

# **FINDING ONENESS**

## **The Power of Loving Awareness**

**by**

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## INTRODUCTION

These writings are an attempt to ground life in God. Life is ordinary until touched by the Spirit living in all of us. The Spirit is, above all else, Love.

I will use an interspiritual and theistic approach, taking salient features from the world's spiritual traditions. Out of all my selections, the Christian Scriptures will be the longest and most detailed. This is so not only because it is my heritage and what I am most familiar with; it is also because of Christ's central position in history, especially Western history, and the extreme riches these Scriptures give us regarding God and the life of Jesus.

The New Testament will be my starting point because Jesus gives us "a new commandment, love one another" (Jo 13:34). Although declared in the Mosaic Law, this precept of love is "new" because Jesus raises the bar to new heights in telling his followers to love one another as he himself loved them, and because love is to be the eminent mark of the "new" era which the death of Jesus begins and proclaims to the world. Love fulfills the Old Testament and precedes all other injunctions.

Taking the cue that love is basic, my offerings will aim primarily at the heart not the intellect. The mystics and writers that I investigate demonstrate that the leanings of the heart are not merely emotional responses. The drive of the refined heart embraces all our faculties, sub-conscious, conscious, and supra-conscious. A sense of unity emerges as our faculties coalesce to see that each of us is a particular participant of Cosmic Mind. The complete mind is often referred to as "heart." It is the mind spiritualized meeting the infinite environment of love.

I believe anyone can meditate, although some prefer not to and others think they can't. It is being taught at all levels including children at the pre-school level, to prisoners of all kinds, to returning veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder, to patients suffering from stress, high blood pressure and bodily pain. To clear up some misgivings about meditation, I recommend Jon Kabat-Zinn's book, *WHEREVER YOU GO THERE YOU ARE*, especially the chapter, "Can Anybody Meditate?" Because I am a theology teacher by profession, some of the material presented may seem pedantic. My advice is to read the information presented and to personalize it according to your method of learning in order to gain some physical, as well as, spiritual benefit. I suggest looking over the Table of Contents to see what you want to peruse or skip.

After the New Testament, I will move more briefly to other sacred or esteemed texts. When I intersperse comments and interpretations, my hope is to move from intelligent

understanding to interior practice. My purpose is to cite those particular texts that have helped my friends and me on our spiritual journeys, especially regarding meditation. I ask you to see the offerings as a buffet to nourish us on our way, food from many times and places, from diverse cultures past and present. What appeals to some, may be rejected by others. Food for travel, if you will.

The biographical data of all those who have contributed to this work will be kept to a minimum so as to let the thoughts and words speak for themselves. It is necessary, however, to mention Raymond E. Brown, S.S., because I am indebted to him for most things Scriptural in the following pages. He was perhaps the premier Scripture scholar of his day, having received over forty honorary doctor's degrees from around the world before his death in 1998. His principal work was on John's writings, as demonstrated by his three volumes covering John's Gospel as well as his Epistles in THE ANCHOR YALE BIBLE. I use these at length along with his unpublished works which I am fortunate to possess because I taught theology on the faculty with him at St. Mary's Seminary and University, Baltimore, MD.

To sum up, three principal themes of the following work are:

1. The Primacy of Love.
2. The Urging of the Heart.
3. The Invitation to Meditate.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE BIBLE

#### A. "I AM" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

John gives particular attention to the use of "I am" (in Greek, "ego eimi") in his Gospel. It has special significance for him because of the way Jesus saw himself and how the Christ reproduces himself in us. John's intimacy with Jesus allowed him to see things in Jesus which others did not. I will look at his lengthy treatment shortly, but I think it advantageous to first see the Synoptic use of the phrase.

##### The Synoptic Usage

There are three synoptic passages where "I am" is used with no predicate expressed, although it may be understood. The evangelist in each case seems to play on both a banal and a deeper use of ego eimi.

The first is Mark 14:62, Luke 22:70: When Jesus is asked by the High Priest if he is the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One, he answers, "Ego eimi." This may be simply an affirmative, "I am." Yet, his answer provokes the charge of blasphemy--a charge that is more understandable if Jesus were claiming a divine name rather than simply affirming Messiahship.

The second case is Matthew 14:27 (Mark 6:50): As Jesus comes walking across the water, he says to the disciples in the boat, "Ego eimi; do not be afraid." This is the same use seen in John 6:20. That Matthew intends more than a simple "It is I" is shown by the profession of faith elicited from the disciples that concludes the scene, "Truly you are God's Son" (Matt 14:33).

The third such use is Luke 24:36: After the resurrection Jesus appears to his disciples and says "Ego eimi; do not be afraid." Once again this may simply mean "It is I" (see 24:39); but the post-resurrectional context, when they were alarmed and frightened thinking they were seeing a ghost, indicates a revelation of the Lordship of Jesus.

There is one example of an "I am" statement in the Synoptic Gospels which is strikingly similar to the absolute Johannine usage which I shall explore below. When speaking of the signs of the last days, Jesus warns, "Many will come in My Name, saying Ego Eimi" (Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8). Some would supply a predicate here, e.g., "I am he, i.e., Jesus or the Messiah." However, the context does not suggest the predicate; and the juxtaposition of Ego Eimi and "my name" does bring us very close to Johannine usage.

The Ego Eimi in John's Gospel. There are three types of uses of the phrase ego eimi.

1. The 'absolute' use without a predicate.

-8:24: "Unless you come to believe that I AM, you will surely die in your sins."

-8:28: "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM."

-8:58: "Before Abraham even came into existence, I AM."

-13:19: "Someone who shares my table rebels against me....When it does happen, you may believe that I AM."

2. The use where a predicate may be understood even though it is not expressed.

-6:20: The disciples in the boat are frightened because they see someone coming to them on the water. Jesus assures them, "Ego Eimi; do not be afraid."

-18:5: The soldiers and police who have come to the garden to arrest Jesus announce that they are seeking Jesus. Jesus answers "Ego eimi." This means "I am He"; but the fact that those who hear it fall to the ground when he answers suggests a greater significance.

3. The use with a predicate nominative. In seven instances Jesus speaks of himself figuratively:

-6:35, 51: "I am the bread of life.... I am the living bread."

-8:12 and 9:5 "I am the light of the world."

-10:7, 9: "I am the (sheep) gate."

-10:11, 14: "I am the good shepherd."

-11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life."

-14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

-15:1, 5 "I am the true vine."

Considering these verses in the light of the use of ego eimi that just outlined, these verses are quite significant, for it seems clear that Jesus is presented as speaking in the same manner in which Yahweh speaks in the Old Testament.



The class 1. or absolute, uses are the clearest in this regard. For example, in Jo 8:28, Jesus promises that when the Son of Man is lifted up (in return to the Father), "then you will know that ego eimi." In Isa 43:10, by way of comparison, Yahweh says that He has chosen His servant Israel, "That you may know and believe in me and understand that ego eime." John draws attention to the implications of divinity in the use of ego eime by Jesus, as for instance when he records that after its use in 8:58, the Jews try to stone Jesus.

The class 2. uses of ego eimi reveal a similar background. In 6:20, the expression may mean simply, It is I, that is, someone whom you know, and not a supernatural being or ghost." But it should be remembered that one of the uses of "I am Yahweh" statements in the OT was to reassure the observers of a divine theophany: "Do not be afraid; I am the God of your ancestors." So it would seem that John may well be giving us an epiphany scene here, and thus playing on both the ordinary and sacral use of ego eimi.

The incident in 18:5 is clearer still. Jesus answer ego eimi causes those who hear it to fall to the ground, suggesting strongly a form of theophany which leaves one prostrate in fear of God. Once again, John seems to be playing on a twofold use of ego eimi.

The class 3. uses of ego eimi in John likewise seems dependent on the use of "I am" in the OT. Note first that the predicate nominatives are adaptations of OT symbolism, for bread, light, shepherd, and vine are all symbolically used in describing the relations of God to Israel. Secondly, the OT offers examples where God uses the formula "I am" with a nominal predicate descriptive of God's action on behalf of men, e.g., "I am your salvation" (Ps 35:3; "I am the Lord, your healer" (Ex 15:26).

Finally, these parallels indicate that the use of "I AM" as a divine name in Judaism explains the many Johannine references to the divine name that Jesus bears. John uses the divine name to give credence to the various claims Jesus is making.

To start with, Jesus came in the Father's name (5:43) and did his works in the Father's name (10:25). Then Jesus made known and revealed the Father's name to his disciples (17:6,26). Later, the hour that brings the glorification of Jesus means the glorification of the Father's name (12:23,28). After this hour has come, believers can ask for things in Jesus' name (14:13; 15:16; 16:23). And last, in the name of the glorified Jesus, the Father sends the Paraclete (14:26). The great sin is to refuse to believe in the name of God's only Son (3:18).

I can ask, "What is this divine name that has been given to Jesus and that he glorifies through his death, resurrection, and ascension?" In Acts and Paul (e.g., Phil 2:9) the name given

to Jesus at which every knee should bend is the name KYRIOS or "LORD" -- the term used in the Septuagint to translate "Yahweh" or "Adonai." While John too uses the title KYRIOS for Jesus (20:28), John seems to prefer EGO EIMI as the divine name given to Jesus. If this name is to be glorified through the hour of the death and resurrection, John 8:28 says: "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that 'I AM'."

Thus John's absolute use of "I am" in classes 1 and 2 seem to be an elaboration of a use of "I am" attributed to Jesus in the earlier Synoptic tradition as well. To conclude, Johannine theology has capitalized on a valid theme of the earlier tradition and points to it with emphasis.

Thus far I have stayed with the strict Scriptural wording. To sum up in my own words, it is easy to see how John is portraying Jesus as a divine being that he has personally witnessed. For reason, Jesus went through a complete human existence to bring to our attention the essence of divinity. One with the Father, he was and is God reaching out to us. See below that John is intent on protecting and preserving the faith and trust of the community for whom he is writing. They are not only to love God, but also love Jesus in the same way, for Jesus Christ is an incarnation of the One Existing Ever-Present God, a destiny and Oneness to which each of us is also called.

## **B. "GOD IS LOVE"**

To continue the Christian Scriptures, "God is love" (1Jo 4:16) might be the most revealing and revolutionary sentence in the Bible. The full passage reads: "God is love, and the person who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him." St. Augustine in the fifth century had written superlatively about this passage: "If nothing else in praise of love was said in the rest of the epistle, nay in the rest of Scripture, and we had heard from the mouth of the Spirit of God that one statement, 'God is love,' we would not have to look for anything else" (Raymond E. Brown, *THE EPISTLES OF JOHN*, p. 549-550).

"God so loved us that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we have life through him" (1 Jo 4:9).

God so loved us that "already in this world we are just the same as Christ is" (1 Jo 4:17).

God so loved us that the love that God has is "in us" (1Jo 4:16), identical with Himself, conforming us to His Son by making us His children

God so loved us that His love is not perfect until it reaches us and is fulfilled in us, thus making divine indwelling a greater intimacy than seeing God: "No one has ever seen

God. Yet if we love one another, God abides in us; and His love has reached perfection in us"( 1Jo 4:12). Part of the revelation is what happens in Christians. "Revealed in us" (4:9) is meant literally and not simply as a synonym for "revealed to us." That love, which is received in and with divine life, must, like that life, be active. It must be outgoing to others, in imitation of God Himself. That love is brought to perfection in the believer when the believer is brought to perfection in love.

God so loved us that I no longer fear, for "perfect love drives out fear" (1 Jo 4:18).

God so loved us that "He has given us of His own Spirit"(1Jo 4:13) to abide with us forever. Part of the work of the Paraclete/Spirit is the ability to see Jesus in his ministry as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. The Spirit is the criterion by which I know that I abide in God and He abides in us. This is not merely an intellectual knowledge, for the love that God has is "in us." Experience of that love makes the Christian grow in knowledge and love. Love and truth are closely related in Johannine thought. Herein is fulfilled Jesus' prayer for mutual indwelling in future believers. To them I make known Your name; and I will continue to make it known so that the love You had for me may be IN THEM, and I may be in them (John 17:26).

A life of love is based on the fact that God first loved us. "In this then, does love consist: not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son..." (1 Jo 4:10). But none of our love is true if we do not love our neighbor. John first pleads with his followers: "Beloved, let us love one another since love is from God. Everyone who loves has been begotten by God." A few verses later John returns to the theme, citing God as the example, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we in turn ought to love one another" (1 Jo 4:11). Finally, John clearly stipulates the need to extend our love: "If anyone boasts, 'I love God,' while continuing to hate his brother, he is a liar" (1 Jo 4:20). The reason is clear: one's "brother" is a child of God from whom love comes, and God the Father expresses compassion for His children by having each child love the other.

Certain passages in the Synoptic Gospels stress the duty to love all, while John's emphasis is on the love of one's fellow Christian (13:34; 15:12).

I would like to branch off to the Synoptics for a moment, where is highlighted how I am to love. A lawyer, trying to disconcert Jesus, asked him, what must he do to gain eternal life. Jesus asked him, "What is written in the Law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus replied, "You have answered right, do this and life is yours." But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, "And who is my

neighbor?" What follows is the parable of the Good Samaritan, one of the most quoted passages on how it is I am to love, At its conclusion, Jesus asked the question, who proved himself a neighbor to the man who fell into the brigands hands? The lawyer answered, "The one who took pity on him." Jesus said to him, "Go, and do the same yourself" (Lk 10:29-37).

It must be remembered that the man who took pity on the traveler was a Samaritan, an alien and a heretic. From such a person one might expect hostility, as opposed to the priest and Levite, fellow Israelites, who should have been sensitive to the demands of charity but passed him by.

John furthers the thought on the greatest commandment of the Law, which Jesus enunciated himself when questioned by the Pharisees, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it. You must love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang the while Law, and the Prophets also" (Matt 22:34; Deut 6:4).

The Johannine author, however, does not speak of two commandments, nor does he give priority to love for God. The one commandment involves both love for brother and love for God; and if there is practical priority, it is with love for brother.

I wish to continue developing the theme of love in the writings of the Evangelist John. These writings show us in an unparalleled way, the means to bring apparent opposites together. To transcend duality and achieve union, John says, "Love," for the love that God has is "in us." Experience of that love makes the Christian grow in knowledge and love. Love and truth are closely related in Johannine thought. Herein is fulfilled Jesus' prayer for mutual indwelling in future believers in John 17:26: "To them I make known Your name; and I will continue to make it known, so that the love You had for me may be IN THEM, and I may be in them."."

1 Jo 4:7-21 gives us the most intensive treatment of love in 1 Jo, and one of the most, if not the most, thorough treatments to be found anywhere. If there is a question of whether "the love of God" means God's love for us or our love for God, John says unambiguously at the beginning of this section that "Love is from God," putting stress on God as the source and not the object of our love. It is the begetting by God that makes love possible (4:7). And lack of love shows that a person has known nothing of God.

Jesus sets the example. In Johannine theology, Jesus' act of self-giving on the cross is a consummate act of love (Jo 13:1, also 15:13). It is the place and time where the glory of God can be seen, and the means by which the Son of God is glorified (see 11:4). The focus is on glory because of what Jesus does. He is the personal light that has come into the world. In several

passages of John (13:34-35; 15:12,17) the disciples are exhorted and urged to the glory of loving. I will quote but one: "I have given to them the glory which you have given me, that they may be one, just as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to completion as one" (Jo 17:22-23).

Jesus is also the means. In John's thought, I must stay in love with Jesus, and love others. The symbol of the vine and branches stresses that if one is to remain as a branch on the vine, one must remain in loving Jesus (15:9). But then this love must be expressed in love for one's fellow believer (15:1).

I cannot help but recall the scene of the Last Supper when the Beloved Disciple leaned against Jesus' breast, emphasizing his closeness to Jesus. "He is resting on Jesus' bosom, just as in 1:18 Jesus is described as in the Father's bosom. In other words, the disciple is as intimate with Jesus as Jesus is with the Father. One can see why scholars suggest that he is the Johannine symbol for the Christian."

The notion that love is from God who is love parallels that of truth, light, and life, all of which are realities from above. Love (agape) is a divine begetting, as Jesus himself is a divine begetting. It is a general principle that we humans are in the likeness of God, but now that likeness is not through creation but through love, a criterion for the knowledge of God. Only through keeping the commandment to love one another does one gain knowledge of God who is love. It must be remembered that when John says that God is light, or God is love, etc., he is not dealing with precise definitions of God but with descriptions of Him in relation to human beings. There was divine love before the coming of God's Son into the world, for God IS love. The incarnation revealed and highlighted what He already was.

I would like to quote Brown regarding the end of this section: "Finally, he (John) dramatizes as effectively as has ever been done in any literature the contradiction between love for God and hate for a fellow human being: "The person who has no love for his brother whom he has seen cannot love the God he has never seen" (4:20; THE EPISTLES OF JOHN, p. 547).

John teaches us that I could not love, nor know how to love, unless God first loved me (1Jo 4:10). I don't believe that I can love the way John instructs us without further help, however it might come. An older translation of one of the beatitudes reads, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Mt 5:4). It often occurred to me that meekness could be seen as weakness. Perhaps, humility is closer to the mark, but even that, leaves a desire for greater accuracy. A more recent translation from the Aramaic, reads, "Blessed are those who soften what is rigid within, they shall receive power and strength from the universe." This is more acceptable

to me for two reasons. First, it stresses our role in the endeavor. And secondly, higher help is available, in one way or another.

John is trying in every way he can to show us the unfathomable riches of God's love for us. The whole purpose is to make ourselves into God, the highest realization possible. I need to take John seriously; he clearly portrays that it is for our sakes God humanizes his loving care for us in Jesus. If John had not taken so many diverse steps to demonstrate divine endearment, I may have thought it impossible that God could love us this way. The goal is Oneness. John shows how love is the binding force: "God is love, and the person who abides in love abides in God and God in him" (1 Jo 4:16). Such love is the fulfillment of Jesus prayer of Jo 17: 21: "That they all may be one, just as you, Father, in me and I in you, that they may be (one) in us."

### **C. CHRISTOLOGY, WISDOM, & ESCHATOLOGY IN JOHN'S GOSPEL**

I have concentrated on the theme of love in John's writings. There are other themes of Johannine theology in this rich Gospel. I would like to give attention to three others: Christology, Wisdom, and Eschatology. They serve the purpose of showing why love is so important, especially love for Jesus, and secondly, why Jesus Christ can be held, at least for the devout Christian, in highest esteem. They along with love aim at the overall purpose of this work: our own spiritual heart.

Modern commentators speak of Christology as the CENTER or heartbeat of John's thought. As such, Christology is spoken of as THE gospel message. The Gospel focuses on Jesus for several reasons: it is he who brings God's life, and he it is who becomes the object of synagogue rejection. At the same time there is the presupposition that Jesus leads people TO GOD. Jesus is supremely important because whoever sees him, sees the Father (14:9), and the Father and he are one (10:30). While some see Jesus as arrogantly making himself God (10:33) and equal to God (5:18), he clearly states "the Father is greater than I (14:28). No way does the Johannine Jesus replace the God of Israel who has long been confessed as one: "Eternal life consists in this: that they know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, the one whom you sent" (17:3).

The second theme that warrants a longer expose is that of Wisdom. John's Gospel stands apart from the other Gospels in presenting Jesus as incarnate revelation descended from on high, from another world, to offer people light and truth. In solemn discourses Jesus proclaims himself with the famous "I am" formula, as shown above; his divine and celestial origins are visible in what he says and the way he says it. Not-of-this-world character is apparent in the way that he can treat with kingly disdain the plots against him and the attempts to arrest him. He says of

himself that he is "in the world but not of it." In portraying Jesus this way for his followers, John has probably capitalized on an identification of Jesus with personified Wisdom as described in the Old Testament.

