subversive is the Book of Job that it is remarkable the book was retained in the bible. Probably the scribal "correction" saved it from being thrown

out, this and the fact that Job is a literary masterpiece.

Of course, even with its modified ending, the story is far from satisfactory. Job's total submission in the face of brute force seems a lame solution to the problem of evil. Nonetheless, the book is momentous because the questions the story fails to resolve were to redound over the centuries, as we shall see, and preoccupy the final books of the Old Testament.

Yahweh's Deficiency

So what is the root of the matter in the story of Job? Carl Jung, the founder of analytical psychology, points out in his able commentary "Answer to Job" that for all of his infinite power Yahweh ultimately damns himself. By humiliating Job, by making him eat dust, God unwittingly reveals his own deep character flaw, brutishness, while at the same time elevating the impotent but righteous human. Job may be powerless before the Almighty, yet he remains free to choose, and by choosing well he shows impressive moral strength. Indeed, Job's fortitude stands in marked contrast with Yahweh's rage and reproaches the deity's ratification of evil.

To be sure, Yahweh carries the day. With infinite power at his disposal, the outcome is not in doubt. Yet, from a moral standpoint Yahweh's display of heavenly fireworks and thunder fails to impress. This is the beautiful and terrible irony of the story: that Job, despite his relative impotence, comes to stand in righteous judgment over God himself. As Jung put it: "We do not know whether Job realizes this, but we do know from the numerous commentaries on Job that all succeeding ages have overlooked the fact that a kind of Moira . . . rules over Yahweh, causing him to give himself away so blatantly. Anyone can see how unwittingly he raises Job by humiliating him in the dust. By so doing he pronounces judgment on himself and gives man the moral satisfaction whose absence we [find] so painful in the Book of Job."⁷

The word Moira refers to fate or destiny. In Greek religion Moira was one of the three personified seasons that accompanied Zeus, and were often pictured hovering just above his shoulder. The point is that Zeus was governed by them even though he was the most important Greek deity.

The mere thought that such a thing might also hold in

monotheistic Judaism is shocking. Surely the God-head cannot be subject to fate. It is God, after all, who determines the destinies of others.

Nonetheless, from the story it is clear that despite his omnipotence Yahweh is lacking in something. Job apparently intuitively feels this because in his suffering he asks: "But tell me, where does Wisdom come from? Where is understanding to be found?" (Job 28:12) In the very next verse Job answers his own question. "Wisdom?" he says. "It is fear of the Lord."

Here, as Jung notes, Job shows that he is unaware of his own achievement. He does not seem to understand that in holding firm, standing on his innocence, and insisting on justice he has won a tremendous moral victory, not just for himself, but for all mankind. Job's answer may seem unsatisfactory, but it is important because during the apocalyptic age it became the grist for the scribal mill, as we shall see.

Now back to the problem raised by Jung, that Yahweh is ruled by fate: Even though Yahweh as God must have access to all knowledge, in the story of Job, as we have seen, he has neglected or forgotten, as Jung phrases it, "to consult his own omniscience." It seems that Yahweh has been split off from a part of himself, which means that he is not fully conscious. Which is incredible! And what of his boasting? Indeed, what could possibly compel an all-powerful and all-knowing Being to stoop to bluster and threats in the first place? This discomfiting aspect of Yahweh's behavior, analyzed long ago by the unknown author of the Secret Book of John, one of the Gnostic gospels found at Nag Hammadi, was the key Gnostic insight:

"[H]e [Yahweh] said to them, 'I am a jealous God and there is no other god beside me.' But by announcing this he indicated to the angels who attended to him that there exists another God, for if there were no other one, of whom would he be jealous?"⁸

Of whom, indeed? No scholar in the modern era has understood the theological question implicit in the Book of Job better than the Gnostic scribe of old. Nor has anyone stated it more succinctly. While the phrase "I am a jealous God..." does not appear in the text of Job, it is implied, and it does occur in Exodus 20:5 and Isaiah 45:5–6. In addition, numerous other passages in the Old Testament, e.g., Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:15–16;

and 32:19–21 and Isaiah 4:8; 44:6; 45:5, 21; and 46:4, convey a similar meaning. In fact, Yahweh's jealous tantrums are a prominent feature of the Old Testament, running through scripture like the surly residue of the old Canaanite storm god, which is precisely the point.

It is of interest that the famous heretic hunter Irenaeus, writing two generations before Hippolytus, quotes the very same line about the jealous Yahweh in his lengthy treatise, *Against Heresies*.⁹ Was it mere coincidence that Irenaeus devoted the largest portion of his five-volume opus to an attempted refutation of the Gnostic demiurge? Or was it an accurate indication of the historical importance of Yahweh's character defect? There is no question that the controversy surrounding the demiurge was one of the major battle lines separating the Gnostics from orthodox Christianity.

Let us now investigate why Yahweh would allow Satan's experiment to be foisted on an innocent man. Jung was apparently intrigued by the same question, for he writes:

"It is indeed no edifying spectacle to see how quickly Yahweh abandons his faithful servant [Job] to the evil spirit and lets him fall without compunction or pity into the abyss of...suffering. From the human point of view, Yahweh's behavior is so revolting that one has to ask oneself whether there is not a deeper motive hidden behind it. Has Yahweh some secret resistance against Job? That would explain his yielding to Satan. But what does man possess that God does not have?¹⁰

The psychologist goes on to suggest that Yahweh's behavior is driven by an ulterior concern, namely, the divine suspicion that our frail human consciousness is more keen than his own. The very idea is stunning. Consider, though, that driven by the ever-present knowledge of our own severe limitations as well as our relative impotence, we humans are required to cultivate consciousness simply to survive. Yahweh, on the other hand, has no such need for introspection because he is unchallenged, has no opposition, and encounters no obstacles; nothing requires him to reflect upon himself.

Stranger still is the conclusion that follows from a related question: Why would Yahweh instruct Satan to spare Job's life? Judging from Yahweh's sadistic behavior, the reason can have nothing to do with com-

passion. Yahweh is perfectly content to wreak mayhem on Job without regret or remorse.

Nor can the reason involve a former loyalty, namely, the Mosaic covenant; for the Book of Job reflects the period following the destruction of the first temple, when the old covenant must have seemed a moot article. In fact, in Job there is not the slightest pretense of a covenant. Why then does Yahweh spare Job's life? Does he enjoy having someone present to witness his thundering about heaven? Can it be that Yahweh actually needs Job? Quite probably he does, which would explain Jung's purpose in mentioning Moira, the season of destiny.

Here, an example from the Greeks may help. We know from the oldest extant account from Greek mythology, the Hymn of Demeter, that when Hades abducted Demeter's beautiful daughter, Persephone, and took her to his realm of the dead, Demeter, the grain goddess, became so heartsick that she refused to extend her usual bounty upon the earth.¹¹ Stricken by a year-long drought and resulting crop failures, humanity faced extreme privation, even mass starvation. In this dire circumstance mighty Zeus was compelled to intervene and arrange a compromise: Zeus ordained that henceforth Persephone would spend part of the year above ground with her mother, Demeter, and the rest below it with her new consort, Hades.

And why would Zeus be concerned enough to intervene? Quite simply, something had to be done because a mass die-off of humanity would leave no human supplicants to perform the daily sacrifices and rituals in honor of the gods!¹² Just as humankind needed the gods, so also did the Greek gods need humankind.

In the story of Job we find hints of a similar phenomenon. Yahweh makes Job suffer, yes, but he dare not exterminate him because he needs a living and breathing Job to honor and glorify his divine name. It is Yahweh's fate to require worship.

Of course, the relationship between God and human is not between equals. An enormous gulf separates Yahweh from the puny and subservient Job. Nevertheless, it is a reciprocal relationship. Yahweh needs humans as much as humans need him. The deeper conclusion to which this leads is never openly stated in the Book of Job. But it is certainly implied, which explains why

Job was (and remains) so controversial: If Yahweh is subject to fate and if he requires worship, how can he truly be the penultimate Godhead, the first without a second? Of course, he cannot. Yahweh as presented in Job is but a figurehead, a demiurge on a par with Zeus and the other pagan storm gods.