There are many such parallels, and they cover a wide ground. This multi-colored picture of Jesus shows the breadth of John's vision rooted in a divine/human being. In the book of Sirach, Wisdom came forth from the mouth of the Most High (24:3), and existed with God from the beginning, even before there was an earth (Prov 8:22-23). So also for John, Jesus is the Word who was at the beginning (1:1) and was with the Father before the world existed (17:5). Descended from heaven, Wisdom dwells with human beings (Baruch 3:29; Wisdom 9:16-17). In Johannine thought, Jesus is the Son of Man who has descended from heaven to earth (John 1:14; 6:38).

Wisdom is described as a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty (Wisdom 7:25), and those who hold her inherit glory (Sirach 4:13). So also Jesus had glory with the Father before the world was created and then manifests the Father's glory to human beings (1:14; 17:5). Wisdom is said to be a reflection of the everlasting light of God (Wisdom 7:26), and lights up the path for people (Sirach 1:29). For John God is light (1 Jo 1:5), and Jesus who comes forth from God is the light of the world (Jo 1:4-5; 8:12).

Wisdom worked signs to deliver a holy people and guided them (Wisdom 10:15-17). Jesus worked signs and showed the way (Jo 14:6). Wisdom teaches people about the things that are above ( Job 11:6-7), to speak truth, to instruct as to what pleases God and to do God's will, to lead people to life and immortality. Samples of each one of these can be found in the OT Wisdom literature. Such is the function of Jesus, the revealer and guide portrayed in numerous passages in John.

Wisdom uses symbols, like food (bread) and drink (water, wine), and she invites people to eat and drink (Prov 9:2-5; Isa 55:1-3-God offering his instruction). Jesus uses these same symbols for his revelation (6:35, 51ff; 4:13-14). Wisdom roams the streets seeking people and crying out to them (Prov 1:20-21; 8:1-4). The Johannine Jesus walks freely, meeting those who will follow him (1:36-38,43), searching out people (5:14; 9:35), and crying out his invitation in public places (7:28,37; 12:44).

Wisdom undertakes one of its most important tasks in instructing disciples (Wisdom 6:17-19) who are her children (Prov 8:32-33; Sirach 4:11; 6:18). So also in John those disciples who are gathered around Jesus are called his little children (13:33). Wisdom tests her disciples and forms them (Sirach 6:20-26) until they love her (Prov 8:17; Sirach 4:12). Wisdom and they

become friends of God (Wisdom 7:14,27). So does Jesus purify and sanctify his disciples with his word and truth (15:3; 17:17) and tests them (6:67) until he can call them his beloved friends (15:15; 6:27). Conversely, there are those who reject Wisdom (Prov 1:24-25; Baruch 3:12). So also in John many who will not listen when Jesus offers them the truth (8:46; 10:25). And so the coming of Wisdom provokes a division; some seek and find; others do not seek and when they change their minds, it will be too late (Prov 1:28). Similar language in John describes the effect of Jesus on people (7:34; 8:21; 13:33).

In comparing the career of Wisdom and the ministry of Jesus, another parallel to Wisdom can be found in the Spirit/Paraclete who teaches people to understand what Jesus told them. The postresurrectional inhabitation of Jesus within those who believe in him (14:23) may be compared to Wisdom's power to penetrate people (Wisdom 7:24, 27).

While there are many parallels between Wisdom in the OT and the ministration of Jesus, there also are clear differences. John introduces a sharp historical perspective not found in the OT literature. Wisdom of old was a poetic personification; Jesus was a living historical figure. Jesus as incarnate Wisdom was incarnated at a particular place and time, once and for all. John's references to the OT are largely to figures like Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah who have given testimony to Jesus and foreseen his days, and thus have been witnesses of divine wisdom (5:46; 8:56; 12:41). John carries this much further by seeing Jesus as the supreme example of divine Wisdom active in history, and divine Wisdom itself.

It took the genius of John and his closeness to Jesus to absorb and explain the revelation the Son of God brought to earth and planted therein for all who wish to follow him. The divine/human potential that blossomed in Jesus resides in each of us awaiting awakening and fulfillment. As Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is among (within) you" (Luke 17:21). The Gospel of Thomas reads: "The (Father's) kingdom is within you and it is outside you...the Father's kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people do not see it."

In the Synoptics, Jesus' teaching shows a certain continuity with the ethics and morality of the sages of the Wisdom Literature; in John, Jesus is personified Wisdom. The most important passage in the Synoptic Gospels reflecting the theme of personified Wisdom is the "Johannine logion," a saying coming from a source common to Matt (11:25-27) and Luke (10:21-22): "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and foolish and revealed them to babes-yes Father, for so it was pleasing to you. All things have been given over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him."



There is enough evidence in the Synoptics to suggest that the identification of Jesus with personified Wisdom was not the original creation of the Fourth Gospel. Most likely, John has capitalized and developed a theme that was already in the primitive tradition.

The final theme of John that I wish to consider is that of Eschatology. There has long been a dispute as to whether the NT presents a realized or a future eschatology. In many ways, John is the best NT example of realized eschatology. If some OT passages seem to imply a coming of God in glory, the Prologue (1:14) answers, "We have seen his glory." If someone were to ask where is the judgment that marks God's final intervention, John 3:19 answers, "Now the judgment is this: the light has come into the world." For John the presence of Jesus in the world as the light separates people into those who are walking in darkness, hating the light, and those who come to the light. Those who refuse to believe are already condemned (3:18), while those who have faith do not come under condemnation (5:24). While in the Synoptics "eternal life" is something that one receives in a future age (Mark 10:30; Matt 18:8-9), for John it is a present possibility: "The one who hears my words and has faith in Him who sent me POSSESSES eternal life...he has passed from death to life" (5:24). For Luke (6:35; 20:36) divine sonship is a reward of the future life; for John (1:12) it is a gift granted here on earth.

There is a peculiar combination in a few passages: "an hour is coming and is now" (4:23; 5:25; also 16:32). To explain it, John probably has a penchant for joined contraries, e.g., believers may die or never die at all (11:25-26); God has been glorified and will be glorified (12:28; 13:31).

There are more passages in John that seem to reflect a purely future element in their eschatology. One can, however, distinguish between those that are simply futuristic and those that are apocalyptic. The life-giving factor is the Spirit (6:63; 7:38-39), and that Spirit is active for believers only after Jesus is glorified by being lifted up to the Father (7:39; 16:7; 19:30; 20:22). It is after the resurrection that Thomas sets an example by confessing Jesus as Lord and God (20:28), the full understanding of what Jesus means when he says, "I am" (8:28)! Another example of future reward is the statement that Jesus passes through death and resurrection so that he may prepare dwelling places in his Father's house to which he will bring those who believe in him (14:2-3). If people see the glory of Jesus on this earth, there is a future vision of glory to be granted when they shall join Jesus in the Father's presence (17:24; see 1 Jo 3:2).

A major problem concerns apocalyptic elements in the eschatology of John. Is there to be a second coming, a resurrection of the dead at the end of time, and a final judgment? There are

clear passages that speak in this manner (5:28-29; 6:39-40, 44, 54; 12:48). How are these passages to be treated and reconciled with what we have seen of realized eschatology?

Many scholars insist that the main emphasis in the Gospel is on realized eschatology. One of the purposes of the Gospel was to teach Christians what a gift they had received in Jesus who was the source and basis of their life. The Gospel very clearly regards the coming of Jesus as an eschatological event that marked the change of the eons. If the Gospel begins with "In the beginning was the Word" it is because the coming of Jesus will be presented as a new and definitive creation: Jesus breathing on the disciples in 20:22 as he communicates to them the life-giving Spirit is like God's breathing on the dust in the original creation of the human being (Gen 2:7), but now through Jesus' Spirit God has recreated people as his own children (1:12-13).

Therefore a perspective must be sought from and in which the DIVERSE eschatology of John as it now stands makes sense--a perspective involving some form of complementarity rather than correction. John does speak of a form of compenetration. For example, already in Jesus ministry the dead come forth from the tombs, but only after his death and glorification comes the Spirit (7:39). In the Johannine narrative, one way or another, there is a blending of horizons: the ministry of Jesus and his dealings therein with his disciples; the time of the community where the Paraclete dwells in each believer; the ultimate joining of believers with Jesus and the Father in the heavenly realm above.

#### **D. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS**

I appealed to the student in us as I gave a detailed analysis of the Scriptural content. At the same time I hoped this approach makes the ancient writings helpful for our modern, human needs. Can I apply to myself what I have read?

God's revelation is continuous and progressive. God cares.

The goal and purpose of revelation, Old Testament, New Testament, John, 1 John, is us, not as an object, but to be One, for me to become God. This requires change; love does it.

I am not what I experience, but can hold a relationship with what I experience. Jesus said, "Watch and pray" (Luke 21:34-36). Jesus means for me to stay awake, aware, alert, and intently focused. Later in these pages I will draw out the fuller meaning of watching or witnessing.

Jesus knew himself to be the Son of God. With love I can be the same.

My prayer often is: "Heavenly Father, make me into yourself," which I know will happen eventually anyhow. And just as often the answer comes back, "Son, make me into yourself."

God's reveals through a human medium. What the world knows about God comes from men and women like ourselves, men and women accepting, understanding, and being enlightened.

God can reveal himself only in terms of our reaction to his revelation. The only limitation on God is our limited capacity to receive. In experiencing the divine, the meaning we put on it is simultaneously present. Divinity leads humanity into Divinity, but only at a pace man can absorb.

Revelation is for the sake of communion, communion with Him to become Him. Our transformation is in our hands!

Our comprehension of God as well as our understanding of people will only be as deep as our ability to know ourselves. I love the quote from Alexander Pope:

"Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,

The proper study of mankind is man."

God's revelation never ends. He acts everywhere all the time. Be open to the ever-greater God!

God's AMNESS (BEING) is LOVE. God's love holds me; I can hold the love that holds me.

God reaches out to tap me! Can I be the light of the world? The good shepherd? The way and the truth and the light? These sayings aren't just for Jesus or for others, but primarily for myself. Jesus said, "Let me firmly assure you, the man that has faith in me will perform the same works that I perform. In fact, he will perform far greater than these" (Jo 14:12). God knows me better than I know myself. He appeals not just to my mind, my thoughts, but primarily to my heart, my love.

## CHAPTER II

### A WESTERN MEDIEVAL GLANCE

#### A. CLOUD OF UNKNOWING

I would like now to see how this Law of Love and supportive themes have been described, applied and developed by mystics of different cultures. One landmark treatise on the subject is THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING, written in the fourteenth century by an unknown Englishman, probably a monk. It has an honored place among the spiritual classics of the English language.

I would like to quote from William Johnston's introduction to his edited version of this masterpiece: "All thoughts, all concepts, all images must be buried beneath a cloud of forgetting, while our naked love (naked because divested of thought) must rise upward toward God hidden in the cloud of unknowing. With the cloud of unknowing above, between me and God, and the cloud of forgetting below between me and creatures, I find myself in the SILENTIUM MYSTICUM.

As for a way of getting beyond thought, the English author advocates using a MANTRA or sacred word. He further explains that the intellect must be overcome by a blind stirring of love towards God. God can be loved but he cannot be thought. To conclude THE CLOUD, the Medieval writer says that "No one can fully comprehend the uncreated God with his knowledge, but each one, in a different way, can grasp him fully through love."

I want to underscore the all-importance of taking this last statement to heart: "...each one, in a different way, can grasp (God) fully through love." When this fullness is realized, nothing more is lacking. There is fulfillment. The intellect sees its place under the heart. But the truth of this statement cannot be understood until each one of us experiences it for him or herself. Truth is in the experience.

This is not to disparage the intellect, but merely to see its limitations. It has been said that the intellect is a wonderful servant but a tyrannical master. Albert Einstein clearly saw the boundaries of the mind when he said near the end of his life, "The mind can proceed only so far upon what it knows and can prove. There comes a point where the mind takes a higher plane of knowledge, but can never prove how it got there. All great discoveries have involved such a leap."

## B. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

The thirteenth century saw some of the greatest figures who contributed immensely to their own culture but also to international understanding as well. Dogen, perhaps the foremost Zen scholar, lived in Japan at this time. In the Arabic world there is Rumi. Europe offers St. Francis of Assisi and St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomas is widely regarded as the greatest Catholic theologian and was the standard for theological orthodoxy for his church for 700 years. He's best known for his *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*, a classical philosophical treatise and one of the most influential works of Western literature. He composed nearly one hundred remarkable works, including the beloved hymn, "Adoro te devote, latens Deitas," ("Oh hidden God, devoutly I adore Thee"). He developed a great love for meditation and solitude, which he described as the greatest opportunity offered to a human being. Here I would like to show a different and largely unknown side of this towering individual, something from his warm poetic nature.

### "On Behalf of Love."

"Every truth without exception--no matter who makes it--is from God.

If a bird got accused of singing too early in the morning,

If a lute began to play magically on its own in the square

And the enchanting sounds it made drove a pair of lovers

Into a wild public display of passion,

If this lute and bird then got called before the inquisition

And their lives were literally at stake,

Could not God walk up and say before the court,

'All acts of beauty are mine, all happens on behalf of love'?

And while God was there, testifying for our heart's desires,

Hopefully the judge would be astute enough to brave a question that could go,

'Dear God, you say all acts of beauty are yours,

Surely we can believe that. But what of all the actions we see in this world,

For is there any force in existence greater than the power of your omnipresent hand?'

And God might have responded, 'I like that question,' adding, 'May I ask you one as well?'

And then God would say,

Have you ever been in conversation when children entered the room,  
And you then ceased speaking because your wisdom knew  
They were not old enough to benefit, to understand?  
As exquisite is your world, most everyone in it is spiritually young.

Spirituality is love, and love never wars with the minute, the day, one's self and  
others.  
Love would rather die than maim a limb, a wing.

Dear, anything that divides man from man,  
Earth from sky, light from dark, one religion from another...  
O, I best keep silent, I see a child just entered the room."

This poem is from LOVE POEMS FROM GOD, p 123-124. The author, Daniel Ladinsky, describes the last days of Aquinas, "Near the end of his life he had a divine revelation while celebrating mass in the chapel of St. Nicholas in Naples that caused him to state, 'I can no longer write, for God has given me such glorious knowledge that all contained in my works are as straw--barely fit to absorb the holy wonders that fall in a stable" (p 122). Three months later he died at the age of forty-nine.

## CHAPTER III

### FIVE PILLARS FROM INDIA

#### A. PAUL DEUSSEN: THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS

The first of these Indian treatises that I offer are the Upanishads. In recognizing the apparent duality of two domains, an Upanishad states, "I am That (tat tvam asi), you are That, all this is That." All the Upanishads move around two basic ideas, Brahman and Atman. Paul Deussen gives an excellent summary of these ancient writings in his book, *THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS*, p 39: "Brahman (is) the power which presents itself to us materialized in all things, which creates, sustains, preserves, and receives back into itself again all worlds; this eternal infinite divine power is identical with the atman, with that which, after stripping off everything external, we discover in ourselves as our real most essential being, our individual self, the soul." And so, God and I are one.

Interesting enough, Jesus puts upon our shoulders the task of transforming the two into one. In the Gospel of Thomas, "Jesus said to them, 'When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same so that the male not be male and the female female; and when you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness, then you will enter the Kingdom'" (Andrew Harvey, *SON OF MAN*, p. 117-118). With poetic brevity, Rumi harbors the same idea, "Listen! Make a way for yourself inside yourself."

In the Upanishads, there are three propositions that go together. First, is a knowing entity or subject within us. It sees but is not seen, hears but is not heard, comprehends but is not comprehended, knows but is not known. In the Upanishads it is called the atman. Secondly, this knowing entity, or atman, is itself unknowable. You cannot see seeing. You cannot hear hearing. You cannot know knowing. How could you know the knower? Thirdly, this atman is the sole reality. In it, space and all that it contains is inwoven and interwoven. By it, or him, the entire universe is known. There is no second outside of him. "These three thoughts are the kernel of the Upanishad teaching, and with it became permanently the innermost kernel of the entire religious and philosophical belief of India." (See Paul Deussen, *THE UPANISHADS*, (p 399-400). What the Upanishads aver makes sense when I realize that, as I said earlier, I cannot know anything outside the domain of my own mind. The Upanishads are part of the Nondual tradition. If I accept their teachings, what Wilber says makes sense, as I will show later: there is a reciprocal interpenetration of all reality and the Spirit dwells in us and in all things.

Although the Upanishads do not dwell heavily on love, there is a passage in the Chandogya Upanishad that brings together in a marvelous way all love, divine and human, God's love for us and our love for God: "The Spirit who is in the body does not grow old and does not die, and no one can ever kill the Spirit who is everlasting. This is the real castle of Brahman wherein dwells all the love of the universe. It is Atman, pure Spirit, beyond sorrow, old age, and death; beyond evil and hunger and thirst. It is Atman whose love is Truth, whose thoughts are truth" (THE UPANISHADS, translations from the Sanskrit with an introduction by Juan Mascaro, pp. 120-121).

I think it is obvious that mystics need God. But in the Introduction to this work, Mascaro quotes Henri Bergson as to why God needs us: "All mystics are unanimous in declaring that God has need of us, even as we have need of God. Why should God need us, unless it were to give us His love?" When I read this and the previous paragraph, the image occurred to me that God is like a hovering hen, lovingly watching over her eggs, waiting for them to hatch, so that they may become just like she is.

At the beginning of his work, Mascaro makes a comparison between the Bible and the Upanishads: "The spirit of the UPANISHADS can be compared with that of the New Testament summed up in the words 'I and the Father are one' and 'The kingdom of God is within you,' the seed of which is found in the Psalms 'I have said: Ye are gods; and all of you are the children of the most High.'"

## **B. SHANKARA**

The second of our Indian works is Shankara's CREST-JEWEL OF DISCRIMINATION (Viveka-Chudamani). Shankara was a Hindu philosopher of India who lived from 788 to 820. He is one of the preeminent teachers of Advaita Vedanta Philosophy. The Vedanta is based on the Vedas, the ancient sacred texts of India, and Advaita means nondual. It teaches that there is one supreme reality called Brahman, infinite and omnipresent. Nothing can be added to it and there is no place where it is not. Its existence is basically nondual, meaning there is no place for the world or man or any creature outside Brahman. All is one and there is no other. (Taken from the website of the Advaita Yoga Ashrama,)

Shankara's translators, Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, offer a few key ideas regarding his philosophy: "No object, no kind of knowledge, can be absolutely real if its existence is only temporary" (p 7). He says, "I am Brahman" is the only true statement any of us can make (p 25), and "Direct personal experience is the only satisfactory proof of Brahman's existence" (p 27).



I will let Shankara speak for himself. "Now I shall tell you the nature of the Atman. If you realize it, you will be freed from the bonds of ignorance, and attain liberation. There is a self-existent Reality, which is the basis of our consciousness of ego. That Reality is the witness of the three states of consciousness, and is distinct from the five bodily coverings....That Reality pervades the universe....Here, within this body, in the pure mind, in the secret chamber of intelligence, in the infinite universe within the heart, the Atman shines in its captivating splendour, like the noonday sun. By its light, the universe is revealed....Know the Atman as the real I...Live always in the knowledge of identity with Brahman, and be blessed....the Atman is indivisible, eternal, one without a second. It is eternally made manifest by the power of its knowledge, Its glories are infinite....When all five coverings are removed, the pure Atman is revealed. It is revealed as God dwelling within us; as unending, unalloyed bliss; as the supreme and self-luminous Being....The wise man, in the greatness of his knowledge and spiritual discrimination, sees the Atman as reality and thinks, 'I am Brahman'(p 52-58).

Shankara presents many bold ideas with explanations, but he also gives his hearers some psychological aids to help their meditations. For example, "The mind of the experiencer creates all the objects which he experiences, while in the waking or the dreaming state (p 61)....The Atman is the witness. It can be directly realized as pure consciousness and infinite bliss (p 64)....If we reason and meditate on the truth of the scriptures, transcending all the five coverings of ignorance, we realize the ultimate Existence--which is the Atman, the witness, the infinite consciousness....It is existence, changeless, pure, ever-blissful (p 67)....the Atman within you is the Atman in all....Meditate on the truth 'That art Thou,' and realize the identity of the Atman with Brahman (p 79)....The Atman must necessarily be changeless and eternal, since it is the knower of all that is changeable....Know your Atman-- the pure, infinite consciousness, eternally existent in the past, present and future. Thus you will find peace (p 81)....There is neither seer nor seeing nor seen. There is but one Reality--changeless, formless and absolute. How can it be divided? (p 100)....Through his transcendental vision (the illuminated man) has realized that there is no difference between man and Brahman, or between Brahman and the universe--for he sees that Brahman is all....Sense-objects flow into his mind, but he feels no reaction, for he lives in the consciousness of the one Reality. He is free indeed, even in this life (p 106)....Brahman is indefinable, beyond the range of mind and speech, one without a second. Brahman is reality itself (p 112)....Our perception of the universe is a continuous perception of Brahman" (p119).

Shankara offers some final advise for the sincere listener: "The Atman is eternally present. It is revealed by transcendental experience, which is not dependent upon place, time or rituals of self-purification....the knowledge that 'I am Brahman' does not require any proof, (just

as knowing my name does not require any proof)... The Vedas, the Puranas, all scriptures and all living creatures only exist because the Atman exists. How then can any of them reveal the Atman, which is the revealer of everything? (p 121)...The man of contemplation walks alone. Sometimes he appears to be a fool, sometimes a wise man. Sometimes he seems splendid as a king, sometimes feeble-minded. Sometimes people honor him greatly, sometimes they insult him. Sometimes they ignore him....He appears to be an individual, yet he is present in all things, everywhere" (p 122-123).

### **C. RAMAKRISHNA**

My next figure is Ramakrishna (1836-1886), who, instead of advocating a particular approach or central idea, taught that any and all paths are valuable and can be used profitably. Our following summation of Sri Ramakrishna is taken from Swami Prabhavananda's *THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF INDIA*, pp 333-353. Sri Ramakrishna practiced many of the world's religions and garnered riches from each of them. His universal outlook surfaced early. In his teens, the ideal of a monastic life appealed to him, but he soon gave up the idea, saying to himself, "To renounce the world just for one's liberation is selfishness. I must do something that will be of benefit to all mankind."

As a young man he performed the daily duties of a priest, but his inquisitive mind hungered for something more. Within himself he questioned, "What is all this for? Is the divine Mother real? Does she listen to my prayers, or is this mere imagination conjured up by human brains?" He increasingly yearned for direct realization of God the Mother. Soon life became unbearable without her. Gripped by pain he would rub his face on the ground and cry, "Oh, Mother, another day is gone and still I have not seen you!" One day, finally, she revealed herself. Later, Sri Ramakrishna described his first vision of the Divine Mother to his disciples: "House, walls, doors, the temple--all disappeared into nothingness. Then I saw an ocean of light, limitless, living, conscious, blissful. From all sides waves of light, with a roaring sound, rushed towards me and engulfed and drowned me, and I lost all awareness of outward things." After regaining consciousness, he was uttering the words, "Mother, Mother."

To his disciples, Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "When true yearning for God comes, then follows the sight of him, then rises the sun of knowledge in the heart. Yearn for him, and love him intensely!...The mother loves her child, the chaste wife loves her husband, the miser loves his wealth; let your love for God be as intense as these three loves combined--then you shall see him."

Sri Ramakrishna brought into agreement the diverse views of Hinduism. Once the ultimate goal of Hinduism is reached, however, views of any kind cease to exist because one is absorbed in turiya, the transcendental consciousness. He had become one with God. At lower levels, differences arise early. Is God personal or impersonal, with form or without form? Sri Ramakrishna brought to bear his mystical experiences and dissolved all such oppositions: "Infinite is God and infinite are his expressions. He who lives continuously in the consciousness, and in this alone, knows him in his true being. He knows his infinite expressions, his various aspects. He knows him as impersonal no less than as personal."

Buddha he regarded as one of the incarnations of God. "When one's buddhi (intellect) merges in the absolute, pure consciousness,....one realizes one's true nature, and that is to become Buddha--enlightened....So many religions, so many paths to the same goal. I have practiced Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and in Hinduism again, the ways of the different sects. I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths."

Sri Ramakrishna lived continually in the consciousness of absolute Brahman, and he liked to use the following much quoted illustration: "Brahman may be compared to an infinite ocean, without beginning or end. Just as, through intense cold, some portions of the ocean freeze into ice and the formless water appears to have form, so through the intense love of the devotee, Brahman appears to take on form and personality. But the form melts away again as the sun of knowledge rises. Then the universe also disappears, and there is seen to be nothing but Brahman, the infinite" (Viveka-chudamani, Shankara's CREST JEWEL OF DISCRIMINATION, pp 18-19).

"So long as there is yet a little ego left, the consciousness that 'I am a devotee,' God is comprehended as personal, and his form is realized. This consciousness of a separate ego is a barrier that keeps one at a distance from the highest realization."

Sri Ramakrishna explains his position: "I see the truth directly: what need have I to philosophize? I see how God has become all this--he has become the individual beings and the empirical world. There is nothing but he. But this truth cannot be experienced until the heart is illumined. It is not a matter of philosophy but of experience. Through the grace of God the light must first shine in one's own soul."

Harmonizing world religions was not Sri Ramakrishna's only way. He can also be pragmatic and practical. He says, "So many religions, so many paths to reach one and the same goal....He would advise that "Any idea of God, any mode of worshipping him that WORKED--

that led the aspirant to the ultimate goal--must be valid and true. But how could one be sure that an idea or a method is really thus effective? Clearly, by trying it oneself. And that, in all simplicity and sincerity, is what Sri Ramakrishna did."

As to what basic paths are to be accepted, the Hindu belief is that all religions can be reduced to the four yogas. They are the path of knowledge or discrimination between the Real and the unreal; the path of loving devotion; the path of selfless work; and the path of concentration and meditation. Sri Ramakrishna believes that whatever path the aspirant follows, meditation is the most important aspect of his spiritual life. "Somehow or other he must keep his mind fixed on God. Meditation is performed not merely with closed eyes but with eyes open as well. There are many ways to meditate and many forms of meditation....Some devotees approach God by going from the aspect without form to that with form; others by going from the aspect with form to that without form. To realize that he is both with form and without form--that is best."

In closing our treatment of Sri Ramakrishna, I would like to mention some of the key points of his teaching:

"Easily the most characteristic aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's doctrine can be summed up in the words tolerance, reconciliation, harmony."

"Do not depend on doctrines, do not depend on dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in man, which is divine; and the more this divinity is developed in man, the more powerful is he for good."

"Know yourself and you will know God. What is your ego? Is it your hand or foot or flesh or blood or any other part of your body? Reflect well and you will find that the ego has no real existence....There are two kinds of ego--one ripe and the other unripe. The unripe ego thinks, 'This is MY house, MY son, MY this, MY that.' The ripe ego thinks, 'I am the servant of the Lord, I am his child; I am the Atman, immortal, free; I am Pure Consciousness.'"

"Let the boat stay in the water; there is no harm. But let not water get into the boat, lest the boat sink. Similarly, there is no harm if the devotee lives in the world, provided he lets not worldliness enter into his mind."

"Clay in its natural state can be molded into any form, but burnt clay cannot. Similarly, spiritual truths cannot be impressed upon hearts that have been burnt by the fire of lust."

"There is only one God, but endless are his aspects and endless are his names. Call him by any name and worship him in any aspect that pleases you, you are sure to see him."

"Having realized the unchangeable reality--the one absolute Existence--one finds that he who is the absolute, formless, impersonal, infinite God is again one with the relative universe." "To see God in the universe, to see Brahman in all, was considered by Sri Ramakrishna to be the highest spiritual attainment."

#### **D. RAMANA MAHARSHI**

I go now to someone who constantly propounded the Self as the only true and lasting reality. Sri Ramana Maharshi is widely proclaimed as one of the outstanding Indian gurus of modern times. Born in 1879 and dying in 1950, he had an enlightening experience at sixteen years of age which set his course for life.

He was visiting his in-laws and was alone in an upper story room. He was lying down and suddenly the thought occurred to him, "I shall be dead." He could not find a reason for feeling like that, which prompted questions and a resolution: "What is dying? How to escape it? This alone was the problem. There were no other thoughts. That very moment (I) had to resolve it." He imagined all that happens to the body at death, yet realized, "Even if the body dies, the I-consciousness will not go. 'I' am the indestructible conscious entity....The knowledge that obtains is not senses-born. That "flashing forth of I" is self-effulgent. Not a matter of imagination."

In this way, in one moment, new knowledge accrued to Ramana. Although these ideas are expressed sequentially, this experience was obtained by Ramana spontaneously only. Ramana later said, "This Self-awareness never decays, It is unrelated to anything. It is Self-luminous....I realized in that very day so clearly that that was "I." (Taken from SRI RAMANA LEELA, the Telugu [a popular Indian language] biography of Ramana.)

TALKS WITH SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI narrate exchanges between Ramana and his followers/visitors from 1935 to 1939. They were all recorded by Swami Saraswati, a very old disciple of Sri Ramana. Visitors flocked to the guru's Asramam from all over the world. "He had such a command of his subject that he was never at a loss for a word in whichever language he might happen to be speaking."

A follower and recorder, Sadhu Arunachala (Major A. W. Chadwick, o.b.e.) summarizes in the Introduction what Ramana tirelessly propounded his whole life: the Self: "You are the Self...nothing but the Self, anything else is just imagination, so BE the Self here and now....free yourself from the doer of (your actions). Self is the witness, you are That....Do not delude

yourself, you are already That. There is nothing more to be obtained, only false association to be shed, limitation to be recognized as illusory."

"His method of doing this is well-known: Self-Enquiry. Always and at all times seek for the source of the ego, the apparent actor, and on the attainment of that goal, he tells us, the ego will drop away of its own accord, and nothing will be left but the all-blissful Self."

I am grateful for Sadhu Arunachala's very helpful summations of Ramana's teachings in the Introduction, for the book itself is over six-hundred fifty pages long. The actual talks with Sri Ramana opens with a question a wandering monk poses to the guru to clear his doubt: "How to realize that all the world is God?" Maharshi: "If you make your outlook that of wisdom, you will find the world to be God. Without knowing the Supreme Spirit (Brahman), how will you find his all-pervasiveness?"

I will continue in this vein to include some details of method which Sri Ramana taught. On January 19, 1935, the guru said, "Realization consists in reaching the ATMAN (Self) which is the expanse of consciousness as distinguished from the mind, which is the expansion of (ego, thought, activity)....The One Reality is the Self from which has sprung the ego....The fact of the ego rising from the Self and forgetting it is birth. So it may be said that the birth of the individual has killed the mother. The present desire to regain one's mother is in reality the desire to regain the Self, which is the same as realizing one-self, or the death of the ego; this is surrender unto the mother, so she may live eternally....One's parents are not outside the Self."

When asked, what is the practice, Ramana replied, "Constant search for the "I," the source of the ego. Find out 'Who am I?' The pure 'I' is the reality, the Absolute Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. When that is forgotten, all miseries crop up; when that is held fast, the miseries do not affect the person....One who lives in Brahman, finds bliss in the Brahman which is the same as the Self....Realization of the Self is the greatest help that can be rendered to humanity."

The more Sri Ramana is questioned, the more encompassing is the reality of the Self: "The Self alone is the Reality; the world and the rest of it are not. The realized being does not see the world as different from himself....There is only one Infinite Self....God, Guru and the Self are identical." The spiritual-minded person ultimately finds that his own Self is the Master. When asked whether Sri Ramana initiates his disciples, he kept silent. One of his devotees took it upon himself to answer: "Maharshi does not see anyone as outside his self. So there are no disciples for him."

The next selection shows how I get directed from the inner to the outer, and how I may again regain the interior. The question was asked, "How is that Self to be known or realized?" Maharishi: "Transcend the present plane of relativity. A separate being (Self) appears to know something apart from itself (non-Self)." So I have the subject aware of the object. "There must be a unity underlining these two, which arises as 'ego.'" This ego is of the nature of intelligence (chit); the insentient object (achit) is only negation of chit. Therefore the underlying essence is akin to the subject and not the object. Seeking the seer, until all the seen disappears, the seer will become subtler and subtler until the absolute seer alone survives. This process is called the disappearance of the objective world. Elimination of the seen is necessary because it means elimination of separate entities of subject and object. The object is unreal.

Maharshi points out another reason why it's difficult to realize the Self: "It is only rarely that a man becomes introverted. The intellect delights in investigating the past and the future but does not look to the present." An elderly learned man interjected: "Because it must lose itself if it sank within in search of the Self. But the other investigation gives it not only a lease of life but also food for growth." Sri Ramana concurred, "Yes, Quite so. Why is intellect developed? It has a purpose. The purpose is that it should show the way to realize the Self. It must be put to that use."

Maharshi gave further advice when questioned, "How can 'I' be pointed out?" Sri Ramana: "It must be found within. It is not an object so that it may be shown by one to another....The instruction here amounts to direction only. It depends on the seeker to use the direction....He is therefore guided to find the Truth....The Upanishadic text is the eternal truth....After hearing the Self to be the Brahman the person finds the true import of the Self and reverts to it whenever he is diverted from it. Here is the whole process of Realization."

I will close our review of Sri Ramana Maharshi where he pleads with a follower who says he is in the dark and ignorant: "This ignorance must go. Again, who says, 'I am ignorant?' He must be the witness of ignorance. That is what you are. Socrates said 'I know that I do not know.' Can it be ignorance? It is wisdom." (See TALKS WITH SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI, pp 1-23, 604-615.)

## **E. PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA**

I spent much time near the beginning of this work on the subject of love, referring at length to the Christian Scriptures, especially the writings of the Apostle John. I believe love to be the essence of the spiritual life: the ground, the goal, and the steps in between. Love is a dominant theme in Paramahansa Yogananda's Classic two volume work, THE SECOND

COMING OF CHRIST: THE RESURRECTION OF THE CHRIST WITHIN YOU. I am taking a deliberate Christian approach here because, I think, that what I report does not contradict any spiritual practice of the world's major religions, and, secondly, because it is a commentary on the original teachings of Jesus, and, lastly, because it is what I am most familiar with.

Yogananda, an Indian yogi and guru, introduced millions of westerners to the teachings and benefits of meditation by his book, AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI. He founded the Self-Realization Fellowship in 1920 to disseminate his teaching; it now has countless followers all over the world. Being an Indian and becoming a follower of Christ gave him the opportunity to bring together the best of both worlds. The Preface to the book I am considering reads, "his unique exposition of the teachings of Jesus Christ dissolved theological boundaries between the liberating path of God's kingdom revealed by Lord Jesus and the Yoga science of God-union taught by Bhagavan Krishna in the sacred scripture of India, the Bhagavad Gita." This Preface, written in February, 2004, adds, "This two-volume scriptural treatise thus represents the inclusive culmination of Paramahansa Yogananda's divine commission to make manifest to the world the essence of 'original Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ.' "

Love, being such a broad subject, will be treated from various perspectives, the first being divine love. Jesus "exemplified the love of God the Father, and that Father's eagerness to alleviate man's suffering and ignorance, as God's power flowed through him to heal the maladies of body, mind, and spirit." Jesus is the object lesson by his words and by his example of the ways in which God loves us. He shows that if I do love, I can reach the sublime heights which he preached and which may seem out of reach to us. Therefore he gives concrete examples of how to behave in actual situations.

As I look at what Jesus says and does, it would help us see more clearly how they affect us if I keep one eye on the fact that Jesus is talking about how the Father actually loves us; the second eye would see that this is how Jesus did live his life; the third eye is meant to look at myself being called to live a similar life of love. "He speaks figuratively of turning the other cheek to illustrate the influence of goodness over inimical behavior." His message is always for our own good. In turning the other cheek, Jesus enjoins freedom from the desire for revenge and not resisting evil with evil methods. Jesus advises us to conquer evil by the infinitely powerful virtue of love and forgiveness. Violence begets violence. If I return a slap with a slap, the next step could be a punch or a bullet. "A calm response, on the other hand, is quite disconcerting and disarming." Jesus knows that one's calmness and love can prevent the "virus of disquieting emotion from entering within himself."



"To turn the other cheek is not calculated to make a person into a mental or moral weakling, or to suggest enduring an abusive or violent relationship, but to instill the strength of self-control gained by overcoming the impulse to act under the influence of revenge." To give in to the reflex to retaliate is succumbing to weakness. "While it is better to have courage to fight an enemy than to 'forgive' him and run away through fear, if one can courageously face down an erring brother with love, that is to possess a mighty spiritual power--the transforming, healing power of divine love. A person perfected in nonviolence lets no one steal his inner peace."

"When assailed by someone, it is hard to give love. The best way, while taking common sense steps to remedy the situation, is to pray to God to change the heart of that person." We would be surprised if we knew how sincere prayer will change the attitude of an antagonist. "The spiritual man sees God not only in his own body but in the bodies of others. In oneness with God, he sees himself as the Self of all."

"Giving away one's 'cloak' as well as one's 'coat,'" as Jesus enjoins, "may seem like very unpractical advice in the modern world. No doubt one must use discrimination. Abnegation of one's own material needs can best be completely practiced only by saints or by people living under ideal conditions. One is under no spiritual compulsion to give his home away to an unscrupulous defrauder; instead, he is compelled to demand lawful justice from those who are unjust to him....It is not necessary to mix with one's enemies. It is often better to love them from a distance....God is in them trying to straighten out the crookedness in their hearts."

But one can moderate one's attitude if not one's actions. I am asked to "Love (my) enemies." Good or bad, all people are God's children. One must cultivate the consciousness of justice and love by knowing how to separate the God dwelling in the soul of a person from the evil in his ego expression. "To see God equally in friend and enemy is a testimony to one's spiritual realization." To see this omnipresence of God, "one must tear away the dark screen of hate and behold His erstwhile hidden presence even in the heart of enemies."

God looks to the do-gooders as well as to the evil doers. "The heart must absolutely give up all manner of hatred....Love is a divine cleanser....The poison of hatred increases by hatred....One who returns...enmity likewise burns up his own equanimity....So to hate anyone is against one's own interest...A wronged person should say within himself, 'I forgive you.' It is such a healing, elevating experience."

"When one steadfastly refuses to give a slap for a slap, allowing animosity no foothold in one's being, a tremendous power of love develops in the heart....The evil person destroys himself by the consequences of his own sins....For those who are slow to learn from God's inner

whispers, there is nevertheless the snail-paced evolutionary unfolding of inner wisdom through the time honored process of incarnations of trial and error, action and reaction--often painful but always with the underlying magnetic pull of God's love." Hatred will eventually be destroyed by love.

Jesus not only says, "Bless them that curse you," but because action speaks louder than words he also says, "Do good to those that hate you." Gestures of good will confirm the relation of divine brotherhood that is the unifying principle among all human beings. If one can in no way approach those who hate him in order to do good to them in some tangible way, it is always possible to follow Jesus' counsel to "pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you." And "If one's prayer to change his enemy's attitude is not fulfilled, then the supplicant must know that God wants him to pass the test of unconditional love, even in throes of persecutions from his enemy's lies, hateful talk, and evil actions. In His own time God can and will remedy all inharmonious conditions....Anyone who wants to know God must learn to love, as He does, His virtuous and sinful children alike."

"Ordinarily, with time, a person forgets anyone who has turned indifferent or hostile to him; but God, with 'unhurrying chase, and unperturbed pace,' never stops pursuing His estranged children who forget Him....As God is kind and helpful to all, even to his evil children, so in order to know and feel what God is, it is expected of His good children that they be merciful and sympathetic like their Father. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'"

It cannot be stressed enough that love is required to know God and to change ourselves. I need to pay particular attention to what Yogananda says in the above paragraph: love is required "in order to know and feel what God is." THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING, reviewed earlier, gives a similar lesson that God cannot be thought, but He can be loved. I believe that one of the greatest things I could ever pray for is to be made a lover.