Job's query regarding Wisdom takes us to the heart of the matter, for Wisdom is the quality Yahweh lacks. The Greek word for her is Sophia. She is the Divine Mother, the feminine companion to God. She is well known in the East, where she is the active principle in the Godhead, with many names. In the various Hindu traditions she appears as Kali, Shakti, and Durga, among others. It is she who both manifests the world, sustains it, and transforms it. But, East or West, she is inseparable from the Godhead. In Judaism, however, awareness of her nature and importance was a late development. That it happened at all may have been due in no small part due to the anonymous scribe responsible for the Book of Job.

The problem is how reconcile her gentle and wise nature with the gruff and irritable Yahweh. The temperamental patriarch of old stubbornly resists the intrusion of her feminine presence. The Hebrew God prefers to stand alone, imperious in his majesty, bristling with archetypal wrath. Indeed, in his raging aspect Yahweh is almost the antithesis of Wisdom. It is no wonder that many of the Old Testament descriptions of Yahweh closely resemble the old Canaanite gods El and Baal, the raw matter for so much of his composite character.¹³ In the sixth century B.C.E. these dross elements were still very much in evidence.

The patriarchal storm God dies hard. Yet, change (i.e., evolve) God must, because from the moment the author of Job exposes Yahweh's dark underside, his deficiency can no longer be ignored, neither on earth nor in heaven. Thus, we find her, Sophia, Wisdom, described in the eighth Proverb, where we are told that her presence is as old as Creation:

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no foundations abounding with water. When he established the heavens, I was there, When he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as a

master workman, and I was daily in his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in his habitable earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. (Proverbs 8: 22–24, 27, 29–31)

Parts of Proverbs are very old and may even date to the time of Solomon, but the chapters about Wisdom, including the ones cited above, were composed much later, although an exact date has never been established. Dating Proverbs has proved difficult.

Jung interpreted the presence of Wisdom as evidence of Greek influence and dated the above passage to the third or fourth century B.C.¹⁴ While this has yet to be confirmed, there is no doubt about the very late date of a similar description of Wisdom in Ecclesiasticus 24: 3–30:

“I came forth from the Most High, And I covered the earth like mist. I had my tent in the heights, and my throne in a pillar of cloud. Alone, I circled the vault of the sky, and I walked on the bottom of the deeps. Over the waves of the sea and over the whole earth, and over every people and nation I held sway.... From eternity, in the beginning, he created me, and for eternity I shall remain.”

Here she is the spirit of God who broods upon the waters in the moment of Creation. Thus, there is no doubt about her antiquity. Yet, Ecclesiasticus dates to no earlier than around 200 B.C.E. The description is meant to be taken retroactively, but the passage itself was a late addition to scripture, and is firm evidence of a process of reform of the Jewish God-concept.

The same theme also repeats in the Song of Songs, in Ecclesiastes, and again in the Book of Wisdom. All of these books are part of what is today known as the Wisdom literature. All were written after the time of Job, during the apocalyptic age, and all are heavily indebted to Job, again and again taking up themes that first appear in that book. For example, the preacher of Ecclesiastes 9:16-17 states: “Wisdom is better than might, but a poor man’s wisdom is never valued and his words are disregarded.

The gentle words of the wise are heard above the shouts of a king of fools.” And in the Book of Wisdom 5:1–2 the scribe offers firm support for Job’s right to demand justice: “[T]he virtuous man stands up boldly

to face those who have oppressed him, those who thought so little of his sufferings.”

In the Wisdom literature we also learn more about the nature of the great feminine companion to the Deity. As it happens, she is a marvelous boon to mankind. Wisdom 10:17 waxes eloquent about her:

“To the saints she gave the wages of their labors; she led them by a marvelous road; she herself was their shelter by day and their starlight through the night.

And in the Song of Songs, which pretends to be the composition of Solomon (but isn’t), we find details of the wondrous union, or syzygy, of both sides of God, male and female.

The Wisdom Dialogue Continues

In the centuries before Jesus, the scribal dialogue about Yahweh’s better half (his feminine side) was played out in the last books of the Old Testament. This was a positive and important development because it produced a deeper awareness of the sublime attributes of the Godhead.

The process continued in the person of Jesus, who campaigned vigorously against every kind of superstitious nonsense, including society’s morally reprehensible treatment of lepers.¹⁵ At issue, time and again, was the old Judaic belief in a vindictive God. The affirmation of Wisdom by Jesus is evidenced also by his respectful treatment of women.

That this new awareness of the Divine Mother was also absorbed into Gnostic Christianity is confirmed by the text of the Naassene Sermon, which was embedded en toto in the Refutation of Hippolytus. The Sermon quotes a hymn honoring the Mother as the companion to the Father: “From thee [comes] Father and through thee [comes] Mother, two names immortal, progenitors of Aeons...”¹⁶ (Refutation 5.6.5)

We know from a lost scripture called the Gospel according to the Hebrews that Jesus made another extraordinary contribution to the Wisdom dialogue. Though this gospel was suppressed and thus did not survive, from the descriptions of early writers it seems that it closely followed the Gospel of Matthew, except that it was written in Hebrew or Aramaic instead of

Greek; hence its name.

The scripture was apparently so popular that it was referred to as the “fifth gospel.” Most important, it included the following key passage quoting Jesus, which was preserved (in two separate places) in the writings of Origen, and also in Saint Jerome: “Even now did my Mother the Holy Spirit take me by one of my hairs, and carry me away to the great Mountain of Tabor.”¹⁷

Here, the words of Jesus explicitly link the Holy Spirit with the Divine Mother; and virtually the same idea occurs in the Gospel of Thomas (101):

“[Jesus said,] Whoever does not hate his father and his mother as I do cannot become a disciple to Me. And whoever does [not] love his father and his mother as I do cannot become a [disciple] to Me. For my mother [gave me falsehood], but [my] true [Mother] gave me life.¹⁸

The passage is also noteworthy for its use of the word life, a word specifically used by Jesus in reference to spiritual life. The idea that the Spirit (spiritual life) flows from the Divine Mother was unprecedented in Judaism, and thus was a momentous development in the West. But the idea had long been understood in the East.

In the Hindu traditions the same Divine Mother who brings the world into existence and sustains it also makes available a very special form of her own divine Self: a divine grace that is the Eastern equivalent of the Holy Spirit. Hindus believe that by means of this extremely subtle energy, known as the Chitti Kundalini or the Shakti Kundalini, the Divine Mother brings about the dramatic reversal of the flow that leads to the heavenly source.

Today, the living traditions of Hinduism describe this key concept of the reversal of the flow reversal in almost exactly the same language used by Gnostics in the first centuries of Christianity. The only difference is that Hindus describe the “descent” of Spirit as an awakening from within. Either way, it is the decisive turning point in the spiritual life of the disciple.

The Gnostic Response

More than 1900 years after the fact it is very difficult for us to comprehend the extent of the calamity that enveloped Judea during 66–73 C.E., and again in 115 and 135 C.E. From the riveting account of Josephus, the consequences must have been horrific, much worse than the damage wreaked by Nebuchadnezzar six centuries before. In the act of breaching the walls of Jerusalem and destroying the great temple, the Roman general Titus proved the prophecies of the apocalyptic age to be a colossal failure, indeed, a collective fantasy. Many Jews survived the siege, the famine, and the final battle only to be crucified. Tens of thousands of others were carried off into slavery, or were thrown to the lions in the great Coliseum of Rome.

Traumatized by war, many Jews in its aftermath must have questioned their faith, including the darker attributes of Yahweh. In 1927 a scholar named A. Marmorstein found evidence of this in rabbinical texts.¹⁹

For Jews who had believed in the grand apocalyptic vision, there were only three possible options. According to scholar Robert Grant, they could rewrite the apocalypse and postpone history; they could explain the failed prognostications by trying to show that the sacred writings had been misinterpreted; or they could simply abandon their faith.²⁰

Little has been written about the war’s impact on the first Christian community of the Nazarenes. One scholar who did study the matter, S. G. F. Brandon, concluded that the impact was no less horrendous.²¹ The war scattered Jewish Christians far and wide.