Jesus brought a New Covenant into the world, replacing the Old Testament law. "The Mosaic law of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" was to serve not only as punishment, but also as a deterrent to other would-be criminals by making the punishment match the crime. A literal meaning may have been justified in the time when people, in the words of Moses, 'have corrupted themselves...they are a perverse and crooked generation...neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise. That they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.'"

"Love is greater than law; it is the unifying thread that attaches the devotee's heart to the unconditional heart of God. Law is based upon the impersonal justice weighed according to the principle of cause and effect; but love claims God as our forgiving Father-Mother whose all-embracing mercy abides whether or not the full measure of the law has been met."

When studying the Johannine Scriptures, I cited the Beloved Disciple's closeness to Jesus by his leaning on his Lord's breast at the Last Supper. Just as Jesus is described as in the Father's bosom in Jo 1:18, so now the Beloved Disciple is resting on Jesus' bosom. The meaning is clear: the Disciple is as intimate with Jesus as Jesus is with the Father. Given here is a symbol for the Christian. The love of God that characterized the greatness of Jesus responded to the pure immediacy of the Disciple's devotion, so that overcoming the usual reserve in the presence of divinity, this Beloved Disciple was often allowed by Jesus to lean on his breast--as would a child seeking succor from its mother. While mundane love is often self-seeking and circumscriptive, divine love is a transcending power, elevating and all-embracing.

"Any sin, and its consequence, can be forgiven the repentant devotee who loves God deeply enough, and thereby puts his life in tune with the all-compassionate Lord....The sinful woman forgiven by Jesus loved much because despite the magnitude of her sins, in the presence of divine love she felt no condemnation but rather faith in its redeeming power." If I do not come from love, my understanding will always be deficient.

For the expansion of love within ourselves, it may help to see how a great scientist views the subject. Albert Einstein thought our separation was a delusion of consciousness. Yogananda quotes him in volume two: "A human being is part of a whole, called by us the 'Universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest--a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

Following the teachings of Jesus, man's neighbor is one's other self or God. "To love parents, relatives, associates, countrymen, all races of the earth, all creatures, flowers, stars, which live in the 'neighborhood' or range of consciousness is to love God in his multifarious tangible manifestations. Those persons yet unable to love God as His subtle expressions in meditation can nurture their love for Him as manifested in nature and in all beings they contact or sense in any way."

"Even saints who love God in transcendental ecstasy in meditation find complete redemption only after they have shared their divine attainment by loving God as manifested in all souls in the omnipresent neighborhood of their soul....But when a person lives just for himself and the select few he chooses to favor as his own, he chokes the expansion of his life, and from the spiritual standpoint he does not live at all....Saints and sages who fulfill the two preeminent commandments are no longer subservient to the discipline of other commandments, for in loving God in transcendental meditation and as manifested in others, the righteousness in all cosmic laws is honored automatically."

## CHAPTER IV

### BUDDHISM

#### A. AJAHN BRAHM: MINDFULNESS, BLISS, & BEYOND

So far, I have been dealing with two centers, the heart loving and the mind knowing. I would like to look at the mind from a Buddhist perspective, using what Ajahn Brahm says in his book. MINDFULNESS, BLISS, AND BEYOND. Employing words, meditation is difficult to teach. Brahm began his life as an academic at Cambridge, and fulfills his calling here as a caring and impassioned teacher.

As Jack Kornfield says in the Forward to Brahm's book, "(Here) you will find a thorough set of teachings for developing and deepening meditation, aimed at attaining absorption, or JHANA SAMADHI, and opening to the insights that can follow from it." This is very high state of consciousness, a meditative state of profound stillness and concentration. "'You' do not do anything....the doer has to disappear. You are just a knower, passively observing."

Within the Jhana state, Brahm explains on p 155:

- "1. There is no possibility of thought;
2. No decision-making process is available;
3. There is no perception of time;
4. Consciousness is nondual making comprehension inaccessible;
5. Yet one is very, very aware, but only of bliss that doesn't move;
6. The five senses are fully shut off, and only the sixth sense, mind, is in operation."

I see only so much of reality, depending largely upon my state of consciousness. And that becomes my comfort zone. If things, people, events, are outside that vision, I usually question, oppose, or deny their offerings. Not everyone wants enlightenment or realization. Many or most of us still want involvement, exploration, amusement.

The window to a broader view keeps opening. Brahm spells out these features which, I think, will point the way for the serious meditator. If during a deep meditation, one wonders whether it is a jhana (absorbed state) or not, one can be sure it is not. No such thinking exists within the stillness of jhana. These features dawn on the meditator only upon emergence from a jhana, employing reviewing mindfulness once the mind can move again. The doer had

disappeared. The subject became just a knower, passively observing. It is only the mind having a thought that convinces the thinker that he must do something

To reach these higher states of consciousness, Brahm suggests steps I can take. To begin, he says the past and the future are burdens to be dropped so that I can abide in the present. "In the timeless realm, you experience THIS moment--just as all wise beings have been experiencing THIS moment for thousands of years. You have arrived at the reality of now."

"The reality of now is magnificent and awesome. When you have abandoned all past and all future, it is as if you have become alive. You are here. You are mindful. This is the first stage of meditation, just this mindfulness sustained only in the present. Reaching this stage, you have done a great deal. You have let go of the first burden that stops meditation. So it is important to put forth a lot of effort to make this first stage strong, firm, and well established."

A strong impetus that helped me at this stage occurred when I read a quote from the Nobel Prize winning Austrian physicist, Erwin Schroedinger: "The present is the only thing that has no end." When I read this, it made me ask, "Where have I been all my life?" The answer came back strong and heavy, "Usually in the past or in the future."

The goal of this meditation is, says Brahm, beautiful silence, stillness, and clarity of mind pregnant with the most profound insights. "You have let go of the first burden that stops deep meditation. Now you should proceed to the even more beautiful and truthful silence of the mind."

The great value I give to my own thoughts is the main obstacle to silent awareness. "Wisely removing the importance that one gives to thinking, and realizing the greater accuracy of silent awareness, opens the door to inner silence....Silence Means No Commentary....An effective way to overcome the inner commentary is to develop a refined present-moment awareness. You watch every moment so closely that you simply don't have the time to comment about what has just happened. In developing inner silence you are giving up another great burden." Following what Brahm says, I am just silently aware of whatever comes into the mind. I watch the thought come and I watch it go.

To go further, I can choose silent present-moment awareness of just one thing, such as the experience of breathing. I simply follow the breath from moment to moment without interruption. The experience that tells me what the breath is doing--am I breathing in or breathing out--that is what I focus on. That is focusing on the experience itself.

Some can experience every part of each in-breath and out-breath continuously for many, many breaths. Full sustained attention on the breath cannot be reached by holding or gripping. Force will not work. One must let go of everything in the entire universe except for this experience of the breath happening silently. "Actually 'you' do not reach this stage, the mind does. The mind does the work itself. The mind recognizes this stage to be a very peaceful and pleasant place to abide, just being alone with the breath. This is where the doer, the major part of one's ego, starts to disappear."

Progress happens effortlessly at this stage of meditation. I get out of the way, let go, and watch it all happen. The mind inclines automatically "if we only let it, toward this very simple, peaceful, and delicious unity of being alone with one thing, just being with the breath in each and every moment. This is the unity of mind, the unity in the moment, the unity in stillness."

"When we simply maintain this unity of consciousness not interfering, the breath will begin to disappear. The breath appears to fade away as the mind focuses instead on what is the center of the experience of breath, which is awesome peace, freedom, and bliss."

"When the breath disappears, all that is left is 'the beautiful,'" as Brahm calls it and then explains. "Disembodied beauty becomes the sole object of the mind. The mind is now taking the mind as its own object. We are no longer aware of the breath, body, thought, sound, or outside world. All that we are aware of is beauty, peace, bliss, light, or whatever our perception will later call it....This bliss will develop, grow, and become very firm and strong. And then one may enter into those states of meditation called the JHANAS."

As the reader can see, Brahm takes her through several stages of ever deepening meditation, saying that careful patience is the fastest way. She watches the breath calm down, from a coarse, ordinary breath to a very smooth and peaceful "beautiful breath." The mind experiences a deepening of contentment. "'You' do not do anything. If you try to do something at this stage, you will disturb the whole process....From this stage of meditation on, the doer has to disappear. You are just a knower, passively observing."

Brahm offers a helpful meditation that he learned from his teacher, Ajahn Chah's famous simile of the "still forest pool." When Ajahn Chah wondered in the jungles and forests of Thailand, he'd always try and find a stretch of water when late afternoon came. When he found one, he'd camp nearby overnight. After settling in, he would sit in meditation a few yards away from the pool. He said that sometimes he sat so still with his eyes open that he would see many animals coming out of the jungle. They wanted to bathe and drink. He knew they would only come out if he sat very, very still, because jungle creatures are timid and far more afraid of

human beings than we are of them. "When they emerged from the bushes they would look around and sniff to see if it was safe. If they detected him, they would just go away. But if he sat absolutely still, the animals wouldn't be able to hear him. They wouldn't even be able to smell him. Then they would come out and drink. Some would drink and play in the water as if he weren't there, as if he were invisible. He said that sometimes he was so still that, after the ordinary animals came out, some very strange animals emerged, beings whose names he didn't know. He'd never seen such extraordinary creatures before. His parents had never told him about them. These wonderful creatures came out to drink, but only if he was ABSOLUTELY still."

"This is a well-known simile of what happens in deep meditation. The pool or lake is a symbol for the mind....You are just sitting before it and watching. If you give any orders you're not being still." Beautiful creatures--mental signs such as feelings or lights or jhanas--will approach only if you're absolutely still. "If they come out to 'sniff around' and you say 'wow!' they hurtle back into the forest and don't come out again....You can't move if you want these beings to come out and play. But if you're absolutely still--no controlling, no doing, no saying, no moving, or anything else--they come out." They may appear as pure beauty, or mental joy, or a beautiful light, or intense tranquility, or ecstasy. "ONLY IF YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY STILL DO THEY REMAIN. The ordinary ones come out first, then the very beautiful ones, and lastly the very strange and wonderful ones? These last are the amazing experiences that you have no names for, the ones you never imagined could exist because they're so strange, so blissful, so pure. These are the jhanas."

I have practiced Brahm's method for several years, with the guidance and help of one of his disciples, a fellow Buddhist monk. Here I would like to exercise some freedom to see some of the other possibilities one can experience having gone through the stages that Brahm so adequately describes. The very title of Brahm's book, MINDFULNESS, BLISS, AND BEYOND, suggests development that is open ended at the top as one elevates his or her state of consciousness.

Simply watching the breath makes happen two very important conditions: it brings body and mind into union, and, secondly, it makes the person present to the present. These are huge beginnings, and the obstacle of inner speech is overcome or weakened. If the mind is on the breath, it cannot be on other things. Energy follows attention. All kinds of insights and realizations can break through during meditation or later in the day. The focusing releases a power in the mind for other things to be brought in, such as freedom, joy, repose, and love.



What is key here is that a higher power enters when I willingly puts aside the powerfully functioning faculty of intellect. It represents a withdrawal from pride and conceit as I humbly ask my ego to take a back seat or get out of the car entirely. In confidence I resort to higher guidance and help. As Brahm says, "you" do not reach this stage, the mind does. The doer becomes a watcher. The higher power is the Witness, the commander of the experience. It is extremely important to abide as the Witness throughout. Thus I move toward the time when seer, seen, and seeing become one. Trust in the knowing, and energy flows into the knower. At times I am suddenly be aware that Something or Someone breathes me.

## **B. BHAGWAN SHREE RAJNEESH (OSHO) ON ATISHA**

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (1931-1990), known as Osho from 1989, was an Indian spiritual teacher, guru, and mystic. He came to the United States and spent much of 1981-1985 leading his community in Oregon before returning to India. He offers us his treatment of duality and oneness in commenting on the 11th century Buddhist master, Atisha (THE BOOK OF WISDOM, vol. 1). Atisha, born in India in 980 and died in China in 1054, was responsible for reintroducing Buddhism into Tibet. Revered as one of the great teachers of classical Buddhism, he transformed the quality of Tibetan consciousness with his pointed discourses on mind training. Rajneesh's discourses are based on Arisha's Seven Points of Mind Training.

I will not go through the points methodically, but rather try to capture the gist of what these two masters (Rajneesh and Atisha) offer for our particular purposes. In the Introduction, Rajneesh talks about the journey to which Atisha beckons: "Very few people are ready to go on the journey of the heart to which he calls us, this journey toward the true, this journey that is not a journey at all but a dropping to the now/here."

Opening the discourse, Atisha says,

"First, learn the preliminaries.

Think that all phenomena are like dreams.

Examine the nature of unborn awareness."

There are two great lessons here: the fleeting of phenomena and the permanence of consciousness. Pure consciousness or awareness always brings me to the present. It is not a question of reaching somewhere else; it is a question of awakening here and now. It is never there, it is always here. It is never then, it is always now. "It is only through searching, seeking,

desiring that the ego exists; it exists in the tension between that which is and that which should be. The moment 'should' disappears, the ego collapses."

"And the ego not journeying at all, simply being here now, is the end of SAMSARA: you are in NIRVANA, SAMADHI, enlightenment. Hence enlightenment cannot be reduced to a goal. If you have reduced it to a goal, you have missed the whole point." The mind is so cunning, and the ways of the ego are so subtle that it even turns God, nirvana, enlightenment, truth, into goals; it starts asking how to achieve them. "They are not to be achieved, they cannot be achieved; the achieving mind is the only barrier."

"Meditation is non-goal-oriented state of mind....Consciousness has no future, no motivation, it is a joy unto itself. It is not a means to some end, it is an end unto itself....You are always the seer...the experiencer,,the witness."

It helps me when I read things like this to remind myself that for many of these mystics nothing is real unless it lasts forever. That does not mean that it is unimportant. I have to deal with many passing conditions, but what the mystics hold out for is getting priorities straight. Rajneesh goes on to say that consciousness is unborn and undying. "It has always been here. It is eternal, it is timeless. And how afraid you were of death, and how afraid you were of old age, and how afraid you were of a thousand and one things!...All phenomena are like dreams."

I now get to the part of Rajneesh's teaching that I consider most important for us, Atisha's sutra which reads: "Grasp the principle of two witnesses." The first kind of witness is that others are witnessing me. "This is the situation in which millions of people live. They live for others." If I hanker for the attention of others it is because I am hollow. Rajneesh makes a distinction between personality and individuality. "Individuality is the fragrance of a really centered being, one who knows who he is....And the day that you can enjoy your individuality, you are free...free from dependence on others."

But if you are not an individual, then at least you can be a person, you can attain personality....The eyes of others are needed to reflect your personality....This is one kind of witnessing: you want to be witnessed....It gives you respectability. But the personality is false, a pretension, a facade. Individuality is your truth."

"The second kind of witnessing is totally different, just the polar opposite. It is not that you hanker for others' attention; on the contrary, you start paying attention to yourself. You become a witness to your own being. You start watching your thoughts, desires, dreams,

motives, greeds and jealousies. You create a new kind of awareness within you. You become a center which goes on watching whatever is happening."

Rajneesh gives an example of how this works: "You are angry, and you watch it. You are not just angry; a new element is introduced into it: you are watching it. And the miracle is that if you can watch anger, the anger disappears without being repressed....The second kind of witnessing creates a totally different kind of person. It creates the sage. The sage is one who knows who he is, not according to others."

Rajneesh has just explained the first set of two types of witnessing. He proceeds to another set of two kinds of witnessing, which have been an enormous help to me and my friends in our meditations.

He says, "There is another meaning to this sutra too. The other meaning is: first witness the objects of the mind...Whatsoever passes before you, watch it, without evaluating, judging or condemning. Don't be for or against, just watch, and DHYANA, meditation is created."

Rajneesh goes on to explain the second principle: "witness the witness itself...the first leads to the second. Start watching your thoughts but don't stop there. When thoughts have disappeared then don't think that you have arrived. One more thing has to be done, one more step: now watch the watcher. Now just witness the witnessing. Nothing else is left, only you are. Just suddenly become aware of awareness itself, and then DHYANA is transformed into SAMADHI. By watching the mind, the mind disappears. By watching the witness, the witness expands and becomes universal."

"The first is a negative step to get rid of the mind. The second is a positive step to get rooted in ultimate consciousness--call it God or nirvana or whatever you wish."

### **C. DOGEN**

While I am tapping Buddhist well springs, I would like to offer a Zen poem, TO STUDY THE BUDDHA WAY, written by Dogen of the thirteenth century, one of the greatest Zen teachers ever:

"To study the Buddha way, is to study the self.  
To study the self is to forget the self.  
To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things.  
To be enlightened by all things is to free one's body and mind and those of others.  
No trace of this enlightenment remains.  
And this traceless enlightenment continues forever."

#### **D. T. BHIKKU'S "NO SELF"**

I found a scholarly explanation of Buddhism's teaching in an article, "THERE IS NO SELF," by the Buddhist abbot, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, in *TRICYCLE*, vol. xxiii, no. 3, (Spring, 2014), pp 88-89. He playfully adds to the article's title, "Nope, never said that either"--The Buddha.

In a concise summary, which I would like to quote verbatim, he put the matter to rest for me once and for all: "There is no self" is the granddaddy of fake Buddhist quotes. It has survived so long because of its superficial resemblance to the teaching of ANATTA, or not-self, which was one of the Buddha's tools for putting an end to clinging. Even though he neither affirmed nor denied the existence of a self, he did talk of the process by which the mind creates many senses of self--which he called "I-making" or "my-making"--as it pursues its desires....In other words, he focused on the karma of selfing."

I might add that the Buddhist doctrine of "no self" is related to its teaching on emptiness. I, you, and everything else is empty of one thing, an independent separate existence. Nothing can exist by itself alone. If any and all interdependent phenomena lack independent or inherent existence, then the Buddhist doctrine of "no self" appears not only plausible but absolutely true. All that exists can be traced to coming from something else.

Elsewhere in the article, the abbot further explains Buddha's reluctance. A wanderer, Vacchagotta, asked the Buddha point blank whether or not there is a self. In reply, "the Buddha remained silent, which means that the question has no helpful answer." Since the Buddha refused to answer the question, it has been interpreted to mean that he believed in "no self." Bhikku clearly states, however, that Buddha never said that. We know that the Buddha did not like to entertain speculative questions, or metaphysical debates, especially those which could not be answered. He wanted his followers to sit, to meditate, and to experience directly for themselves their own answers. Near the end of his life, when his disciples were afraid he would leave them and they would be forsaken and left alone in the dark, he tried to comfort them with his now famous quote, "Be a lamp unto yourself."

#### **E. FATHER ROBERT KENNEDY ROSHI**

I would like to continue our Buddhist section with a look at two men who were able to bring together their Catholic Jesuit priesthood with that of becoming a Zen master. The first is Fr. Robert Kennedy, as reported in *TRICYCLE*, vol. XV, no. 1 (fall, 2005). He was born in Brooklyn in 1933 to devout Irish Catholic parents. In 1958 as a member of the Jesuit order, he volunteered for a missionary post in Japan, where he would eventually be ordained a Roman

Catholic priest. "Years later, in search of spiritual renewal, Kennedy began a rigorous Zen practice under the guidance of Yamada Koun Roshi, a highly regarded Zen master."

Asked how it began, Kennedy replied, "There are many different expressions of Catholicism. One expression that meant a lot to me was the apophatic tradition of the Greek Fathers (contemplative priests of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries)...It says that God is completely ineffable, beyond all words, beyond all theology. We have domesticated God. Most Catholics need a devotional Catholicism, just as most Buddhists need a devotional Buddhism. Zen is different. Zen is the apophatic way." The apophatic way explains God by what he is not, or "via negativa."