And if the followers of Jesus were as angry with their Jewish brothers as they were with the Romans, they had good reason: The zealots had hijacked Judaism and brought ruin upon the nation. For which reason Jewish Christians probably shared the conviction that if only more of people had listened to Jesus, events might have turned out very differently.

Anyone with an eye in his head, after all, could see that the zealots had been blind. The entire nation had been led off the cliff like a pack of lemmings. To think the fools had believed that Yahweh would come down out of the sky and destroy the Romans! Where was Yahweh? Was he sleeping? Or was something the matter with the national God-concept?

The scattered remnants of the original Jerusalem Church found it difficult to regroup. We know that Roman pursuit continued, and was intense.²² Eventually, Jewish Christian sects did emerge, including the Ebionites and Elchaisites, and held on in places like Alexandria. But Jews would never again dominate the Jesus movement. The war and the subsequent Jewish revolts had set in motion a great reshuffling of men and ideas, and out of the rubble emerged Gentile Christianity.

So began a new phase of the Wisdom dialogue within the rich and diverse literature of Gnostic Christianity; and Alexandria was one of the primary cauldrons. Increasingly, the teachings of Jesus passed into Gentile hands. Probably for this reason, as time passed, there was less sympathy for Yahweh's noisy tantrums, less tolerance for the residue of the old pagan storm god.

There may also have been a feeling that the Wisdom literature did not go far enough. To many it probably seemed that events had completely discredited the Jewish God along with his people. Thus, the God of the Jews suffered the fate history has always accorded losers. Yahweh was demoted to the lesser status of a demiurge.

To be sure, the Fathers of the Church vociferously resisted this trend. Irenaeus devoted much of his leaden prose, including the greatest portion of *Against Heresies*, to refuting the Gnostic "error."²³

Notwithstanding the views of men like Irenaeus, the Gnostic repudiation of Yahweh was not a case of apostasy. Indeed, to many Christians it must have seemed like an advance. Certainly the demotion of Yahweh was not the end of God or heaven. The Godhead, after all, had not changed. What had changed was the concept of God, which simply reconstituted itself in human understanding. Indeed, the sloughing off of the less desirable elements in Yahweh's character surely helped many to clarify the nature of the Godhead. Yahweh was rechristened as Saklas, "the fool," and as Samael, "the blind." Behind Yahweh, unseen by him, stood Wisdom (the Divine Mother, Sophia, Achamoth, the Ogdoad, Barbelo, and so forth), now recognized as the true boss. Yahweh was simply the hired man. Above Wisdom, indeed, over all, presided the incom-

prehensible Father about whom Jesus had spoken in such loving terms.²⁴

It is interesting to note that although Wisdom was often ranked below the Father, their relationship was intimate: Wisdom was an integral part of the Godhead.

The fate of the old Yahweh was not a happy one. Some of the more extreme Gnostics dealt harshly with him. In the *Hypostasis of the Archons*, one of the Gnostic scriptures found at Nag Hammadi, Ialdabaoth is cast down into dark Tartarus, the hellish realm beneath Hades where the Titans had been hurled after the defeat of Cronus.²⁵ The Naassene Sermon, however, mentions no such dismal fate. In its milder tone we may see maintained the sturdy link with the Old Testament.

Just as it is difficult for us moderns to understand the full measure of the destruction wreaked upon Judea by the Romans, so also it is difficult to apprehend the Gnostic resynthesis that occurred in the war's aftermath, and why, especially from the perspective of places like Alexandria, that reform was so necessary.

This article is an edited chapter taken from Mark Gaffney's book, Gnostic Secrets of the Naassenes, released by Inner Traditions in May 2004. Mark's first book, "Dimona: the Third Temple," was a pioneering 1989 study of the Israeli nuclear weapons program.

For links to more of Mark's stuff check out his web site <www.gnosticsecrets.com> Mark can be reached for comment at <mhgaffney@sbcglobal.net>

Notes:

1. The demiurge was not a Gnostic invention, however. Nearly 500 years before Christianity, Plato described a similar Creation scheme in his *Timaeus*. In fact, as we know from a number of pagan theogonies that have come down to us, the same formula existed throughout the ancient world. For a detailed study of various Greek theogonies see M.L. West's brilliant book, *The Orphic Poems*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983; for a look at the Egyptian theogony see Robert Bauval and Adrian Gilbert, *The Orion Mystery*, New York, Crown Books, 1994; for a discussion of the Sumerian gods see Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963,

chapter 4.

2. Most scholars have followed Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1958, pp. 92-93.

3. For a good discussion see Yehoshafat Harkabi, *The Bar Kokhba Syndrome*, Chappaqua, NY, Rossell Books, 1983.

4. Also see Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1968, p. 168; also see Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1973, pp. 3-75.

5. For example, see Michael Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, New York, Scribners, 1984, p. 175.

6. W.F. Albright noted the absence of references in Job to any of the prophetic books, and cited this as evidence that Job was composed before these books, i.e., in the seventh century BC, or even earlier. Albright drew the same conclusion based on allusions in Job to Chaldea. But I take a very different view. Where Jeremiah criticizes King and nation Job goes farther and critiques God himself, that is, the all male God-concept that is pervasive even in the Books of Jeremiah and Isaiah. There was good reason for Job to stand apart! Allusions to Chaldea also point to a late (post-exilic) rather than an early date. The presence of the Son of Man in Ezekiel, Second Isaiah, and Job all points to a common eastern source. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, 1968, pp. 260-261.

7. Carl G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, trans. by R.C. Hull, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1958, p. 23.

8. James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1977, p. 106.

9. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I, 29, 4; 30, 6.

10. Jung, *Answer to Job*, p. 13.

11. R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hofman, and Carl A.P. Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1978, p. 59. 12. *Ibid*, p. 67.

13. Twentieth century Archaeology established the prevalence of goddess worship in ancient Israeli folk religion. Which was in sharp contrast with the official state religion: the pure Yahwism of the temple priesthood. For some reason, although Yahweh assimilated to himself the various epithets and qualities of male Canaanite gods such as Baal and El, the same did not happen with the pagan goddess. Ephraim Stern, "Pagan Yahweism", *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May-June 2001, p. 21.

Also see Israel Finklestein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, New York, Free Press, 2001, pp.

241-241.

14. According to W.F. Albright the eighth Proverb swarms with Canaanite words and expressions that refer to the pagan goddess. Albright dated it to as early as the seventh century BC. Yet, as Albright notes, paeans to Wisdom can be found in the literature from Ugarit dating back well into the second millennium BC. All of this is curious. If Wisdom entered into Judaism as early as Albright asserts, how then do we explain the all male character of Yahweh? Albright never explained this. The fact is that Yahweh did not assimilate aspects of Wisdom until very late. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1940, p. 368.

15. If the late Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin is correct, the village of Bethany was a leper's colony in the first century. Hershel Shanks, ed., *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York, Random House, 1992, p. 104. In which case Jesus surely defiled himself in the eyes of the Essenes and other strict Jews by spending time there. Matthew 21:17; 26:6; Mark 11:11; 14:3; Luke 24:50; John 11:1; 12:1. His visits were probably meant as a strong protest against the extremism of Jewish purity laws. The Jews were a superstitious people, as evidenced by the Old Testament, a people who regarded leprosy as a curse visited upon the wicked. II Kings 5:7; II Chronicles 26:20. Consider the case of Miriam, sister of Moses, who, we are told, was so stricken because she opposed her brother's leadership during the wanderings in the wilderness. Numbers 12: 9-10 That the incident is spurious, an obvious scribal attempt to inflate the image of the patriarch Moses, is attested by the Book of Jasher, which describes the same events in a very different light. (Jasher is mentioned in Joshua 10:12-13 and II Samuel 1:18-27.) Jasher was regarded as a lost book, until a copy turned up in England in 1721. It was first published in 1829. Albinus Flaccus Alcuinus, *The Book of Jasher*, Kessinger Publishing (reprint), Montana, 1829. The contrast with the Numbers version of events is remarkable. In Jasher 12-15 Miriam's stature as a prophetess is so great that she overshadows even her brother. In Jasher 12 it is Miriam, not Moses, who finds water in the desert. Miriam's importance is affirmed in the Talmud, which assigns her a status equal with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Aaron, and even Moses, the only woman so named. Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, New York, Avon Books, 1978, p. 117. Although Numbers 12:9-10 describes Miriam's sudden attack of leprosy as an angry intervention by Yahweh, in Jasher leprosy

is never mentioned.

The punishment meted out to Miriam is more credible. Moses places his sister under house arrest for reasons of political expedience. Moreover, he is forced to release her when Miriam's many supporters flock to her defense. Miriam is even credited with an important oral relic, the "Song of the Sea" (also known as the "Song of Miriam"), which established her unique place in Hebrew history. The song celebrates the Red Sea crossing, and is archaic, one of the oldest fragments of oral tradition in the Bible (See Chapter Seven). All of this appears to have been understood by the Naassenes. The Sermon mentions Miriam and describes her as "the one who is sought after." (Ref., 5.8.2)

King Uzziah was another Old Testament figure cursed by leprosy. Uzziah was stricken for entering (and thus defiling) the temple sanctuary. II Chronicles 26:19-21. Curious that no such fate was visited upon Pompey, the Roman general who was despised for a similar offense.

16. The hymn refers to the hermaphroditic Primal Man. But clearly his androgynous nature mirrors the Godhead. The very next line even states that, "the knowledge of him [Primal Man] is the originating principle of the capacity for knowledge of God."

17. Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924, pp. 1-2.

18. Robinson, 1977, pp. 128-129.

19. Cited in Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, New York, Columbia U. Press, 1966, (chapter 6, n. 23), p.33.

20. Grant, 1966, p. 35.

21. S.G.F.Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*, London, S.P.C.K., 1951, chapter 9.

22. In his history Eusebius reports that the Romans pursued the family of David for many years. The successor of James the Just was finally hunted down and executed during the reign of Trajan. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, chapters 11,12, and 32.

23. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4, 4.

24. For an abundance of detail see the Secret Book (Apocryphon) of John, Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, p. 98.

25. Ibid, p. 158.

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Solari was founded by Catherine Austin Fitts as a Delaware corporation in 1994 and became operational on March 22, 1998. Catherine (catherine@solari.com) is currently the President and sole shareholder. Solari is headquartered in Hickory Valley, Tennessee at PO Box 157, Hickory Valley, Tennessee 38042.

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Catherine Austin Fitts - Founder and President

Catherine served as Managing Director and Member of the Board of Directors of the Wall Street investment bank, Dillon, Read & Co., Inc.

Catherine served as Assistant Secretary of Housing/Federal Housing Commissioner at HUD in the first Bush Administration and was the President and Founder of Hamilton Securities Group, Inc., a broker-dealer/investment bank and software developer that successfully completed \$12 billion of transactions and \$500 billion of portfolio strategy prototyping the solari model.

Catherine has a BA from the University of Pennsylvania, an MBA from The Wharton School, and studied Chinese at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Catherine serves on the advisory board of Sanders Research Associates in London and publishes a column, Mapping the Real Deal, in Scoop Media in New Zealand.

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Noam Chomsky: It's Time To Take Back Our Lives

**By Jerry Large
Seattle Times staff columnist**

Noam Chomsky is a prodigious generator of books, articles and speeches, who has been talking about politics and world affairs since he was a kid.

He made his living as a linguistics professor at MIT and achieved world renown in that role, but his name is stuck in the back of all of our heads because of his ubiquitous political commentaries over the past half-century.

Chomsky is in town this week talking on the radio and in lecture halls, so I took the opportunity to ask him what it is he hopes to accomplish — what transformation does he want his words to encourage?

“I would like to see a society ultimately based on free association of a people who live cooperatively, control their own institutions, their communities, their workplaces ... and a move towards elimination of wage labor,” he said.

That’s a big order, but maybe we can handle the first bite-sized chunk of that, which is to reinvigorate our democracy.

Basically, Chomsky wants people to wrest control of their lives away from corporations, government and whatever other institutions have a claim on them, and “reconstruct the basis for a functioning democratic society.”

“Public opinion no longer has an effect on public policy,” he says.

“Our political campaigns, we would laugh about them if they were in another country.” The last election was between two rich boys who went to Yale, and instead of talking about issues, they tried to sway us with images — two regular guys, one hunting, the other working at his ranch — except they weren’t regular folks.

“The helplessness measure keeps rising. People feel they can’t do anything.”

Chomsky, 76, can remember when the labor movement was strong, and he says it gave ordinary people and poor people a way to pool their power and have real influence.

Churches are about the only comparable institution nowadays, he says. “It’s an active society, but in atomized fashion.”

People mostly live separated and isolated from one another.”

Chomsky says one of his main reasons for traveling around the country giving talks is that the talks bring together people who are active but maybe live in different parts of town and don’t know about each other.

People have to work together to have influence, but a lot of our social structure works against that.

“The ideal for the business world is based on a pair: you and your television. Be connected to the television or computer and not talking to your neighbor.”

Chomsky sees the current Social Security flap as a scam, an attempt to destroy an institution that is based on social solidarity.

“The basis of Social Security is that you care whether the disabled widow across town has enough food to eat.”

Public schools are in trouble, he says, because they too are an institution that depends on people caring about what happens to other people in the society.

You might imagine him pounding the table to make a point, but he’s quite relaxed. His voice is so soft, I have to strain to hear him sometimes.

Some folks would consider him a radical, but he believes most Americans would agree with him on many issues; it’s the political parties that are out of step.

People, he says, want to help their neighbors, they want to provide health care to Americans who can’t afford it, they want to increase foreign aid and cut back on weapons, but their voice is too soft to be heard over the noise of big interests.

We can't afford to just be quiet and leave national and world affairs to so-called experts, he argues.

"Politics is anybody's field. There's no secret. It's not quantum physics; anyone can understand it if they work at it."

Fine for an MIT professor to say, though he does acknowledge the difficulties most folks face.

With stagnant wages, people are working longer to keep up, and in many households two adults work, leaving little time to bone up on issues.

Also, stuff is complex. Chomsky mentions the Clinton health plan, which was too complicated for any ordinary person to understand, and says one of the roles unions used to fill was to study complex issues and help members understand them.

People need to create new organizations that fill that role.

In the meantime, people need to take back some of the time diverted to superficial concerns, like maybe the latest Hollywood trial, and educate themselves, not leave politics to a specialized elite.

Chomsky credits his uncle with helping him see politics as something everyone should have a hand in.

His uncle, who ran a newsstand, never went past fourth grade, but he read a lot and he understood issues, which Chomsky says was not unusual among working-class people in those days.

"If you are a member of a democratic society and a free person, that's your field."

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THEOLOGIAN EXPLORES EMERGING IDEAS

By Jeff Wright
The Register-Guard, February 5, 2005
The "In Search of Jesus" News List

Marcus Borg is a Christian - but don't go jumping to conclusions.

That doesn't mean he believes everything in the Bible is literally true, or that Christianity is the one true religion, or that God frowns on ministers who are female or gay.

In his latest book, "The Heart of Christianity," Borg describes a new "emerging paradigm" of Christianity that focuses less on creeds and beliefs and more on living life altered by a relationship with God.

Borg is arguably Oregon's best-known - and controversial - theologian. A professor of philosophy and religion at Oregon State University, he is a longtime member of the Jesus Seminar, a group of scholars who've analyzed every Bible quote attributed to Jesus for historical authenticity.

Borg's previous books include "Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time" and "The God We Never Knew." His new book, published last year, is now in paperback following a hardcover press run of 50,000.

Borg describes his new book as "a tale of two Christianities" whose adherents are often suspicious and even hostile toward each other. One view of Christian life emphasizes an afterlife and what to believe or do to be saved, he says, while the other is all about being transformed and doing good works in this life.