For the sake of clarity, I would like to divert from Kennedy's story to comment briefly on this "via negative." Dionysius the Areopagite (late 5<sup>th</sup> to early 6<sup>th</sup> century), has been called "The fountain-head of Christian mysticism." William James, in *THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE* (p. 407-408), says this about Dionysius: "He describes the absolute truth by negatives exclusively: 'The cause of all things is neither soul nor intellect; nor has it imagination, opinion, or reason, or intelligence; nor is it reason or intelligence; nor is it spoken or thought...It is neither essence, nor eternity, nor time. Even intellectual contact does not belong to it. It is neither science nor truth,' etc. But these qualifications are denied by Dionysius, not because the truth falls short of them, but because it so infinitely excels them." Mystics often say the "via negative" comes closer to the truth of what the ineffable is than any positive allegation we can make. I will take up later more of James' commentary.

Returning to Kennedy's story, he talks about his years in Japan. He says Zen was there, but he wasn't ready for it. He was sent to teach English and coach baseball at a Jesuit high school. "It was only after he returned stateside, after eight years in Japan, that he began to sit. "I realized something was lacking. A spirit. A depth." He and his friend, Fr. William Johnston, a fellow Jesuit priest, "both felt that Zen was something that belonged in the Church, that Catholics could profit from it. We also spoke about emptiness. The emptiness of our religious constructs, and the way they were turned into mental constructs."

The reporter of this story, freelance writer Robert Hirschfield, says that Kennedy's eyes close around the words when he speaks of his experience: "Zazen was the best way I found of being in the presence of God, in the presence of truth, which is silence. It was not repeating things I already knew and read. In silence, I was able to learn something new....With Yamada, I was finally in the presence of someone who had achieved something, who didn't just believe in something." He recalls the words of his root teacher: "I don't want to make you a Buddhist. I

want to empty you in imitation of your Lord Jesus Christ who emptied himself." Kennedy responded: "Zen helped me with letting myself be emptied."

How did Kennedy see Jesus after his Zen experience? "After Zen, I saw everything in a new light. Up until that time, I was trying to build a relationship with Jesus. Then, there was a shift from relationship to identity. I AM JESUS! Right now! With all my limitations! It's such a radical statement within Catholicism because many Catholics follow the analogy of relationship. Not that that's wrong, or in any way inferior to identity. It's just a different approach. For me, it's not a question of knowing Christ, or loving Christ as someone outside myself. 'Who is Christ?' leads me back to the question, 'Who am I?'

"With Maezumi Roshi, one of the koans he studied was 'Who is the Buddha?' One day, in DOKUSAN (a private interview with a Zen teacher) he said to Maezumi, 'You are the Buddha!' Maezumi slapped him hard and said, 'You too!'" "Now I wish he'd slapped me more. I'd have seen more."

When Kennedy was made sensei (respectful title for teacher), some sangha (Buddhist community) members objected to having a Catholic priest appointed as a Zen teacher. The head of the sangha, Bernie Glassman, responded to the criticism with a challenge, "Are we one, or are we not?" Most of the sanghathen backed Glassman and supported the Jesuit sensei.

"It says a lot about the openness of Buddhism," Kennedy remarks, "that Buddhists would make me, a Catholic priest, a Zen teacher. I think that would be unheard of in other faiths. Kennedy began teaching in 1991 and became roshi--or master--in 1997.

The reporter of this story, Robert Hirschfield, visits Kennedy in his Zendo at Kennedy's invitation. He asked the Jesuit sensei whether most of his students are Christians. He replied that he doesn't ask his students their religion, conceding that the majority might be Christians. Then Kennedy repeated what Yamada Roshi told him: "Both Christianity and Buddhism are categories to be transcended."

## **F. RUBEN L. F. HABITO**

Our second Jesuit priest to become a Zen master is Ruben L. F. Habito, as reported in TRICYCLE, vol. XXIII, no. 4 (summer, 2014). Sent as a young seminarian from his native Philippines to Japan, he was encouraged by his spiritual director to look into Zen. He entered formal training under Yamada Koun Roshi, with whom he studied for 18 years. Discovering Zen was an epiphany for Habito ("it pointed to a realm beyond language"), and koan study became for him a profound foil to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, a set of meditations and

devotional practices for Jesuits that Habito had been practicing since entering the order. While koan work is a highly specialized form of training under a Zen teacher, Habito found his study of Zen very nourishing and very resonant with what he had learned from his Jesuit spiritual formation. "The Eastern approach emphasized the more contemplative aspects rather than the discursive and meditative kinds of things that the Ignatian Exercises, which I had been practicing for six or seven years, are known for. Zen became a way for me to come back to that place of silence, no words, and just find a sense of belonging to the universe."

When asked whether there was any conflict in bringing the two practices together in his own life, he narrates what he had to do. "I needed to go through a struggle for about 10 to 12 years to sort out theological concepts--to weed out the conceptual accretions--and see what in the Christian tradition really leads to genuine experience but is caged in Christian vocabulary or doctrinal terms. I experienced a very liberating affirmation that what unites IS the experience."

Habito explains that according to the Zen context the mind is that which leads us to what is beyond words and concepts. Thus, he says, it does not matter whether one is a Christian or a Muslim or a Jew or an atheist or a Buddhist, for what happens in Zen practice should not be different. "It's an immersion into the silence and appreciation of all that's there. And all that's there is not something we can limit through our thoughts and concepts and our restricted notions of being and nonbeing."

Our priest/Zen master further clarifies that it is very difficult but really important to find out whether someone's concepts are going to be in the way, or whether they're going to be part of the path. His teacher, Yamada Koun, "felt there were certain terms in the Christian tradition like GOD, HOLY SPIRIT, and so on that had enough power in them to point to an experience that is beyond concepts." Habito's remarks led his interviewer, Jane Lancaster Patterson, a New Testament Seminary professor, to ask whether the God he now knows is the same God he had before Zen practice. He answered, "Over time, my sense of God would have shifted no matter what. It started happening in my mid-teens, even before I entered the Jesuits....The notion of God I had as a child had to die first, and the death of that God is what led me to the God that is beyond words and concepts."

Zen practitioners don't usually use the word "goal," and so Habito was asked if he could discuss how one may arrive at a kind of goal. He said "I would rather call it the fruit or outcome of practice. In spiritual paths in general there seem to be three stages that have distinctive characteristics but that are related in a developmental way:...purification, illumination, and

union. That's what I try to map out in my new book, taking Zen on the one hand and the Spiritual Exercises on the other as parallel paths of transformation."

In a kind of summation, Habito says that St. Ignatius proposed a very left-brained kind of approach to spirituality. There are exercises for examining your sinfulness, checking out your day, seeing what you did that was according to God's will and what was not. "Zen is a more direct way of inviting people to 'just sit and behold in the silence.' Can these two go together? For me it is the 'Contemplation of Divine Love' (the final contemplation in the Spiritual Exercises) that is the summit of the exercises. That's exactly what happens in sitting in stillness in Zen. You're simply soaked in the divine love that is beyond words, and you allow it to fill you, inundate you, and move you so that you can love a life grounded on that, offering yourself to others."

Habito left the Jesuits but continues a deep engagement with the order.



## CHAPTER V

### THE TAO

The Tao seems particularly adept at dispelling the delusion of duality. It sees proper meditation as a means to do this. I will be quoting and paraphrasing Deng Ming-Dao's work, 365 TAO: DAILY MEDITATIONS.

"...to pair meditator and object creates a dualistic relationship between self and environment that leads one astray. Therefore, the only true meditation is one that does not put us into a relationship of viewer and object. Any object, no matter how holy, still reinforces the illusion that there is a reality outside of ourselves....The ultimate meditation is the realization that we ourselves are empty of distinctions, that our sense of identity is only the result of dualistic clinging" (p 221)....As long as we adhere to intellectual ideas over experience, then we can never have a genuine perception of Tao." (p 225)

"The holy person transcends all identity. Therefore, wealth or poverty, good or bad, violence or peace makes no difference. Dichotomies are no longer valid to such a person. Do you find this hard to believe? The degree that you find this difficult to accept indicates the degree to which you are shackled by dualism. True enlightenment comes from understanding the oneness of all reality." (p 224)

"...there is no separation between void and phenomena. Therefore, Tao cannot be gained from denying the world....In all of life, the only thing that separates from Tao is the human ego, because one places oneself above all other things." (p 156)

Not only does the Tao seek to overcome duality, through meditation it aims at what might be called "direct spiritual knowing. Wholly internal, this mode is the direct experiencing of truth through the opening of higher faculties. Meditation gives one perceptions of absolute certainty. There is no doubt or need of other investigations; this knowledge is beyond words, descriptions, and rationalizations. In fact, one must be careful not to let the fruits of one's meditations pass into the realm of rationalization. This will subject you to a relativity of external truths and ruin your confidence. To avoid doubts and conflicting opinions, followers of Tao keep their revelations secret. Then what is known directly is absolutely yours." (p 161)

It may take a while and a process to have such confidence in one's self. The author explains: You need a master to begin. And then, "A good master leads you to the true master within. Only that master, who is your own higher self, can adequately answer all questions." (p 165)

"When you are seeing the greatest wonder of your life, the last thing you want is to have someone blocking the light." (p 233)

"Once you unite all elements within yourself, metaphorically referred to as the uniting of male and female, the light that dispels darkness appears. Just as all colored light together makes colorless light, so too does the combinations of all our facets result in the integration of our polarities. When this happens, you will "see" a light in your meditations. This light brings knowledge. That is why it is called the true master." (p 165)

"One should never stop learning, never stop exploring, never stop going on adventures. Be like the explorers of old. What they acquired for themselves will always surpass those who merely read about their exploits." (p 199)

Continuing the survey of the Tao, the author sees the deepest self, the soul, and what the seasoned meditator can realize. Eventually, he reaches a stage where meditation flows quite spontaneously. Every day is new, fresh, and full of wonderful insights. The beauty of the world then shows itself as it is, doubts fade away, and the banality of ordinary life is replaced by the awe and grandeur of the soul. This is true formlessness." (p 212)

"Any person with training can reach this soul. Only then can you be convinced of its presence. When you reach it, your body and mind will become irrelevant, for you are now in a state beyond the senses and beyond thought. The soul is called absolute because it is beyond relativity" (p 154). You are god. The only way to confirm this is to remove the barrier of subjectivity that prevents you from realizing your essential oneness with all things." (p 211)

"...the soul cannot be slain. Every soul is but a part of an infinite, cosmic soul....Nothing is truly destroyed, and nothing is truly born. Only appearances change. Therefore, people of composure view the transformations of the world calmly. They do not become alarmed with the different permutations of phenomena. They know that these are all merely outer manifestations of an indefinable, unlimited, and infinite reality." (p 219)

The author knows that such realization is not for the weak-hearted and, indeed, it may be arduous. He explains by quoting a sage: "Human nature was originally one and we were a whole. And the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love....But in this world, the pursuit of love and compassion is not without pain and confusion." (p 247)

I'll end our view of this Chinese classic with Deng Ming-Dao's own description of the Tao and one last plea for oneness: "Tao is within us; we are Tao. It is also outside of us; it is all the known universe. All that we can know of ourselves and our universe cannot account for all

that is Tao...The ultimate Tao is called absolute" (When something is named absolute, it is usually so called because there is no other, no second.) "Our normal minds are incapable of perceiving where there is no contrast. Yet it is precisely this colorless infinity that is the underlying reality to this life....The only way to fathom it is to remove our sense of division from it. In essence, we must plunge into the mystery itself. Only then will we know peace." (p 222)

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SUFIS

#### A. KABIR EDMUND HELMINSKI: LIVING PRESENCE

The religious traditions offer ways of getting beyond the ordinary, daily functioning of the mind, and to enjoy various higher states of consciousness, such as I have been pursuing. I turn now to a Sufi, Kabir Edmund Helminski, and his wonderfully instructive book, *LIVING PRESENCE*. Kaminski is a translator and interpreter of Sufi works. He is a Shaikh (Noble Elder) associated with the Mevlevi Order founded by Rumi; he is also a transpersonal psychologist.

Large portions of his book center on love, including three chapters and much of the last four chapters devoted to the subject.. He elaborates, "Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi has said, 'The religion of Love is like no other.' It has no form, and it is not dependent on laws, but it can be recognized despite outer forms by those who know it. It is the same religion Jesus brought, calling it the *NEW COVENANT*. The religion of Love was also brought by Mohammad and passed on through Ali and Abu Bakr to become Sufism."

Sufism is not indissolubly linked to Islamism. Again, Helminski makes the point, "Sufism is the attribute of those who love. Lovers are people who are purified by love, free of themselves and their own qualities and fully attentive to the Beloved. This is to say that Sufis are not held in bondage by any quality of their own because they see everything they are and have as belonging to the Source. An early Sufi, Shebli, said: 'The Sufi sees nothing but God in the two worlds.'" His words make me think that love may be the criterion by which to judge any religion. Is my religion an attribute of love?

Helminski relates his view on standard Sufism: "In classical Sufism the continuum from the false self to the essential Self has been described in seven stages. The word for self, *NAFI*, is also equivalent to 'soul.'" I believe his naming of each stage helps to describe the process of what is transpiring at that particular stage. One needs to consult the book for a full explanation.

- "1. The self of compulsion....
2. The self of conscience....
3. The self of inspiration....
4. The soul of tranquility....
5. The soul of submission....
6. The soul of total submission....
7. The soul of perfection....

Stages 1 and 2 are more or less under the domination of the false self. Stage 3 might be called the natural self, whereas stages 4 through 7 represent various degrees of the essential Self."

His book is devoted to what he calls "The Work," or Soul Work. He explains: "What is most characteristically human is not guaranteed to us by our species or by our culture but given only in potential. A spiritual master once expressed it this way: A person must work in order to become human....We are made to know ourselves; we are created for this self-awareness; we are fully equipped for it....The education of the soul, or essential Self, is different from the education of the personality or the intellect. The education of the soul involves not only knowledge, but the realization of a presence that is our deeper nature and that includes attention, will, and self-transcendence...."

"Presence is the state of being consciously aware....It is not a belief or opinion, but a practice." Our awareness is usually occupied with more superficial layers of mind activity, particularly our ego's thoughts and desires. With work, it is possible to listen within more constantly. "Through this listening, mind and heart, ego and subconscious can be integrated....The heart, as Sufis and others call it, is the totality of the mind's faculties, both sub- and supra-conscious. These faculties work behind the curtain of our conscious awareness. They function erratically, partially, and unconsciously in most of us, because the human heart is fragmented and in conflict. If, however, the subconscious mind functions in harmony with the Divine Unknown, the Creative Power, life becomes filled with new meaning that flows into conscious awareness."

"To purify and harmonize our conscious and subconscious faculties, to make the heart pure around a single center, or master desire, and to patiently awaken those faculties that have gone to sleep or atrophied--this is the work of presence...."

"With consciousness it is possible to direct one's attention and even to be conscious of where one's attention moves, to see moment by moment what attracts it....With true consciousness, in contrast to passive awareness, the present moment is a wide space....the present is perceived as it is, in the perfection of its many dimensions. Consciousness is knowing that you are....Presence is to have this quality of energy activated. As human beings we can know that a single creative energy connects everything and that we are integral to it...."

"One day the heart may reach such contact with its own source through merging directly with the Creative Power and knowing the One behind multiplicity that it may make a home in unity." Then one may feel being held or upheld, connected with everything and at home anywhere. It's a communing with and an opening to all. "Human beings are destined to realize

this possibility more and more. The result is the complete human being, the drop that becomes the Sea. It is not difficult to achieve this end, because we are made for it."

"At higher levels, there are fewer laws. Two stones cannot occupy the same space, but two fragrances can. In the world of solid material existence, a stone has a weight and mass that limits what it can do. Fragrance, on the other hand, being matter in molecular form, has powers of diffusion and penetration that allows it to spread at phenomenal speeds over great distances in all directions at once. A rock, however, can move only if it is moved, and then in a single direction and at a speed limited by the force acting on it."

Helmski finishes the comparison: "The difference between matter in its solid state and matter in its molecular state is analogous to the mind limited by the ordinary intellect and senses and the mind that has become spiritualized."

For the drop to become the Sea, some dissolution must take place. Some part of the self dissolves and yet is still present. "The conventional idea of self begins to break down. The boundaries of the self are less limited, and yet the identity has not been weakened. The self has dissolved: it is there, but not in its old form. A new quality enters into our relationships--a deeper love, as if we were loving a part of ourselves. Within ourselves we are surrounded by presences; the saints and masters are here within us, as is the Presence of Spirit."

The individualized mind that I spiritualize is not something separate from the mind of the universe, but a reflection of this mind as it draws nearer to its source. "The heart is the individualized, manifesting part of the Cosmic Mind. It is a reflection of the Cosmic Mind's attributes: love, compassion, mercy, patience, generosity, will, service creativity, beauty, wisdom, awareness, and innumerable other qualities. To the extent that we can increase our reflection of these qualities, we are also developing the heart."

"The real Work is completed under the protection and guidance of Love....Our tendency is toward personal independence....ego-protective behaviors...keep us in separation. We need to open ourselves to other beings in this milieu of love....Only as we begin to open to others in love can the isolated ego be transformed....An awareness of our interdependence with our fellow human beings and with all of life provides the environment in which the seed of the soul can flourish."

"What we love we will become....The experience of love will activate our conscious and subconscious faculties....For those who love, serve, and remember, (the universe) will demonstrate corresponding values. Those who call on God with sincerity will find the living

Presence of that God within themselves." If I become what I love, is not the destiny of those who love God to become God?

"Never think of love as the goal of anything," a teacher of mine said, "always think of it as the cause." Developing that thought, Helminski says, "At all levels of existence a single cosmic energy is active. The whole universe is alive with intelligence, creativity, and constant evolution. Another name for this cosmic energy is Spirit, and we experience Spirit, this cosmic energy, as love."

Later in the same chapter, "Love the Transformer," the author repeats the injunction, "Love is not the goal of anything; it is the cause of everything, including our own final transformation." If I take these words seriously, love is the cause not only of good acts but of evil actions as well. It may be self-preservation or ego-driven, but the perpetrator is still acting out of love, no matter how misdirected. I don't think we can act at all except from the motive that what I do is ultimately good for myself in some way or other.

I believe it is easier to accept that love is the cause of everything if I see that I and all others were created out of love. If love is the cause of our being, the energy does not end. I am love and made to love. When dealing with the Christian Scriptures, I quoted what St. Augustine said in the fifth century about love, which is worth repeating here: "If nothing else in praise of love was said in the rest of the epistle, nay in the rest of Scripture, and we had heard from the mouth of the Spirit of God that one statement, 'God is love,' (1 Jo 4:16) we would not have to look for anything else."

"Love brings together what needs to be brought together....The psyche's refinement toward more continuous presence results in our being able to meet more and more manifestations of Life with unconditional Love. We are able to overcome our separation to such an extent that we feel at one more and more. Wider awareness" leads us to "overcome the inner tyrannies of attraction and preference."

"As the psyche opens in love to its milieu, a marriage occurs between the heart and the electromagnetic milieu of love, and a child is born: will, or conscious action. Until then we have only ego--the bastard child of intellect and desire. The marriage of the subtle faculties of mind, or the heart, with unconditional love gives birth to true, conscious, unqualified will....This merging of the heart with the milieu of Love brings us to the stage known as unconditioning, which is the highest state of subtlety of the mind and heart."

Helminski says, "we experience Spirit, this cosmic energy, as love....Spirit plus Nothing: that is your highest destiny....This Spirit is not to be understood as a metaphysical assertion or belief, but as something we can experience for ourselves,...The essential Self will be found to have the attributes of Spirit, including unconditional love and fundamental creativity."

"We come face-to-face with Love as we gather in its name. Love is the milieu in which we all exist. Together we can join our hearts to this field....All we need is within if we are free of the obstructing ego. Love is the tamer of ego."

Helminski and other Sufis call the total mind "heart." It has a specific meaning in their spiritual glossary. "The heart includes those faculties that are beyond the intellect; but as long as we are attached to this physical body, we working THROUGH the intellect....It includes the subconscious/superconscious mind; all the subtle faculties that are nonintellectual....Nothing originates with the intellect....Heart is spiritualized mind."