Borg writes that the "traditional" view of Christianity - with such tenets as the Bible's infallibility and Jesus as the sole path to salvation - aren't traditional at all, but rather a relatively recent response to the Enlightenment, science and secularism.

The "traditional" view is increasingly hard for many American Christians to embrace, he says, as the country becomes ever more pluralistic religiously. He notes, for example, that there are now more Mus-

lims in America than Presbyterians and Episcopalians combined.

Borg discussed other elements of his book in a recent telephone interview. Here are excerpts:

Question: Do you find most Christians are unaware that such tenets as biblical literalism and Christian exclusivism are relatively new to Christianity?

Answer: I think the majority of people both within and outside the church are not aware. Most conservative Christians think they're defending Christianity the way it's always been, and many skeptics of Christianity think the same thing.

Question: Are you ever accused of wishful thinking - that this is the way you'd like Christianity to be, even if it's not for a majority of Christians?

Answer: No, I'm not accused of that. The comment I hear most frequently about my books is, "You've put into words something I've felt for a long time."

Question: You say many mainline Protestant denominations have already embraced this "new" Christianity. But aren't those denominations declining in membership, while other denominations more wedded to traditional Christianity are growing?

Answer: That decline stopped in 1993 and mainline denominations since then have been steady. It's important to realize that most of the people who left (those denominations) did not go to more conservative churches. They simply dropped out because the earlier paradigm of Christianity ceased to be persuasive to them.

Question: You write that the issue is mostly settled that gays and lesbians can be Christians - at least among adherents of this new Christianity. But churches took the lead in defeating Measure 36 in Oregon, and similar measures in 11 other states that restrict marriage to one man and one woman.

Answer: Conservative Christians are still in the majority - not in mainline denominations but nationally. The Christian Right has more voting power than progressive Christians. Some people think change in the church is slow, but just in my lifetime we've seen the conversation go from "Can gays and lesbians be

Christian?" to "Can they be in a committed relationship?" and "Can they be ordained?" That's a big change.

Question: You write, "Probably more Christians have left the church because of the Bible than for any other single reason." Why?

Answer: It's because of the literalistic interpretation they've been exposed to. If the Bible is supposed to be the absolute will of God, they read it and say, "I can't believe it."

Question: How can the Bible be sacred but not divine?

Answer: The Bible is sacred in its status and function, but not its origin. When we say it's our sacred Scripture, we're saying, "This is the most important collection of documents we know. It is our identity document."

Question: You say, "Stories can be true without being literally and factually true." But while there are underlying truths to parables and myths, don't most people reasonably equate truth with the facts?

Answer: That's a modern Western way of seeing. I think pretty much every Christian thinks parables are not factually true, but they are truth-filled.

Question: You say God is not personal in the sense of being a personlike being, yet our relationship to God is personal. How can this be?

Answer: God is more than personal. I know that sounds like waffling language. The language I have for God is "What is." For me, it's obvious that "What is" is, and our relationship to "What is" is personal, in the sense that it affects us at our deepest level as persons.

Question: You say we all need to be "born again" - but not in the usual, evangelical sense of the word. What do you mean?

Answer: I mean dying to an old identity and being born into a new identity centered in God. I have an identity that transcends everything my culture says about me.

Question: You write, "If I thought I had to believe that Christianity was the only way, I could not be a Christian." Why not?

Answer: Because it makes no sense to me that the creator of the universe would be known in only one

religious tradition, which just fortunately happens to be our own.

Question: Can a person embrace the new Christianity and still have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

Answer: Yes. One of my definitions of what it means to be a Christian is, people who know God as disclosed through Jesus. There are many Christians who have the experience of Jesus to this day. Other Christians relate primarily to God - but nonetheless it's a God as known through Jesus.

Question: In 25 words or less, what is the heart of Christianity?

Answer: The transformation of the self to a deeper centering in God as known through Jesus.

Learning from Silence

by Robert Rabbin

"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder the hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." -- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

How many times must we prove these words? Violence does not lead to peace. Violence does not create peace. Violence cannot co-exist with peace. These are self-evident truths. We cannot indulge war and expect peace.

In my heart, I know that all people want peace, in spite of the seeming evidence to the contrary. Therefore, on behalf of all people, I want to call for peace: total and absolute peace throughout the world, without further thought or consideration or calculation of any kind.

It is a universal human experience that suffering, tragedy, and death can awaken us from the surface of life to its depths, from the superficial to the meaningful, from the crude to the beautiful, from the selfish to

the selfless, and from the mundane to the transcendent. As we awaken, we are drawn towards deep reflection, inner Silence, and wisdom. It is through deep reflection, inner Silence, and wisdom that we come to know peace. And now, in this moment of escalating passions and convictions, in this moment in which the world is trembling and reeling from past passions and convictions, we must seek that peace, know that peace, and become that peace.

To honor the truest expression of humanity, we must all call for peace, stand for peace, and act for peace. We must accept only peace. But first, we must become peace itself, not an idea or image of peace, not the rhetoric of peace, not the passions of peace, but actual peace, the peace in which violence cannot arise, because its true causes have been seen, understood, and transformed. There are many among us who have given their lives to such peace, who have become such peace, and who can speak for such peace. We must listen to them, learn from them, and give them seats in those rooms of power in which government and military officials now decide our nation's priorities and course of action.

This is a crucial moment in human history. The path we choose now will create our future for years and generations to come. Our every thought, word, and act holds the power to create or destroy. In the simplest of terms, our choices are between the paths of war or peace, between violence or nonviolence, between hatred or understanding, between fear or love, between retribution or reconciliation, between aggression or restraint. It is of supreme importance that before we retaliate against those we believe sponsored the attacks, before we choose one of these paths, we reflect and learn. In order to learn, we have to empty our cup of these things--the already known. We must create within ourselves a sky of uncluttered awareness, in which we can rest in the clarity, equilibrium, and peace of our purest essence and deepest truth. We must allow our first and second thoughts, our inflamed feelings, and our habitual reactions to dissipate in this sky of awareness, into stillness and Silence.

Wisdom flows from Silence, and we need wisdom. We need a clarity of perception and understanding beyond what we already know. Differing points of view and perspectives are useful, but a higher level of consciousness is essential. Beyond thoughts and words,

beyond concepts and beliefs, beyond all that is known and imagined, beyond the mind itself, is Silence--the sacred hub of the universe, the place where all differences dissolve, where all conflicts cease, where all fear turns to love, where all souls shine with the same single flame of radiance. Silence reveals what we don't yet know, and Silence will teach us what we must learn. From these teachings we will understand, and from this understanding we will grow wiser, and as we grow wiser we will act wisely. Henry David Thoreau wrote, "It is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things." If we do not grow wiser, then we will do desperate things, and our desperate acts will cause violence to escalate in ways we cannot even imagine. I pray that we will not take our world down this path.

Sitting in Silence and deep reflection, we will find a wisdom that is not diminished by the dualism of the mind, not driven by surface appearances, not defined by the commotion of passions and convictions, not ruled by the chaos of habitual thoughts and reactions. In times of crisis such as we are now experiencing, we instinctively pause, reflect, and seek the solace and guidance of Silence. But for how long? For a moment? For a day? For a weekend? Typically, that is what we do, and it is not enough, because when we again take to the streets of "business as usual," the quiet voices of reflection and silence are overcome by the louder noise of habit and convention, of thoughts and beliefs, of anxiety and tension, of ego, fear, and separation. Instead, let us forge an enduring and unbreakable relationship to Silence and deep reflection, one that is constant and sacred, one that is attended to and cultivated in each moment, so that we may be ever and always guided by that to which we too rarely turn, and even then only in times of crisis, loss, and grief. We must surrender to Silence as a way of life, for it is in this Silence that we find the true heart and spirit, the true soul, of our humanity. Silence is the supreme summit from which we can see the past, present, and future of the human drama, and what lies behind it. It is upon this summit that the saints and sages from every country and culture have stood, and it is upon this summit that we must all now stand.