"At the beginning of spiritual work, and for as long as it takes, it is necessary to go through a process of deconditioning: meticulously observing the influences of our conditioning, learning more and more to see things as they are. Simultaneously, it is necessary to cultivate the sensitive and conscious capacities." Helminski explains how this cultivation works: we need conscious effort springing from a love for developing our true nature. "How much of the latent capacities of the mind do we employ? How often are we conscious, actively receptive, living in true service, or asking a real question? How often do we listen within, and how often do we consciously receive the subtle impressions of the heart?"

"The ability to use our subconscious faculties depends on a quality of presence....With the development of presence comes a more refined awareness of all levels of experience." The more we are conscious, the more we are aware of knowledge and information not restricted by space and time. "We should learn to be cautious about accepting images that arrive fully formed and detailed, since they are likely to be creations of memory and association. We should also be wary of information and impressions that come too quickly and strongly, since these are more likely to be examples of mental noise."

"So far I have been talking about the intentional application of subtle faculties. But the spontaneous reception of knowledge and guidance is at least as important in our spiritual life. To receive the spiritual guidance...to be a full participant in life, we will need a presence, a clarity, an openness. Simultaneous with this presence, a loving attitude toward all manifestations of life will help create the necessary invisible connections....In all these examples, love is the means....Through the creative and attractive power of love, the mind is helped to make contact



with more and more of the universe, to feel its participation in the continuing miracle of existence."

"Everything happens within a matrix of Spirit; everything is ordered and lawful....Some people take a second to slow down, while some take a lifetime." We may think that we have gone for many years TOWARD Reality. Why shouldn't we accept that we are WITHIN it right now? If we are within it, what is there to worry about? Isn't Reality fundamentally compassionate and merciful? Isn't apparent chaos just a thin veil over Order?"

"A sigh of compassion is within this world. The Divine Unknown is nearer than our jugular vein. Its face is everywhere to be seen; Its qualities surround us. Everything is being breathed out of the silence of Spirit. This is the key to the secrets of the moment, to the fullness of living. Let it breathe us; let us be this Living Presence." In the heading for this next to the last chapter of his book, "Service Within the Divine Unknown," Helminski quotes a short poem of Rumi's which seems apt here:

"Each moment contains  
a hundred messages from God:  
To every cry of, "Oh Lord,"  
He answers a hundred times, "I am here."

In his last chapter, "What Sufism Is," our author makes some closing remarks: "If Sufism has a central method, it is the development of presence and love. Only presence (conscious awareness) can awaken us from our enslavement to the world and our own psychological processes, and only cosmic love can comprehend the Divine. Love is the highest activation of intelligence, for without it nothing great would be accomplished, whether spiritually, artistically, socially, or scientifically. Sufism is the attribute of those who love."

"An early Sufi, Shebli, said: 'The Sufi sees nothing except God in the two worlds.' This book is about one aspect of Sufism: presence, and how this presence can be developed and used to activate our essential human qualities."

Helminski closes with this final paragraph: "The idea of presence with love may be the most basic remedy for the prevailing materialism, selfishness, and unconsciousness of our age in our obsession with our false selves, in turning our backs on God, we have also lost our essential Self, our own divine spark. In forgetting God, we have forgotten ourselves. Remembering God is the beginning of remembering ourselves."

## B. JELALUDDIN RUMI

In the work immediately above, LIVING PRESENCE, Helminski begins each chapter with a poem or short quotation, always from the Sufi master, Jelaluddin Rumi. Here I would like to offer Rumi's famous and sublime ode on Oneness. It is taken from THE ILLUMINATED RUMI, Translation and Commentary by Coleman Barks (p 108-109);

### SAY WHO I AM

I am dust particles in sunlight.

I am the round sun.

To the bits of dust I say, STAY.

To the sun, KEEP MOVING.

I am morning mist,

And the breathing of evening.

I am wind in the top of the grove,

And surf on the cliff.

Mast, rudder, helmsman and keel,

I am also the coral they founder on.

I am a tree with a trained parrot in the branches,

Silence, thought, and voice.

The musical air coming through a flute,

a spark off a stone, a flickering in metal.

Both candle and the moth

crazy around it.

Rose and the nightingale

lost in fragrance.

I am all orders of being,

the circling galaxy,

the evolutionary intelligence,

the lift and the falling away.

What is and what isn't. You  
who know Jelaluddin, you

the One in all, say  
who I am.

Say I am You.

### **C. HAFEZ**

Echoing this making the two one, Hafiz, an illustrious Sufi poet writing in the fourteenth century, dresses this endeavor in beautiful poetic terms in "I Have Learned So Much," from *THE GIFT: POEMS BY HAFIZ*, p. 32, 79-80:

"I have learned so much from God that I can no longer call myself  
A Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Jew.

The Truth has shared so much of Itself with me  
That I can no longer call myself a man, a woman, an angel, or even pure Soul.

Love has befriended Hafez so completely  
It has turned to ash and freed me

Of every concept and image  
My mind has ever known."

Hafez consummates the journey in another poem, "Lifts Beyond Conception:"

"Independent of this body is my mind  
When the call of the Golden Nightingale  
Lifts and pours my being throughout the sky.

When God unfurls even a shadow of His tress  
Upon my bare shoulder.

Sovereign of my illumined heart  
Is the indivisible knowledge  
In the gaze of my spirit's wings climbing to

Such a sublime height they each  
Become the Sun Itself

And reside-perched beyond every throne  
Known to man.

Hafez, this Sufi path of love is so astoundingly Glorious  
That one day each wayfarer upon it will become  
The Inconceivable-  
The Creator of God Himself."

## CHAPTER VII

### MODERN MYSTICS & WRITERS

#### A. JOEL S GOLDSMITH

I go from the Middle Ages and two Sufi mystics of that era to our times and a modern day mystic. All three have been influenced by the Christian Scriptures and Jesus Christ. Joel S. Goldsmith, who died in 1964, was the founder of The Infinite Way, now a world-wide movement. He wanted to develop spiritual consciousness and offer a path for his meditating followers. This is what he says in the Introduction to PRACTICING THE PRESENCE: "This book is my personal life revealed. This book, THE ART OF MEDITATION, and LIVING THE INFINITE WAY reveal all that has happened to me in my entire spiritual career, and not only to me but to all those who have been taught in this way, whether by me or by any other spiritual teacher on this particular path."

I am going to look at key passages in these three books, paying particular attention to how his work explains and develops passages from Jesus and the Bible for concrete use by his practitioners. Some of his renderings may appear startling, but I ask the reader to let herself breathe the rarefied atmosphere of a true mystic. Everyone's experience is different because no two people are alike. The Apostle John's experience of loving Jesus and loving God, narrated earlier, was unique to him. I have my own experience and need to be at home with it. God calls each of us to our personal experience of Him, or he wouldn't have made us all different.

For Goldsmith, God is no far-off miracle worker. The Spirit of God, Infinity, Greatness, Goodness, can find outlet only as human consciousness, as your consciousness and mine. There is no God and me. There is only God manifested as individual being. God is our very own being. God fulfills Himself as our individual being. Goldsmith says to, "Enjoy watching the glory of the Father unfold as our individual experience."

Goldsmith is expressing here in simple and concrete words what many spiritual teachers worldwide have taught. If I take it seriously, then I must answer the question, "How can God be kind to the world if I am not?"

"What is God?" And the answer is "I AM." With this, I believe Goldsmith pushes the question of what is God to its ultimate conclusion. God is the mind and life of the individual. There is but one universal "I," and every one of us can say it because God is the only "I."

I embrace the world and all existence within myself. All that exist as persons, places, and things live within my own consciousness. I can never become aware of anything outside the

realm of my own mind. Anything that can be known is effect until I become one with what is. God is my being. True communion is without words or thoughts. God is the core of each and everything. Although we are all interconnected, it is up to each to realize its own divinity. The world is real and permanent because its substance is eternal Consciousness.

To further understand what consciousness is, Goldsmith says it is necessary to realize the truth of the Bible. They are no longer quotations, but statements of fact, and that brings us to the point of demarcation between 'knowing the truth' and 'taking no thought.'" I realize truth as an established truth within my own consciousness--the truth of my being. I do not take thought to make any good come to us. "We are realizing the truth, knowing the truth of our own identity, of our oneness with the Infinite, with our infinite capacities." The belief of separation I correct by realizing that my oneness with God constitutes my oneness with everything.

"Never forget that you cannot live scientifically as man or idea, but that you must realize yourself to be Life, Truth and Love. You must accept Jesus' revelation of the I AM until it becomes realization with you."

The activity I am engaged in, whether it is a business, a profession, or an art, is an activity of Consciousness. "It is even more than this. As an emanation of Consciousness, it is Consciousness Itself individually appearing and expressing Its own being, nature, and character...Consciousness alone is responsible. We learn to let go and let God, Consciousness, assume Its responsibilities."

Such claims prompt us to look more carefully at what human consciousness is, and how Goldsmith advises us to use it. He says the more truth that I read and hear, the more active truth is in my consciousness. Thus I learn to abide in the Word. This is the first step on the way. The second, and more important step, is to be able to receive truth from within, to be receptive and responsive to the truth that wells up within me. Thus I go from the letter to the Spirit. Goldsmith shows his own confidence, and urges me to follow, when he says to be unwilling to accept any authority other than my own interior revelation.

God is individual being. God is your being; God is my being; God is the being of every form of life-human, animal, vegetable, mineral. All that the Father is, I am; all that the Father hath is embodied within my consciousness. God is individual mind, and God is the only mind. The presence and the power of the Invisible is that which is made manifest to us as the visible, the one inseparable from the other. Some miracle of invisible activity has transformed a dry seed, a handful of earth, and a little water into a flower. What marvel, what wonder is this unfolding before our very eyes, unseen, unknown, inexplicable! The realization of God must come as an

individual unfoldment to every aspirant on the spiritual path. God is what I am. To uncover or reveal God, I must discover what I am.

The Oneness of God and its expression individually in the world is one of the chief teachings of Goldsmith. God is one: one Power, one Law, one Substance, one Cause, one Life. This teaching of oneness, he says, is probably the highest spiritual teaching ever given to the world. When I understand God as Life, there is only one Life and I can never have a life to save, or a life to heal or redeem. There is only one. One life has the highs and lows that I and all experience.

Goldsmith tries to aid some of his followers who may be overly concerned with "What is truth?" He says not to be so concerned with what is truth as with feeling truth. Give less thought to the letter and more receptivity to the feel. This word "feel" refers to the awareness, consciousness, or a sense of the truth. I am now not speaking truth but receiving truth. It may be experienced as a "felt sense."

Men, even great men, such as Jesus of Nazareth, Buddha of India, Lao-Tze of China, were messengers of divine truth. They were interpreted as the Light, whereas their message was not themselves. The sublime reality they brought was not something "out there" from our own selves; it was the light of truth within our own consciousness. An illumined consciousness can look upon an appearance of evil and perceive the divine reality. The world is in a process, perhaps eons long, of being transformed from the merely human to a divine reality.

Meditation leads to illumination, Goldsmith says, and illumination leads to communion with God. And communion leads finally to union. A God experience is an individual one. I may share my illumined unfoldment with others, but there can be no partner in this solitary experience. There is no limit to the depth of my attainment; Goldsmith calls it the depth of Christhood. Illumination leads to communion in which there is a reciprocal exchange, something flowing out from God into our consciousness and back again from our consciousness into the consciousness of God. It is an awareness carried to a deeper degree than has been experienced thus far, but I do not carry it-God carries it. No effort on our part can bring it about; I can only be patient and wait for it. It takes over and there is a peaceful, joyous interchange in which I feel the love of God touching us and our love for God returning to God.

Communion, carried to its ultimate, results in the final relationship which is union with God. One can feel the presence of The Lord. It is as if It were saying, "I am walking beside you;" then again It may say, "Heretofore, I have walked beside you, but now I am within you;" finally you hear It say, "Heretofore, I have been within you, but now I Am you-I think as you; I speak as

you; I act as you; your consciousness and My Consciousness are one and the same, because there is now only My Consciousness."

## **B. ANDREW HARVEY: SON OF MAN**

Andrew Harvey is briefly cited elsewhere in these writings. Born in 1952, he is an Oxford religious scholar who writes extensively on spiritual and mystic subjects. Here I want to give an extended view of his excellent work, for which the sub-title speaks for itself: SON OF MAN; THE MYSTICAL PATH TO CHRIST.

In his chapter, "Jesus and Power," Harvey quotes from the Gospel of Thomas. Salome asks Jesus, "Who are you that you have come up to my couch and eaten from my table?" Jesus replies, "I am he who exists from the undivided." Jesus, here characterizes Kingdom-consciousness as "existing from the undivided," living an "undivided" life...." Jesus condemnation of those who 'choose division' is fierce and sad: 'If he is divided, he will be filled with darkness.' To be 'divided' then, is not simply to be unable to enter the Kingdom of unity and wholeness and compassion; it is to be an active agent of darkness. Not to allow yourself to be 'destroyed' into love and to become an instrument in reality is to invite being 'filled with darkness' and to perpetuate the misery and squalor of that 'divided' life that keeps human beings separate from God, each other, and their own divine identity." 'That which exists from the undivided' is undivided mystical vision and just, compassionate action that flows naturally from it.

In talking about unity or the "undivided," it is revealing to see how at one time, and still for many, holiness was and is seen as separate and, perhaps, wholly other. Harvey quotes Marcus Borg on what the latter calls "the politics of holiness." "The introduction of Roman rule had brought a crisis into every aspect of Jewish life, religious, political, social, and economic; in response to the threat produced by the Roman occupation, the Jewish social world had become dominated by the 'politics of holiness.' It was expressed most succinctly in Judaism after the exile in the 'holiness code,' whose central words affirmed 'you shall be holy as I the Lord your God am holy.' "God was holy, and Israel was to be holy. That was to be...her way of life. Moreover, holiness was to be understood in a highly specific way, namely as separation. To be holy meant to be separate from everything that would defile holiness. The Jewish social world and its conventional wisdom became increasingly structured around the polarities of holiness as separation; clean and unclean, purity and defilement, sacred and profane, Jew and Gentile, righteous and sinner."



Thus, holiness originated as a survival strategy during the exile and afterwards. The Jewish people were determined to be faithful to God to avoid another outpouring of the divine judgment which led to their present predicament. Moreover, as a small social group, they also feared being assimilated into surrounding cultures. "The quest for holiness addressed both needs. It was the path to faithfulness and the path of social survival."

The next section I examine is what I consider central to Harvey's description of Jesus, where the Son of Man is teaching his disciples. "Being called 'master,' being set apart from others, would only unravel and destroy the core of his message to the world--that everyone would live in the divine glory of joy and power as he did; what Jesus wanted was a far more demanding intimacy and recognition. In the Gospel of Thomas, he is reported as saying, 'Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds he will be troubled. When he becomes troubled he will be astounded and he will rule over all.' The 'safety' of being a 'follower' has to be abandoned for the 'trouble' of discovering the vastness and majesty of one's own and everyone's divine identity, and for the 'astonishment' that follows on such a discovery and such an effort (an astonishment that dissolves all previous categories of understanding and reveals the divinity of the universe). The safety of being a 'seeker' has to be exchanged for the 'trouble,' 'astonishment,' and responsibility for rulership of being a 'finder.' Only then can the truth of what Jesus is and knows be recognized as the truth of all beings, and known not through worship but as he knows it himself in direct, suffering, astonishing, ecstatic knowledge."

"As Jesus says in the Secret Book of James: 'Become better than I, like the son of the holy spirit! Be eager to be saved without being urged. Instead, become zealous on your own, and if possible, surpass even me. For that is how the Father will love you.'"

"When Jesus says, then, 'I am the way, the truth and the life,' he is not speaking as a leader cajoling followers into accepting his authority (and his alone): he is speaking as the voice of the Kingdom within everyone, as the herald of that divine consciousness that is everyone's secret."

"The most complete statement that Jesus ever made about the nature of Union, and one of the key mystical clues to the transformation of the whole human being into a Christ, is found in Logion 22 of the Gospel of Thomas: "Jesus saw some babies nursing. He said to his disciples, 'These nursing babies are like those who enter the Kingdom' They said to him, 'Then shall we enter the Kingdom as babies?' Jesus said to them, 'When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same so that the male not be male and the

female female; and when you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness, then you will enter the Kingdom"

"Every detail of this logion is revelatory. It begins by Jesus seeing some babies nursing. Immediately, this image of total at-oneness, trust, and abandon arouses in Jesus' awakened mind the image of resurrected consciousness. The Kingdom-consciousness is divine Child-consciousness, a consciousness that is drinking the milk of divine joy, wisdom, strength, and protection at every moment. To become a Christ is to become a 'nursing baby,' one who experiences the universe as a Mother, who nourishes, feeds, sustains, provides, guides at all times, who knows, in fact, perfect intimacy while in time and in a body with what St. John of the Cross calls 'the tenderness of the Life of God.'"

Harvey stresses the necessity of continuous learning on the path to Christhood: "Nothing real can be accomplished in the mystical journey to Christ without learning--and learning at ever-greater depth and with an ever-more acute and exacting fervor and sincerity--the 'feminine' wisdom of surrendering in trust and with an abandon of love to the mystery of ordeal."

In Part Four of SON OF MAN there are Twelve Sacred Practices and Thirty-one Meditations on the Mystical Christ. I would like to close our treatment of Harvey with one of these meditations, "The Divine Birth," by Meister Eckhart: "God gives birth to the Son as you, as me, as each one of us. As many beings, as many gods in God. In my soul, God gives birth to me as his son, he gives birth to me as himself, and himself as me. I find in this divine birth that God and I are the same. I am what I was and what I shall always remain, now and forever. I am transported above the highest angels; I neither decrease nor increase, for in this birth I have become the motionless cause of all that moves. I have won back what has always been mine. Here, in my soul, the greatest of all miracles has taken place--God has returned to God."

### **C. KEN WILBER**

I turn now to an American writer, Ken Wilber, who gives a solid basis dating back to ancient times for the argument that the ultimate reality is oneness. I will trace and condense his masterful study of the Nondual traditions as he unfolds their fuller meaning. Houston Smith, author of THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS, has written this about Wilber, "No one--not even Jung--has done as much to open Western psychology to the enduring insights of the world's wisdom traditions."