Within this Silence, we learn much about the deeper nature and purpose of human life, about the nature of the world, about cause and effect, about immutable laws of existence. If we are to know peace, we must

learn from Silence. So far, we have not. So let us begin now, together, in our call for peace.

Let us learn from Silence.

Robert Rabbin is a San Francisco-based writer and speaker. He is the author of numerous books and articles, and the founder of Radical Sages, an online hub of global spiritual activism. For more more information, please visit www.radicalsages.com.
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Critical Thinking at its best!

The following is an actual question given on University of Washington chemistry mid-term. The answer by one student was so "profound" that the professor shared it with colleagues, via the Internet, which is, of course, why we now have the pleasure of enjoying it as well.

Bonus Question: Is Hell exothermic (gives off heat) or endothermic (absorbs heat)?

Most of the students wrote proofs of their beliefs using Boyle's Law (gas cools when it expands and heats when it is compressed) or some variant.

One student, however, wrote the following:

First, we need to know how the mass of Hell is changing in time. So we need to know the rate at which souls are moving into Hell and the rate at which they are leaving. I think that we can safely assume that once a soul gets to Hell, it will not leave. Therefore, no souls are leaving.

As for how many souls are entering Hell, let's look at the different Religions that exist in the world today. Most of these religions state that if you are not a member of their religion, you will go to Hell.

Since there are more than one of these religions and since people do not belong to more than one religion, we can project that all souls go to Hell. With birth and death rates as they are, we can expect the number of souls in Hell to increase exponentially. Now, we look at the rate of change of the volume in

Hell because Boyle's Law states that in order for the temperature and pressure in Hell to stay the same, the volume of Hell has to expand proportionately as souls are added.

This gives two possibilities:

1. If Hell is expanding at a slower rate than the rate at which souls enter Hell, then the temperature and pressure in Hell will increase until all Hell breaks loose.
2. If Hell is expanding at a rate faster than the increase of souls in Hell, then the temperature and pressure will drop until Hell freezes over.

So which is it?

If we accept the postulate given to me by Sandra during my freshman year that, "it will be a cold day in Hell before I sleep with you," and take into account the fact that I slept with her last night, then number 2 must be true, and thus I am sure that Hell is exothermic and has already frozen over.

The corollary of this theory is that since Hell has frozen over, it follows that it is not accepting any more souls and is extinct ... leaving only Heaven, thereby proving the existence of a divine being which explains why, last night, Sandra kept shouting "Oh, my God."

THIS STUDENT RECEIVED THE ONLY "A".

LIGHT AND LIFE introduces you to new friend and author Jessica Nagler, aka Jun Q'Anil, author of:

Jun Q'anil: One Who Walks the Way

In her mid thirties, after a decade of chronic physical pain and a deeper inner restlessness, Jessica made the life-altering decision to leave her home in Los Angeles — fiancé, successful psychotherapy practice, and everything she owned — to journey to Central America on a spiritual quest. Compelled by a need for radical change, she set off in search of a more meaningful existence.

From the exotic shores of Costa Rica to deep in the Guatemalan jungle, Jessica worked with shamans and healers, delved into Mayan spiritual mysteries, and

ultimately became her own teacher on the path of self-discovery. Testing all limits — physical, mental, and spiritual—she emerges as Jun Q'anil (pronounced Oon Ka-neel), a Mayan term meaning: onewho walks the way.

Jun Q'anil's easy, conversational style avoids new-agey clichés and leaves the reader feeling warmly connected with the challenges and transformation of the author. Jessica's story is one of a kindred traveler on the quest to mend the body and fill the soul.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jessica received her BA in Political Science, Philosophy, and Sociology from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1989, and her MA in Clinical Psychology at Pepperdine University in 1992. A licensed marriage and family therapist and a former adjunct faculty member at Pepperdine University, she has an extensive background in clinical psychology.

ABOUT THE BOOK: Jessica left Los Angeles in 1999 to travel to Central America on a spiritual quest. There she met up with a Mayan Shaman who taught her the ways of the ancient Maya and assisted in her own inner journey. While in Guatemala, Jessica had a profound awakening and though she eventually returned home to Los Angeles, she remained in solitude for nearly three years, studying Buddhism and chronicling her journey. Her first book, *Jun Q'anil: One Who Walks the Way*, is the direct account of why she left and the adventures that took her deep into the jungles of Central America and ultimately herself.

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THE GIFT OF CHANGE by Marianne Williamson

The times in which we live are difficult, more difficult than a lot of people seem willing to admit. There is an abiding sense of collective anxiety, understandable but not always easy to talk about.

When things aren't going well for you in your personal life, perhaps you call a friend or family member or go to a therapist or support group to process your pain. Yet when your feelings of upset are based on larger social realities, it's hard to know how to talk about them and to whom. When you're afraid because you don't know where your next paycheck is going to come from, it's easy to articulate; when you're worried about whether the human race is going to survive the next century, it feels odd to mention it at lunch.

And so, I think, there is a collective depression among us, not so much dealt with as glossed over and suppressed. Each of us, as individual actors in a larger drama, carries an imprint of a larger despair. We are coping with intense amounts of chaos and fear, both personally and together. We are all being challenged, in one form or another, to recreate our lives.

On the level of everyday conversation, we conspire with each other to pretend that things are basically okay, not because we think they are but because we have no way of talking together about these deeper layers of experience. If I tell you what happened in my personal life today, I might also mention how I am feeling about it, and both are considered relevant. But when it comes to our collective experience, public dialogue allows for little discussion of events of equally personal magnitude. "We accidentally bombed a school today, and fifty children died." How do we feel about that? Uh-oh, we don't go there. . . .

So we continue to talk mainly about other things, at a time when the news of the day is as critical as at any time in the history of the world. Not dealing with our internal depths, we emphasize external superficialities. Reports on the horrors of war appear intermittently between reports on box office receipts for the latest blockbuster movie and a Hollywood actress's vintage Valentino. I see the same behavior in myself, as I jump from writing about things that demand I dig deep to obsessively checking my e-mails for something light and fun to distract me. It's like avoidance behavior in therapy? wanting to share the gossip but not wanting to deal with the real, more painful issues. Of course we want to avoid the pain. But by doing so, we inevitably cause more of it.

That is where we are today. We are acting out our anger and fear because we are not facing the depth of our pain. And keeping the conversation shallow seems

a prerequisite for keeping the pain at bay. Those who would engage in a deeper conversation are systematically barred from the mainstream: from newspapers and magazines, from TV, and especially from political power.

One night I was watching a news broadcast about the latest videotape purportedly sent by Osama bin Laden to an Arab television network. The focus of the American news story was not on bin Laden's message but rather on the technology by which Americans had verified the recording. His message was too horrifying; it was as though we were trying to emotionally distance ourselves from it by having a beautiful news reporter discuss the technology of the tape rather than its contents.

Visiting a medical office one day recently, I asked my doctor, a member of the "greatest generation," how he had been feeling lately.

"Fine," he said. "How about you?"

"I'm okay," I said. "But I feel like everybody is freaking out on the inside these days; we're just not talking about it. I think the state of the world has us more on edge than we're admitting."

"I think that's true," he sighed. "Things would get bad before, but you always had a sense they would ultimately be okay. Now I don't necessarily feel that way . . ." His voice trailed off, his sadness obvious. As unhappy as he was with the state of the world, he seemed grateful I had brought it up. The fact that we go about our lives as though the survival of the world is not at stake is not the sign of a stiff upper lip. It is the sign, rather, of a society not yet able or willing to hold a conversation about its deepest pain.

We are being challenged by world events, by the tides of history, to develop a more mature consciousness. Yet we cannot do that without facing what hurts. Life is not a piece of tragic fiction, in which at the end of the reading we all get up and go out for drinks. All of us are actors in a great unfolding drama, and until we dig deep, there will be no great performances. How each of us carries out our role will affect the end of the play.