I will quote and paraphrase from Wilber's, THE EYE OF SPIRIT. This title, as well as that of his closing chapter, "Always Already," are very telling and indicate how he proceeds. The

last chapter begins: "The realization of the Nondual traditions is uncompromising: there is only Spirit, there is only God, there is only Emptiness in all its radiant wonder. All the good and all the evil, the very best and the very worst, the upright and the degenerate--each and all are radically perfect manifestations of Spirit precisely as they are. There is nothing but God, nothing but the Goddess, nothing but Spirit in all directions, and not a grain of sand, not a speck of dust, is more or less Spirit than any other." (p 281)

"This realization undoes the Great Search that is the heart of the separate-self sense. The separate-self is, at bottom, simply a sensation of seeking....The Great Search for Spirit is simply that impulse, the final impulse, which prevents the present realization, and it does so for a simple reason: the Great Search presumes the loss of God....Spirit must be fully, completely present right now--and you must be fully, totally, completely aware of it right now....There must be something about our PRESENT awareness that contains the entire truth....100 percent of Spirit is in your awareness right now---and the trick, as it were, is to recognize this ever-present state of affairs....And this simple recognition of an ALREADY PRESENT Spirit is the task, as it were, of the great Nondual traditions." (p281-283)

"Mysticism" or "transcendentalism" does not deny the world or the body and the senses and its vital life. The core understanding of the great Nondual mystics, from Plotinus and Eckhart in the West to Nagarjuna and Lady Tsogyal in the East is that absolute reality and the relative world are "not two" (which is the meaning of "non-dual"). The "other world" of Spirit and "this world" of separate phenomena are deeply and profoundly "not two," and this nonduality is a direct and immediate realization which occurs in certain meditative states--in other words, seen with the eye of contemplation--although it then becomes a very simple, very ordinary perception, whether you are meditating or not. (p 283)

"Every single thing that you perceive is the radiance of Spirit itself, so much so, that the Spirit is not seen apart from that thing: the robin sings, and just that is it, nothing else....We don't see that Spirit is fully and completely present right here, right now, because our awareness is clouded with some form of avoidance. We do not want to be choicelessly aware of the present....We will do anything except come to rest in the pure Presence of the present."(p 283-284)

"In nondual meditation or contemplation, the agitation of the separate-self sense profoundly relaxes, and the self uncoils in the vast expanse of all space....This realization may take many forms. A simple one is something like this: You might be looking at a mountain, and you have relaxed into the effortlessness of your own present awareness, and then suddenly the

mountain is all, you are nothing. Your separate-self sense is suddenly and totally gone, and there is simply everything that is arising moment to moment." (p 284)

"That simple witnessing awareness, the traditions maintain, is Spirit itself, is the enlightened mind itself, is Buddha-nature itself, is God itself, IN ITS ENTIRETY....In other words, the ultimate reality is not something seen, but rather the everpresent Seer....And thus, the ultimate state of consciousness--intrinsic Spirit itself--IS NOT HARD TO REACH BUT IMPOSSIBLE TO AVOID." (p 287-288)

"And so, as you rest in the pure Witness, you won't see anything in particular--whatever you see is fine. Rather as you rest in the radical subject or Witness, as you stop identifying with objects, you will simply begin to notice a sense of vast Freedom. This Freedom is not something you will see; it is something you are." When you are the Witness of thoughts or feelings, you are not bound by thoughts or feelings. "In place of your contracted self, there is simply a vast sense of Openness and Release. As an object, you are bound; as the Witness, you are free. We will not see this Freedom, we will rest in it. A vast ocean of infinite ease." (p 289)

"We do not contact or bring this Witness into being, but simply notice that it is always already present, as the simple and spontaneous awareness of whatever is happening in this moment....We also notice that this simple, ever present Witness is completely effortless....'The perfect person employs the mind as a mirror,' says Chuang Tsu. It neither grasps nor rejects; it receives, but does not keep'" (p 290).

"Eckhart said that 'God is closer to me than I am to myself,' because both God and I are one in the ever-present Witness, which is the nature of intrinsic Spirit itself....When I am not an object, I am God" (p 291).

"When I rest in the pure and simple Witness, I will even begin to notice that the Witness itself is not a separate thing or entity, set apart from what it witnesses. All things arise within the Witness, so much so that the Witness itself disappears into all things" ....Things and events simply arise as they are....They arise with Spirit, as Spirit, in the opening or clearing that I am....When all things arise in me, I am simply all things. There is no subject and object because I do not see the clouds, I am the clouds. I do not feel the breeze, I am the breeze. I do not hear the thunder clapping, I am the thunder clapping....I am no longer on this side of my face looking at the world out there; I simply am the world. I am not in here. I have lost face--and discovered my Original Face, the Kosmos itself (p 292-293).

"When I am not an object, I am God. When I seek an object, I cease to be God, and that catastrophe can never be corrected by more searching for more objects." (p 294)

"Every time I RECOGNIZE OR ACKNOWLEDGE the ever present Witness, I have broken the Great Search and undone the separate-self. And that is the ultimate, secret, nondual practice, the practice of no-practice, the practice of SIMPLE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, the practice of remembrance and recognition, founded timelessly and eternally on the fact that there is only Spirit, a Spirit that is not hard to find but impossible to avoid." (p 295)

"Spirit is the only thing that has NEVER been absent. It is the ONLY constant in your changing experience. You have known this for a billion years, literally. And you might as well acknowledge it. 'If you understand this, then rest in that which understands, and just that is Spirit. If you do not understand this, then rest in that which does not understand, and just that is Spirit.' For eternally and eternally and always eternally, there is only Spirit, the Witness of this and every moment, even unto the ends of the world." (p 296)

Wilber gives another look at the unified field in one of his earlier works, NO BOUNDARY. In it, he says, "We are always wave jumping, we are always resisting the present wave of experience. But unity consciousness and the present are one and the same thing. To resist one is to resist the other. In theological terms, we are always resisting God's presence which is nothing but the full present in all its forms. If there is some aspect of life that you dislike, there is some aspect of unity consciousness that you are resisting. Thus we actively, if secretly, deny and resist unity consciousness. The understanding of this secret resistance is the ultimate key to enlightenment." (p 131)

Wilber offers some, what I call, psychological aids to help us cross over our boundaries. "You cannot eradicate an illusion. You can only understand and see through the illusion itself. From this point of view, even trying to destroy the primary boundary through such elaborate activities as yoga, mental concentration, prayer, ritual, chanting, fasting--all of that merely assumes the primary boundary to be real and thereby enforces and perpetuates the very illusion it seeks to destroy. As Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, put it, 'There is no more dangerous illusion than the fancies by which people try to avoid illusion.'"(p 44).

I may have to change my concept of self to get beyond our limitations. "An important change in one's sense of self and reality results," Wilber says, "from the simple healing of the split between mind and body, the voluntary and the involuntary, the willed and the spontaneous. To the extent you can feel your involuntary body processes as you, you can begin to ACCEPT as perfectly normal all manner of things which you cannot CONTROL....You may learn you

needn't control yourself in order to accept yourself. In fact your deeper self...lies beyond your control. It is both voluntary and involuntary, both perfectly acceptable as manifestations of YOU." (p 105)

Deepak Chopra has said this about Ken Wilber: "Ken Wilber is one of the most important pioneers in the field of consciousness in this century." I know from personal experience that what Wilber is saying above about accepting body processes can and does work to enlarge our horizon.

When I was having difficulty with my meditation, I asked a meditation teacher what I should do. After explaining my problem, he said to listen to my body and feel whatever comes up. Get a "felt sense," he said, of anything happening from head to toe. "Wait and watch within. You may feel a warmth, a release, an illumination, an inspiration, an opening. You may feel touched, or a stillness may come over you. Whatever it is, it is your private secret to explore. Regard it as sacred." It worked! I found that the "felt sense" often turned into "felt realization" of something bigger. It took a while for my "feeling witness" to take over. When it did, I felt simultaneously grounded, at peace, and at one with my body. I now resort to this form of meditation frequently.

I can't find any summary more succinct or more profound than what Ken Wilber has offered me. As a contrast, a simple sentence from John Muir, the Scottish-American naturalist and conservationist shows his approach to oneness: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."

#### **D. VATICAN II & POPE JOHN XXIII**

Buddhism initially presented a challenge for me, then it became a soothing balm for my meditation. The challenge came when I learned that Buddhism teaches there is "no self." My understanding of that phrase meant that there is no soul. Since I was born and raised a Roman Catholic, taught from early years that I have an immortal soul, I saw the two statements as contradictory.

When I entered the seminary to study for the priesthood, the conviction of something internal to us lasting forever was deepened by our studies of and meditations on Jesus of Nazareth. I remember in particular a meditation I was taught by the Sulpician Fathers.

We students jokingly called it "The Three Halos": Jesus in my head, Jesus in my heart, Jesus in my hands. In the first step I imagine and think about a scene from the life of Jesus, for example, Jesus crucified and dying on the cross. I would bring in all I could to make the scene

poignant and memorable, perhaps visualizing his mother, Mary, with his disciple, John, in tears at the foot of the cross. In the second step, Jesus in my heart, I would commiserate with Jesus and try to feel all he felt in dying for me. I would repeat what he said: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" In the last step, Jesus in my hands, I would think about something I could do that day to make the life and suffering of Jesus real for me, and which would improve my life and character. I always admired his proclamation on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It could be applied by forgiving anyone and anything I encountered that day that appeared wrong or inappropriate. All of this is done for the salvation of my deepest self, my soul, and that of others.

I later joined the Society of St. Sulpice because I wanted to further my studies in theology and teach in the seminary. I was sent to the University of Louvain, Belgium, to obtain a doctorate in theology. Here my views were widely expanded by brilliant professors. Fortunately again for me, during my three years there, Vatican Council II was convened and our professors were summoned as experts to formulate the decrees that would later be published.

Our teachers spent six months in Rome working on the documents, and six months back home teaching us. They were on fire with enthusiasm and hope when they told us what was going on at the Council. Pope John XXIII would come into the deliberations of the theologians and sit for four or five hours to listen to these brilliant men from all over the world discussing their views. After sometime, they often forgot that he was there. When he rose to leave, they were reminded that he was there and would stand in respect for His Holiness. He said to them words that I will always remember. He told them that he needs them and the Church needs them. He intended to invite representatives of all religions and all factions, even atheists, to the Council, and to let them have an active role in the proceedings. He said, "We need to do this because we all have the same address: 'Earth.' "

This never happened. "Outsiders" were invited as observers but not voting members. There were varied speculations as to why his intentions did not materialize. One such opinion was that the cardinals would not tolerate it. I think a more plausible explanation could be found in the diary that John XXIII kept his whole life from the time he was fourteen years of age. It appears that during the Council John had a revelation or illumination. I will take the liberty of paraphrasing him: "What good would it be if I invited representatives from the world at large, and the hearts of Catholic leaders and others were hardened to the extent that they could not recognize each other as equal, as brother and sister?" In such an atmosphere I think Pope John saw the futility of universal representation and even universal ratification. Until we all soften what is rigid within, we will never get along to form one world and one people.

But some form of John's compassion was realized at the Council. I would like to quote from the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions:"

"From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history....Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Buddhism in its various forms realizes the radical insufficiency of the changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation or attain by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination."

The Declaration goes on to recognize the followers of Mohammed: "The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself, merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men...." Next, it calls attention to the Church's bond with Judaism: "As the Sacred Synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock. Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets... "

From the Synod's closing remarks in this Declaration, I would like to quote a short paragraph that underlines our purpose in these writings: "We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: 'He who does not love does not know God.'" (See "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, National Catholic Welfare Conference, pp 2-5).

These declarations sealed for me once and for all the validity and power of other approaches beside the Christian one. We are all different from each other, and there are many belief systems and ways to God. Any path can be a path to enlightenment.

I see no contradiction in accepting teachings from different religions or belief systems. Truth is one and we are all one. What was originally difficult for me in Buddhism was the notion of "no self." The problem was resolved, at least in my own mind, when I came to understand that "no self" meant no independent, separate existence. I firmly believe that we are all one.



Everything is connected to something or someone else. Nothing stands absolutely alone. Another way of putting it is, "this happens because of that."

### **E. VICTOR HUGO: LES MISERABLES**

I find a very different and concrete realization of personal love in Victor Hugo's masterpiece, LES MISERABLES. It is one of the most enchanting passages I have ever read on a love triangle: man, woman, and God. I quote from his chapter IV, "A heart beneath a stone," pp 932-933:

"The reduction of the universe to a single being, the expansion of a single being into God, this is love....Oh! How true that the beloved becomes God! One would understand that God might be jealous if the Father of all had not clearly made creation for the soul, and the soul for love....God is behind everything, but everything hides God. Things are black, creatures are opaque. To love a human being is to make her transparent."

"All of God's works were made to serve love. Love is powerful enough to change all nature with its messages. The future belongs still more to the heart than to the mind. To love is the only thing that can occupy and fill up eternity. The infinite requires the inexhaustible."

"Love partakes of the soul itself. It is of the same nature. Like the soul, it is a divine spark; it is incorruptible, indivisible, imperishable. It is a point of fire within us, which is immortal and infinite, which nothing can limit and nothing can extinguish. We feel it burning even in the marrow of our bones, and we see it radiate even to the depths of the sky."

"God can add nothing to the happiness of those who love one another, but to give them unending duration. After a life of love, an eternity of love is a superabundance, indeed; but to intensify the ineffable felicity that love gives to the soul in this world is impossible, even for God. God is the plentitude of heaven; love is the plentitude of man....Love, soar!...What love begins can only be finished by God."

"True love is in despair and raptures....it requires eternity for its devotions and its hopes. It is composed at the same time of the infinitely great and the infinitely small. If you are stone, be loadstone, if you are plant, be sensitive, if you are man, be love."

## **F. ALBERT EINSTEIN**

Many would call Einstein a great scientist but not a mystic. His writings, however, reveal a twofold mystical leaning: his experience of a mysterious force or spirit vastly superior to man manifest in the laws of nature; and secondly, his desire to expand our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature, thus ending, he said, the delusion of consciousness that we are separate. Regarding this second attribute, I have already referred to it above where Yogananda quotes the physicist in volume two of *THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST: THE RESURRECTION OF THE CHRIST WITHIN YOU*, to enhance our spiritual evolution. For the sake of convenience, I repeat it here:

"A human being is part of a whole, called by us the 'Universe,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest--a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circles of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty."

Here I'll offer several quotations regarding his other mystical leaning--a spirit or force behind our experience--to show a deeper, personal side of this renowned figure. I'm taking excerpts from Walter Isaacson's 2007 biography: *EINSTEIN: HIS LIFE AND UNIVERSE*. The book has been called "a soaring journey through the life, mind, and science of the man who changed our view of the universe."

One evening in Berlin at a dinner party with his wife, a skeptic asked Einstein if he was, in fact, religious. "Yes, you can call it that," Einstein replied calmly. "Try and penetrate with our limited means the secrets of nature and you will find that, behind all the discernible laws and connections, there remains something subtle, intangible and inexplicable. Veneration for this force beyond anything that we can comprehend is my religion. To that extent I am, in fact, religious."

Einstein wanted to express his feelings, both for himself and for all of those who sought a simple answer from him about his faith. And so, in 1930, while sailing and ruminating, he composed a credo, "What I Believe." It ended with an explanation of what he meant when he called himself religious: "The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand in awe, is as good as dead, a snuffed out candle. To sense that behind anything that can be experienced there is something that our

minds cannot grasp, whose beauty and sublimity reaches us only indirectly; this is religiousness. In this sense, and in this sense only, I am a devoutly religious man."

People found this answer evocative, even inspiring, and it was reprinted in various translations. But it did not satisfy those who wanted a direct answer to the question of whether he believed in God. A Colorado banker wrote that he had gotten responses from twenty-four Nobel Prize winners to the question of whether they believed in God, and he asked Einstein to reply as well. Einstein wrote back : "My religiosity consists of a humble admiration of the infinitely superior spirit that reveals itself in the little that we can comprehend about the knowable world. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God."

Einstein's notoriety also attracted children. A sixth grade girl of a Sunday school in New York asked about religion in a different way. She asked, "Do scientists pray?" Einstein took her seriously, although we don't know how much she understood: "Scientific research is based on the idea that everything that takes place is determined by the laws of nature, and that holds for the actions of people. For this reason, a scientist will hardly be inclined to believe that events could be influenced by a prayer, i.e., by a wish addressed to a supernatural Being."

Einstein's answer did not mean, however, that there was no Almighty, no spirit larger than ourselves. He demonstrates this because he went on to explain more fully to the young girl: "Everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the Universe--a spirit vastly superior to that of man, and one in the face of which we with our modest powers feel humble. In this way the pursuit of science leads to a religious feeling of a special sort, which is quite different from the religiosity of someone more naive."

Rather than denigrating those who believe in God, as several notables were doing in his day, Einstein tended to denigrate atheists: "What separates me from most so-called atheists is a feeling of utter humility toward the unattainable secrets of the harmony of the cosmos."

"The fanatical atheists," he wrote in a letter, "are like slaves who are still feeling the weight of their chains which they have thrown off after hard struggle. They are creatures who--in their grudge against traditional religion as the 'opium of the masses'--cannot hear the music of the spheres."

Our biographer, Walter Isaacson, asks, "How did this religious instinct relate to his science? For Einstein, the beauty of his faith was that it informed and inspired, rather than

conflicted with, his scientific work. 'The cosmic religious feeling,' he said, 'is the strongest and noblest motive for scientific research.'"

Einstein further explained his view of the relationship between science and religion at a conference at the Union Theological Seminary in New York, "Science can be created only by those who are thoroughly imbued with the aspiration toward truth and understanding. This source of feeling, however, springs from the sphere of religion."

His remarks got front-page news coverage while his concise conclusion became famous: "The situation may be expressed by an image: science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind."

Einstein always felt free to draw upon his own imagination, as in 1895 when as a 16-year-old he imagined what it would be like to ride alongside a light beam. In commenting how he got his ideas, he said, "I'm enough of an artist to draw freely on my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."

Near the end of his life, Einstein reflected again upon the limits of the mind. The following is a quote from an unknown source. "The mind can proceed only so far upon what it knows and can prove. There comes a point where the mind takes a higher plane of knowledge, but can never prove how it got there. All great discoveries have involved such a leap."

## **G. INSIGHTS AND VARIOUS MEDITATIONS ON LOVE**

I would like to quote from a modern physician and professor, Dr. Dean Ornish, on the power of love to heal and bring happiness. Dr. Ornish is the founder of the non-profit Preventive Medicine Research Institute in Sausalito, CA, and Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. He says in his book, *LOVE AND SURVIVAL*: "Love and intimacy are the root of what makes us sick and what makes us well, what causes sadness and what brings happiness, what makes us suffer and what leads to healing." His program for reversing heart disease has been recognized as the only system scientifically proven to reverse heart disease without drugs or surgery.

Buddhism offers a beautiful meditation how to instill and practice loving kindness. First, pick a person you truly love, and send that person loving kindness. Secondly, choose a person you are fond of, and offer the same loving kindness. Thirdly, pick a person you regard as neutral and do the same. Next, a person that irritates you. To continue, an enemy or someone you despise. Lastly, send loving kindness to yourself. Out of these six "sendings," many regard the last the most difficult. If I dig deeply into my soul, and see that I am not 100% OK with myself,

it shows that self-love can be hard to come by. But this practice sends us in the direction of loving all. (A description of this practice may be found in the article, "Being Love," by Laura Munson in SHAMBHALA SUN, March, 2014, pp 38-39).

I experienced Buddhist loving kindness when I asked a monk friend of mine in the Great Lakes Buddhist Vihara, Southfield, MI, to pray for my wife, Helen, who was about to enter the hospital to undergo open heart surgery. What follows is a quote from the email he sent me: "I am sorry to hear about your wife's open heart surgery. But I am sure it will be perfect. I and resident monks will be praying again and again on her behalf. I believe you have a great power now within your heart and mind through meditation that can radiate toward her. Turn it all in the perfect love and focusing that, let it heal her....May all the spiritual powers and energies that we accumulate and practice at the temple be with your wife on her speedy recovery."

Another Buddhist exercise is the Practice of Giving and Taking, reputedly adapted from the Tibetan Buddhist practice of Tonglen. It can be considered a crossover (Buddhist and Christian) technique for it helps develop and use the Christ power of compassion to establish oneself in the light of love and send love and healing to others. The principle is simple. As you breathe in, you take on or breathe in all the misery and suffering of all the beings in the world, past, present and future, as Christ did and does. In breathing out, you give out or breathe out all love and peace, all help and possible forms of healing, as Christ did and does.

You need not fear that the pain or terror will invade you or contaminate you. When you do this practice with a sincere intention to help others, you also will be offering up your own separate false self for purification. The heart is a transforming force. The moment you take all the sufferings of the world inside you, they are no longer sufferings. The heart transforms the energy: drink in misery, and it is transformed into bliss, then send it out. This is the method of compassion: drink in all suffering and pour out all blessing. Some people who do this practice have seen that these are not two, but the reality is really one process of the world being transformed from bad to good with the practitioner's help. Once people have seen that the heart can work this magic, they want to do it again and again. This is one of the approaches of Buddha and his disciples. Buddha says again and again, "Come and see." In other words, find out for yourself (See Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (now Osho), THE BOOK OF WISDOM, vol 1, p. 22).