Who we ourselves become, how we grow and change and face the challenges of our own lives, is intimately and causally connected to how the world will change over the next few years. For the world is a projection of our individual psyches, collected on a global screen; it is hurt or healed by every thought we think. To whatever extent I refuse to face the deeper issues that hold me back, to that extent the world will be held back. And to whatever extent I find the miraculous key to the transformation of my own life, to that extent I will help change the world. That is what this book is about: becoming the change that will change the world.

Yet we seem to have great resistance to looking at our lives, and our world, with emotional honesty. And I think we are avoiding more than pain. We are avoiding the sense of hopelessness we think we will feel when confronted by the enormity of the forces that obstruct us. Yet, in fact, it's when we face the darkness squarely in the eye, in ourselves and in the world, that we begin at last to see the light. And that is the alchemy of personal transformation. In the midst of the deepest, darkest night, when we feel most humbled by life, the faint shadow of our wings begins to appear. Only when we have faced the limits of what we can do, does it begin to dawn on us the limitlessness of what God can do. It is the depth of the darkness now confronting our world that will reveal to us the magic of who we truly are. We are spirit, and thus we are more than the world. When we remember that, the world itself will bow to our remembrance.

Returning to Love

In 1978 I became a student of a self-study program of spiritual psychotherapy called *A Course in Miracles*; in 1992 I wrote a book of reflections on its principles called "A Return to Love." Claiming no monopoly whatsoever on spiritual insight, the Course is a psychological mind training based on universal spiritual themes. It teaches people how to dismantle a thought system based on fear and replace it with a thought system based on love. Its goal is attaining inner peace through practicing forgiveness. You will notice it referred to throughout this book, and many of its teachings will be reflected in what I write. When there is no specific reference for quoted material or concepts from *A Course in Miracles* (published by the Foundation for Inner Peace), I have added an asterisk to mark *A Course in Miracles* principle.

Although the Course uses traditional Christian terminology, it is not a Christian doctrine. Its terms are used in a psychological context, with universal meaning for any student of spiritual principles, regardless of whether they have a Christian orientation.

Spiritual principles do not change, but we do. As we mature through the years, we access more deeply information we had only abstractly understood before. Twenty years ago, I saw the guidance of the Course as key to changing one's personal life; today, I see its guidance as key to changing the world. More than anything else, I see how deeply the two are connected.

That is why I have written this book. It is, once more and hopefully in a deeper way, my reflections on some of the principles in *A Course in Miracles*.

Looking back at "A Return to Love" several years after writing it, I was struck by the example I used of how hard it can be to try to forgive someone. I told a story about a man who stood me up for a date to the Olympics in Los Angeles and how I struggled to work through my anger and resentment. I'm incredulous now that I ever thought someone standing me up for a date was a profound example of the ego's cruelty. In the words of Bob Seger, "Wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then." It's pretty easy to espouse forgiveness when nobody's ever really hurt you too deeply.

Life was more innocent for all of us not so long ago. Today the world seems filled with such sorrow and danger; it's not so easy anymore to simply spout off metaphysical principles and expect everything to be okay by morning. These are times that challenge our spiritual assumptions, as the power of darkness seems to be taunting us, demanding, "So where's all that love you believe in now?"

The answer is that love is inside us, just waiting to be unleashed. The darkness is an invitation to light, calling forth the spirit in all of us. Every problem implies a question: Are you ready to embody what you say you believe? Can you reach within yourself for enough clarity, strength, forgiveness, serenity, love, patience, and faith to turn this around? That's the spiritual meaning of every situation: not what happens to us, but what we do with what happens to us and who we decide to become because of what happens to us.

The only real failure is the failure to grow from what we go through.

The Challenge to Grow

Whether we like it or not, life today is different in ways we never expected. The speed of change today is faster than the human psyche seems able to handle, and it's increasingly difficult to reconcile the rhythms of our personal lives with the rapidity of a twenty-four-hour news cycle.

Dramatic endings and beginnings seem more prevalent than usual. Birth, death, divorce, relocation, aging, career change?not to mention the fact that the world itself seems so irrevocably altered?all seem to hail some kind of sea change. Things we thought stable and secure seem less so, and things we thought distant possibilities have come strangely close. Many people feel right now like we're jumping out of our skin. It's gone way past uncomfortable into a haunting sense that we might be living a lie.

It's not that our relationships lack integrity or our careers don't truly jive with our deepest soul purpose. It's deeper than that?some sense that reality is like a layer of cellophane separating us from a truly magical existence. We feel some loss of meaning like a sickness we can't shake. We would love to burst out, as though we've been crouching in a small box for a long time. We ache to spread our arms and legs and backs, to throw our heads back, to laugh with glee at the feel of sunshine on our faces. We can't remember when we last did that. Or when we did, it was like taking a vacation, visiting a tourist attraction. The most marvelous things about life don't seem to make up the fabric of our normal existence anymore. Or maybe they never did. We're not sure.

Most of us live with a deep, subconscious longing for another kind of world. We sing about it, write poetry about it, watch movies about it, create myths about it. We continue to imagine it though we never quite seem to find it. Our secret desire is to penetrate the veil between the world we live in and a world of something much more real. One thing we know for sure: this world can't be it.

Many of us are ready to make a break for freedom, to find that better world beyond the veil and no longer

buy into the absurdity of a pain-laden world that takes itself so seriously. The question is, how do we do that? If the world we live in isn't as real as it's cracked up to be, and the world we want is on the other side of the veil, then where does that leave us?Who among us doesn't feel displaced at times, in a world that's supposedly our home yet is so completely at odds with the love in our hearts? And how do we make the world more aligned with who we are, instead of always having to struggle to align ourselves with the world?

Perhaps we are living in a magic hour, like that between night and day. I think we stand between two historic ages, when a critical mass of the human race is trying to detach from its obedience to fear-based thought systems. We want to cross over to someplace new.

When we look at the innocence of children, as they love and learn, we wonder: So why can't people remain like that? Why must babies grow up to face fear and danger? Why can't we do what it takes to protect their innocence and love? You're not the only one feeling so concerned; the world is on a self-destructive course, and our children and their children's children are pleading with us to change things.

The times in which we live call for fundamental-change, not merely incremental change. Millions of people feel called in their souls to the task of global transformation, wanting to be its agents in a monumental shift from a world of fear to a world of love. We can feel the time is now, and we know we're the ones to do it. The only problem is, we don't exactly know how.

How can we best participate in a task so huge and idealistic? We sense new energy rising up everywhere, calling us toward more enlightened ways of seeing, living, thinking, and being. Books arrayed in bookstores proclaim a better way to love, to lead, to live. Seminars and support groups keep us working on ways to improve ourselves, practicing spiritual disciplines and religious rituals. We get involved in causes and politics, licking envelopes, sending money. But somehow, still, we don't seem to be hitting the sweet spot, the miraculous key to turning the world around.

We can't avoid the news, the war, the terror alerts, the fear. We're doing what we can to change the world in our own small way, but new ideas and more compas-

sionate forces seem overwhelmed by their opposites. A few things seem to be getting better, but many things seem to be getting much worse. Just when love seemed to be the hot new topic, hatred sounded its clarion call. And the entire world could not but hear.

The Eternal Compass

The most important thing to remember during times of great change is to fix our eyes anew on the things that don't change.

Eternal things become our compass during times of rapid transition, binding us emotionally to a steady and firm course. They remind us that we, as children of God, are still at the center of divine purpose in the world. They give us the strength to make positive changes, wisdom to endure negative changes, and the capacity to become people in whose presence the world moves toward healing. Perhaps we're alive during these fast-moving times in which "the center does not hold" in order to become the center that does. I've noticed in myself that if something small and ultimately meaningless has gone wrong? I can't find the file I left on top of my desk, my daughter failed to do what I asked her to do before going to a friend's house. I can easily get rattled. But if someone calls to inform me of a serious difficulty, someone has been in an accident, or a child is in trouble. I notice a profound stillness come over me as I focus on the problem.

In the former case, my temptation to become frantic does not attract solutions, but rather hinders them. There is nothing in my personal energy that invites help from others, nor do I have the clarity to think through what I need to do next. In the latter case, however, all of my energy goes toward a higher level of problem-solving: my heart is in service to others, and my mind is focused and clear. When I am at the effect of the problem, I become part of the problem. When I am centered within myself, I become part of the solution. And that phenomenon, multiplied many times over, is the force that will save the world.

When things in the world are troubling, our need is not to join in the chaos, but to cleave to the peace within. The only way to gain power in a world that is moving too fast is to learn to slow down. And the only way to spread one's influence wide is to learn to go deep. The world we want for ourselves and our children will not

emerge from electronic speed but rather from a spiritual stillness that takes root in our souls. Then, and only then, will we create a world that reflects the heart instead of shattering it.

The time is past for tweaking this or that external circumstance. No superficial change will fix things. What we need is more than behavioral change and more than psychological change; we need nothing less than for an otherworldly light to enter our hearts and make us whole.

The answer lies not in the future or in another place. No change in time or space but rather a change in our perception holds the key to a world made new. And the new world is closer than we think. We find it when we settle deeply into the hidden, more loving dimensions of any moment, allowing life to be what it wants to be and letting ourselves be who we were created to be. In what A Course in Miracles calls a Holy Instant, we're delivered by love from the fear that grips the world.

Each of us is connected to a cosmic umbilical cord, receiving spiritual nourishment from God each moment. Yet in slavish dedication to the dictates of a fear-based ego, we resist the elixir of divine sustenance, preferring instead to drink the poison of the world. It's so amazing that we do this, given the extraordinary pain that underlies so much of daily living.

Yet the mental confusion created by our dominant thought forms is so intense, and we are so trained by the world to do fear's bidding, that deliverance comes at most in flashes. Fortunately, there are more of those flashes than usual today. While darkness seems to be all around us, an understanding of a deeper nature is emerging to light our way.

That light, a kind of contemporary, secular star of Bethlehem, indicates newness on the horizon and beckons us to follow it to the birth of something fantastic. The wonders of the external world are as nothing compared to what's happening inside us. This is not an end time but a new beginning.

What is being born is a new kind of human, played out dramatically in each of our lives. Freed from the limitations of the ego, free to see and hear and touch the magic we've been missing all our lives, we're becoming at last who we really are.

Toward the end of his life, the literary giant George Bernard Shaw was asked what person in history he would most like to have been. His response was that he would most like to have been the George Bernard Shaw he might have been and never became.

A New Beginning

It is an article of faith that God always has a plan. No matter what craziness humanity has fallen into, He has always delivered us ultimately to the peace that lies beyond.

Today, we can stand in the midst of the great illusions of the world and by our very presence dispel them. As we cross the bridge to a more loving orientation? as we learn the lessons of spiritual transformation and apply them in our personal lives, we will become agents of change on a tremendous scale.

By learning the lessons of change, internally and externally, each of us can participate in the great collective process in which the people of the world, riding a wave of enlightened understanding, see the human race on a destructive course and turn it around in time.

To some this might feel like the period of a Great End, perhaps even at times an Armageddon, but in fact this is the time of a Great Beginning. It is time to die to who we used to be and to become instead who we are capable of being.

That is the gift that awaits us now: the chance to become who we really are.

And that is the miracle: the gift of change.

Personal Growth: A Minute by Minute Affair with Our Selves

By Jackie Woods

Everything in life is in motion, from molecular cells to the heavenly bodies in our solar system. Our bodies are in a constant state of growth, change and aging. Our children grow at remarkable rates and every year we seem to say, "Time flies faster and faster."

Our lives, too, are in a constant state of growth. Does it not stand to reason then, that we are also in a constant state of personal growth and adjustment? Personal growth is more than therapy. It is more than working through a specific place of trauma. It is more than a course you take or a book you read. It is the constant appraisal of your patterns of thinking, feeling and doing. Patterns are not necessarily bad. It is simply that they become destructive, and even painful, when they no longer fit our lives and the ever-changing qualities, or energies, of our being.

We are more than just our programmed patterns. We are qualities of the heart, such as loyalty, love, play, compassion, commitment, humor, creativity and patience, to name a few. It is these energies that we express in our lives through our work and relationships. It is these energies that we empower and grow in order to become bigger and better persons. We may have one quality in large measure and another, small, but they all need to be expressed in order to be empowered and expanded.

People need to become aware that there is something inside them beyond their patterns and the way they were programmed to act, think and feel. If your patterns are incongruent with who you are inside, it forms an un-reality in your life that causes "dis-ease." It is only in the reality of your Self that growth takes place. The un-reality may be so normal to you that you may not notice it is there. Just ask yourself, "Is there anything else I would like to have, do, or experience in life?" Your heart always wants to grow and express more.

Life is more than a series of trouble spots. As life is constant movement, we are in a constant state of expansion, change and evolution. Personal growth is

not something that can be attained by taking a single class or workshop. It is a minute by minute awareness of our process of change. Personal growth and awareness means that we are lifetime learners. It is, however, very difficult to see beyond one's personal range of vision. Thus people often find that support groups and/or spiritual teachers can help them to see beyond what has become familiar, to what the heart needs at any given moment.

Our patterns might have to do with such issues as intimacy, relationships, power, or fears, for example. If we bring our awareness of these issues into our daily lives, we can begin to see our unhealthy patterns and begin the process of finding out who we really are in those issues. It is in this place that we find healing and change. Spiritual growth, or heart expansion, is what life is all about. In the process of becoming all you can be, you will also get to manifest more in your life. Give the heart a healthy pattern, i.e., one that fits it, and there is no stopping its expression.

Each person must heal themselves by learning to identify and adjust patterns so they will be able to express their true selves. You may have support, but no one else can do that for you. The beauty of this responsibility is that as your consciousness attains more clarity, healing and realness, it affects the consciousness of the planet. It makes worldwide healing more attainable. It is in this bigger picture that all of our heart expressions come together.

We need to get past the point where we are going through life, working alone. There are many places that offer support. Healing centers offer ongoing growth and awareness classes on-site and over the Internet. Healers of many kinds offer programs that address acquiring a long-term relationship with health. Mentors are available with whom you can develop a lasting and supportive relationship. In these places of support, synergy is powerful as we all grow together. This healing goes out in waves through each person's unique connection to the world.

Growth gives you direction and support in your ongoing process of change. It adds focus and meaning to what is happening in your world, power in your work, and more heart in your relationships.

So many people think, "My life is fine. Why change it?" Or they think life is about attaining single goals such as a good job, relationship or children. Really, we are growing all the time, because THAT is what life is about. People need to live their lives from a true expression of themselves, rather than from just being impacted by the outside world. Our lives and our goals have meaning when they come from the realness in our hearts.

Jackie Woods is a healer, spiritual teacher, and founder of Adawehi Healing Center in Columbus, NC. Jackie's ability to recognize and correct unhealthy patterns of living has enabled her to help thousands of people to improve their lives. For more information about Jackie's work, and to subscribe to her free newsletter *The Heart's Journey*, please visit www.jackiewoods.org.

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Hoods of the Misunderstood

By Jim Cleveland

As through this life we travel
To an uncertain end
Then a hopeful new beginning
Something better to transcend
As through this life we fear each act
Whether we've done the best we could
One thing we can mark for certain
We will often be misunderstood.

As through our loves we try to relate
Draw the lines right where we should
As we integrate and postulate
And often play for blood
As we find a true path we think will last
Then turn up lost in the woods
We can lay it all off with a raspy cough
To ways we're misunderstood.

Through life and all its misunderstandings
We learn there's more than we can know.
So to know it all can get you stalled
And your spirit will not grow.
Turn your light to spirit bright
Let your attitude be understood
You'll magnetize, your soul will rise
To a place where Love is understood.

As through your life, you seek to surmise
What's love to do with it all?
How can it be applied where it does not reside?
Bombs exploding, bloody faces appalled
The key is that you see in its absence
What horrors in your world are procured
In the hatreds of ignorance and the lack of love
That could catalyze and make all understood.
When we lower our selfish dark hoods.
Understanding Love Ensues.

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