A variation of this technique is to sit down in front of a large mirror in which you can see yourself clearly. The person in the mirror is your biographical self, or your personality, with all its fears, difficulties and sadnesses. The person looking at your biographical self is your real or essential self, the Christ in you, all-loving, alert, calm and fearless. With as much love and

intensity you can muster, permit the Christ in you to look at your biographical self openly and mercifully. The Christ self sees all your biographical self's needs and weaknesses, not judging them, but noticing them without shame and with detached compassion. Now breathe all the fear and pain of your biographical self in the mirror into your open and calm Christ heart. And breathe back at your biographical self all the peace, joy, bliss and healing power of your inner Christ.

You may also select a person you know who is suffering, and in your heart's eye do for them as you were doing for yourself. You could imagine them performing the same operation with you. Finally, you may also turn your attention to the agony of the whole world and all sentient beings. (See Andrew Harvey, SON OF MAN, pp. 247-249).

Suffering is to show that love conquers all. It is to be remembered that God is not only the suffering of the world, but also the refuge within the suffering as well. The pimping and the screaming and the Valium and the broken air conditioner and the homeless and the meditation are all in One Grand Plan, all in the Oneness of God. In the eternal/temporal scheme of things, the universe is constantly reordering itself, but always under divine guidance. I want to stay open to the Ever-Greater God.

I have found it very helpful to focus on the different aspects of the injunction, "Be still and know that I am God." I can picture either God or myself saying it. After a complete declaration, I reduce the wording step by step. So the next affirmation would be, "Be still and know I am." And the next, "Be still and know." Followed by, "Be still." And lastly, "Be." One of the pronouncements may capture my imagination today, while a different one may do the same tomorrow; and I can stay for a longer or shorter period with each according to my own liking.

One of the members of our meditation group took the above Biblical utterance and made from it his own prayerful meditation: "Be still and know that I am God. Be still, my will, and know, no doubt, that God is becoming myself. Myself is becoming all things. All things are mine as they merge in me. My Me is God, nor do I recognize any other Me except my God Himself. (He was well aware that he took the last sentence from St. Catherine of Genoa).

Love is the bridge

From otherness to Oneness.

From words to Reality.

From my head to my heart.

From the One Christ to the One Christ.

Unless I love, my understanding will always be deficient. Wherever my mind goes, let it always go with love. Shouldn't this be the unifying factor of religious and spiritual traditions?

"Behold but One in all things; it is the second that leads you astray"--Kabir. Apparent evil, suffering, mystery, Self, God: all are part of the Oneness....All is God!

Deepak Chopra, in *THE DAUGHTERS OF JOY*, (pp 64-67, 76, 93-94) offers some interesting comments on love that bring out the subtleties of this sometimes powerful and sometimes quiet emotion:

"Love. Love is the glue that keeps things from falling apart. Love makes you feel Immortal because you stop being fooled by time. When you love, you suddenly remember WHAT IS...."

"This whole journey is going to be about love. Love is what allows you to remake yourself....The good news is that you get to change everything that's ever gone wrong in your life. The bad news is that you get to face everything that's ever gone wrong in life...."

"The complexity of the emotional body is as great as the physical's body's, only we don't see it as important enough."

I would like to note here some other things I garnered from Chopra's insight into love.

Your soul is love. If love is what you are, your energy has to contain love. Love must be accompanied by desire in order to work. I'm sure Chopra did not mean sexual desire, although that may be a part of it. Without desire love can't ask for enough. Love is a god and, therefore, we should be devoted to it with all the desire we can muster.

Nothing feels more impossible than suffering. Now you know what love is faced with every day.

Love says, "I will deny you nothing." And so, anything and everything can be shaped by love. Love looks for me. It seeks me out because I was made by love and for love.

My secret heart is often unknown. At a certain level, all is about me.  
What's mystical to some is reality to others. Becoming free isn't the end  
but the beginning.

I conclude our survey of Chopra by including his list of "the aspects of love that few  
people see:

Love is what Love is what cannot be lost.

Love is what changes the past.

Love is what makes one out of two.

Love is what denies fear.

Love is what fills the holes.

Love is what speaks in silence.

Love is what lets you be seen" (p 196).



## CHAPTER VIII

### ANTHOLOGIES

#### A. EVELYN UNDERHILL: MYSTICISM

There is an extensive and specialized treatment of mysticism in Evelyn Underhill's *MYSTICISM* (1911). It appears that no book of this type has met with such success until the appearance of Aldous Huxley's *THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY* in 1946. Hers has been called "A study in the nature and development of Man's spiritual consciousness." Underhill (1875-1941) was a poet, novelist, pacifist and mystic, and published over thirty books. I am choosing only a few citations from her excellent work.

She gives an excellent psychological profile of the different human faculties engaging in spiritual and mystical pursuits. "Metaphysics and science," Underhill says, "seem to offer to the intellect an open window towards truth; till the heart looks out and declares this landscape to be a chill desert in which she can find no nourishment. These diverse aspects of things must be either fused or transcended if the whole self is to be satisfied; for the reality which she seeks has got to meet both claims and pay in full."

Underhill quotes Dionysius the Areopagite, who laid a foundation for Western mysticism. He divided the angels closest to God into the Seraphs who are aflame with perfect love, and the Cherubs who are filled with perfect knowledge, thus giving expression to the two most intense aspirations of the human soul.

Then Underhill gives her own explanation: "There is a sense in which...the desire of knowledge is a part of the desire of perfect love, since one aspect of that all inclusive passion is clearly a longing to know, in the deepest, fullest, closest sense, the thing adored....Love, all wings,..is a quest, an outgoing towards an object desired, which only when possessed will be fully known, and only when fully known can be perfectly adored. Intimate communion, no less than worship, is of its essence. Joyous fruition is its proper end. This is true of all Love's quests, whether the Beloved be human or divine....But there is no sense in which it can be said that the desire of love is merely a part of the desire of perfect knowledge."

"There is thus a sharp distinction to be drawn between these two great expressions of life: the energetic love, the passive knowledge." Love, this dynamic impulse inherent in all living things, "is almost wholly the business of will, but of will stimulated by emotion; for willful action of every kind, however intellectual it may seem, is always the result of interest, and interest involves feeling. We act because we feel we want to; feel we must. Whether the inspiring

force be a mere preference or an overwhelming urge, our impulse to 'do' is a synthesis of determination and desire." All man's achievements are the result of this drive, never of mere thought.

Underhill continues: "Aristotle said, 'The intellect by itself moves nothing,' and modern psychology has but affirmed this law. Hence (man's) quest of Reality is never caused, though it may be greatly assisted, by the intellectual aspect of his consciousness, for the reasoning powers as such have little initiative....They stay at home, dissecting and arranging matter that comes to hand, and do not adventure beyond their own region in search of food. Thought does not penetrate far into an object in which the self feels no interest--i.e., towards which she does not experience a movement of attraction, of desire--for interest is the only method known to us of arousing the will, and securing the fixity of attention necessary to any intellectual process."

"None think for long about anything for which they do not care; that is to say, which does not touch some aspect of their emotional life. They may hate it, love it, fear it want it; but they must have some feeling about it. Feeling is the tentacle we stretch out to the world of things."

I would like to look at another vein of Underhill's work, one that moves closer to the main subject of her book: mysticism. For those who try to tabulate the steps in our spiritual journey, she has this to say: "we are gradually forced to the conclusion that the so-called 'degrees of orison (prayer)' so neatly tabulated by ascetic writers are largely artificial and symbolic: that the process which they profess to describe is really, like life itself, one and continuous--not a stairway but a slope--and the parts into which they break it up diagrammatic."

Nonetheless, Underhill says some arrangement is necessary. "Some diagram, however, some set scheme, the writer on introversion must have, if he is to describe with lucidity the normal development of the contemplative consciousness. She offers the following: "Recollection, Quiet, and Contemplation, then, answer to the order in which the mystic's powers unfold." Meditation goes side by side with the Purification of the Self and falls under the "Recollection" heading. "'Quiet' tends to be characteristic of Illumination." "'Contemplation' proper--at any rate in its higher forms--is most fully experienced by those who have attained, or nearly, the Unitive Way." It is interesting to note that others have called them the Purgative, the Illuminative, and the Unitive Ways.

In attempting to give flesh and blood to academic descriptions, I cite certain excerpts from Underhill's chapter nine, "The Dark Night of the Soul." She says "the mystic, like other persons of genius, is man first and artist afterwards....Being, not Doing, is the first aim of the mystic; and hence should be the first interest of the student of mysticism."

Being is one, which is the reality the mystic must accept. Easier said than done, for it necessitates the death of self. Underhill: "It is clear that so drastic a process of unselfing is not likely to take place without stress. It is the negative aspect of 'deification' in which the self, deprived of 'perception, knowledge, will, work, self-seeking'--the I, the Me, the Mine--loses itself, denies itself, unforms itself, drawing 'ever nearer' to the One, till 'nothing is to be seen but a ground which rests upon itself'--the ground of the soul, in which it has union with God."

"The 'mystic death' or Dark Night is therefore an aspect or incident of the transition from multiplicity to Unity; of the mergence and union of the soul with the Absolute which is the whole object of the mystical evolution of man....No transmutation without fire, say the alchemists: No cross, no crown, says the Christian....The act of complete surrender then, which is the term of the Dark Night, has given the self its footing in Eternity: it's abandonment of the old centers of consciousness has permitted movement towards the new." In closing Underhill's work, she stresses that the Dark Night is "not as a series of specific moods and events, but as a phase of growth largely conditioned by individual temperament." It is the remaking of one's consciousness, with "temperamental reactions to the ceaseless travail of his deeper self."

## **B. WILLIAM JAMES: THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

American scholar, William James (1842-1910), wrote an outstanding work, THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE, in which he surveys and summarizes the varied expressions stemming from the human religious impulse. He was professor of psychology and of philosophy at Harvard University. Here I take the chapter in his book entitled "Mysticism." He says that mystical states in general assert a pretty distinct drift that point in definite philosophical directions. "One of these directions is optimism, and the other is monism. We pass into mystical states from out of ordinary consciousness as from a less into a more, as from smallness into a vastness, and at the same time as from an unrest to a rest. We feel them as reconciling, unifying states....In them the unlimited absorbs the limits and peacefully closes the account."

As a contrast to these positive assertions, James cites Dionysius the Areopagite, whom he calls "the fountain-head of Christian mysticism." This ancient Christian theologian describes the absolute truth in negatives exclusively: "The cause of all things is neither soul nor intellect; nor has it imagination, opinion, or reason, or intelligence; nor is it reason or intelligence; nor is it spoken or thought....It is neither science nor truth. It is not even royalty or wisdom; not one; not unity; not divinity or goodness; not even spirit as we know it," etc., ad libitum. "But these qualifications are denied by Dionysius," says James, "not because the truth falls short of them, but because it so infinitely excels them. It is above them."

"Thus come the paradoxical expressions that so abound in mystical writings. As when Eckhart tells of the still desert of the Godhead, 'where never was seen difference, neither Father, Son, nor Holy Ghost, where there is no one at home, yet where the spark of the soul is more at peace than in itself.'"

I would like to take a long quote from James that so adequately expresses the mystical state and so well points out its similar contours from culture to culture:

"In Paul's language, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Only when I become as nothing can God enter in and no difference between his life and mine remain outstanding."

"This overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences in climate or creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think, and which brings it about that the mystical classics have, as has been said, neither birthday nor native land. Perpetually telling of the unity of man with God, their speech antedates languages, and they do not grow old.

"That art Thou!" say the Upanishads, and the Vedantists add: 'Not a part, not a mode of That, but identically That, that absolute Spirit of the world.' 'As pure water poured into pure water remains the same, thus O Gautama, is the Self of a thinker who knows. Water in water, fire in fire, ether in ether, no one can distinguish them: likewise a man whose mind has entered into the Self.' 'Every man,' says the Sufi Guishan-Raz, 'whose heart is no longer shaken by any doubt, knows with certainty that there is no being save only One....In his divine majesty the ME, and WE, the THOU, are not found, for in One there can be no distinction. Every being who is annulled and entirely separated from himself, hears resound outside of him this voice and this echo: I AM GOD: he has an eternal way of existing and is no longer subject to death.' In the vision of God, says Plotinus, 'What sees is not our reason, but something prior and superior to our reason....He who thus sees does not properly see, does not distinguish or imagine two things. He changes, he ceases to be himself, preserves nothing of himself. Absorbed in God, he makes but one with him, like a center of a circle coinciding with another circle.' 'Here,' writes Suso, 'the spirit dies, and yet is all alive in the marvels of the Godhead...and is lost in the stillness of the glorious dazzling obscurity and the naked simple unity. It is in this modeless WHERE that the

highest bliss is to be found.' 'I am as great as God,' sings Angelus Silesius again, 'He is as small as I; He cannot be over me, I cannot be under him.'"

The reference to a circle in the above passage reminded me of St. Bonaventure's image of God, which, I hope, I'm quoting correctly: "God is like a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere."

### **C. ALDOUS HUXLEY: THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY**

As I near the end of this spiritual enterprise. I can think of no better or more comprehensive a work that embraces so much of what has been said than Aldous Huxley's THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY. It is particularly apt in that it breaks down into twenty-seven chapters the wisdom of the ages. I will examine only his Introduction and the first two chapters, which I think are adequate for our purpose here, but I highly recommend the whole book for constant reading and reflection because it is such a famous and impressive study.

His opening words follow, which tell why it is called the perennial philosophy. "Philosophia perennis--the phrase was coined by Leibniz; but the thing--the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being--the thing is immemorial and universal."

Huxley goes on to crack open the nutshell he has just given us. "Knowledge is a function of being. When there is a change in the being of the knower, there is a corresponding change in the nature and amount of knowing....Nor are changes in the knower's physiological or intellectual being the only ones to affect his knowledge. What we know depends also on what, as moral beings, we choose to make ourselves. 'Practice,' in the words of William James, 'may change our theoretical horizon, and this in a twofold way: it may lead into new worlds and secure new powers. Knowledge we could never attain, remaining what we are, may be attainable in consequence of higher powers and a higher life, which we may morally achieve.' To put the matter more succinctly, 'Blessed are the poor in heart, for they shall see God.' And the same idea has been expressed by the Sufi poet, Jalal-uddin Rumi, in terms of a scientific metaphor: 'The astrolabe of the mysteries of God is love.'

"The Perennial Philosophy is primarily concerned with the one divine Reality....But the nature of this one Reality is such that it cannot be directly and immediately apprehended except by those who have chosen to fulfill certain conditions, making themselves loving, pure in heart,

and poor in spirit. Why should this be so? We do not know....The self-validating certainty of direct awareness cannot in the very nature of things be achieved except by those equipped with the moral 'astrolabe of God's mysteries.' If one is not oneself a sage or saint, the best thing one can do, in the field of metaphysics, is to study the works of those who were, and who, because they had modified their merely human mode of being, were capable of a more than merely human kind and amount of knowledge." For the sake of brevity, I have just given in abridged form the Introduction to Huxley's book.

In his first chapter, "That art Thou," he continues with descriptions of this transcendental knowledge and of how it may come to the mystics. "The doctrine that is to be illustrated in this section belongs to autology rather than psychology--to the science, not of the personal ego, but of that eternal Self in the depth of particular, individualized selves, and identical with, or at least akin to, the divine Ground. Based upon the direct experience of those who have fulfilled the necessary conditions of such knowledge, this teaching is expressed most succinctly in the Sanskrit formula, TAT TVAM ASI ('THAT ART THOU'): the Atman, or immanent eternal Self, is one with Brahman, the Absolute Principle of all existence; and the last end of every human being is to discover the fact for himself, to find out Who he really is....Only the transcendent, the completely other, can be immanent without being modified by the becoming of that in which it dwells. The Perennial Philosophy teaches that it is desirable and indeed necessary to know the spiritual Ground of things, not only within the soul, but also outside in the world and beyond world and soul, in its transcendent otherness--'in heaven.'

Huxley next quotes William Law (1686-1761), an Anglican priest who was deprived of his fellowship at Cambridge University when his conscience would not allow him to take an oath backing the new government. Law said that the faculties of understanding, will and memory can only reach after God, but cannot be the place of His habitation in us. But there is a root or depth in us from whence spring all these faculties. "That depth is called the centre, the fund or bottom of the soul. This depth is the unity, the eternity...of the soul, for it is so infinite that nothing can satisfy it or give it rest but the infinity of God."

Huxley continues, saying that the philosophy of the Upanishads reappears, developed and enriched, in the Bhagavad-Gita, and was finally systematized in the ninth century of our era by Shankara. He quotes several passages from Shankara's verified treatise, VIVEKA-CHUDAMANI (THE CREST JEWEL OF WISDOM): "The nature of the one Reality must be known by one's own clear spiritual perception; it cannot be known through a pandit (learned man). Similarly the form of the moon can only be known through one's own eyes. How can it be known through others?...Liberation cannot be achieved except by the perception of the identity

of the individual spirit with the universal Spirit....The wise man is one who understands that the essence of Brahman and of Atman is Pure Consciousness, and who realizes their absolute identity. The identity of Brahman and Atman is affirmed in hundreds of sacred texts...."

There are also Taoist formulations of the Perennial Philosophy, and our pathfinder quotes from one of the great classics of Taoist literature, the Book of Chuang Tzu: "Do not ask whether the principle is in this or in that; it is in all beings....we apply to it the epithets of supreme, universal, total....All proceeds from It and is under its influence. It is in all things, but is not identical with beings, for it is neither differentiated nor limited."

"From Taoism we pass to Mahayana Buddhism which, in the Far East, came to be so closely associated with Taoism, borrowing and bestowing until the two came at last to be fused in what is known as Zen. The Lankavatara Sutra, from which the following extract is taken, was the scripture which the founder of Zen Buddhism expressly recommended to his first disciples: "The self realized in your inmost consciousness appears in its purity; this is the Tathagata-garbha (literally, Buddha-womb), which is not the realm of those given over to mere reasoning...Pure in its own nature and free from the category of finite and infinite, Universal Mind is the undefiled Buddha-womb.

The next quote, from Yung-chia Ta shih, expands this realized self: "One Nature, perfect and circulates in all natures, One Reality, all comprehensive, contains within itself all realities, The one Moon reflects itself wherever there is a sheet of water, And all moons in the waters are embraced within the one Moon....The great gate of charity is wide open, with no obstacles before it."

Here Huxley makes a personal observation: "I am not competent, nor is this the place to discuss the doctrinal differences between Buddhism and Hinduism. Let it suffice to point out that, when he insisted that human beings are by nature 'non-Atman,' the Buddha was evidently speaking about the personal self and not the universal Self."

Before leaving India, I would like to make some personal observations about Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi defined his life as a diligent and faithful "pursuit of Truth." It was a conviction opposed to the belief that one's faith holds all the answers, and that one can thereby "possess the Truth." Truth, according to Gandhi, is the realization of the Self. This ultimate stage of life can be reached only by a difficult road paved with sincerity and humility.

He admired the non-violent attitude of Jesus in preaching to turn the other cheek, and thought the Sermon on the Mount was the greatest sermon ever. By following its teaching, he is reported to have said, "we shall have solved the problems...of the whole world."

Someone objected saying that we do not know the historical accuracy of the Sermon. Gandhi replied that its historicity is not an issue. Then the objection was furthered by the statement that we cannot be sure of the historicity of Jesus himself. Gandhi is reported to have said that whether Jesus lived or not does not matter. These are the words one chooses to live by or not. They were to be for him the standard to which he held himself and thought that the whole world would benefit if others did the same.

"In India, as in Persia, Mohammadan thought came to be enriched by the doctrine that God is immanent as well as transcendent....It is a significant historical fact that the poet-saint Kabir is claimed as a co-religionist both by Moslems and Hindus. The politics of those whose goal is beyond time are always pacific, as shown by Kabir: "Behold but One in all things; it is the second that leads you astray."

Here Huxley makes the point that language is often wiser than the wisest who speak it. Sometimes it locks up truths which were once well known, but have been forgotten. Or it holds the germs of truths which were not plainly discerned. For example, the root meaning of 'two' connotes badness. "The Greek prefix dys- (as in dyspepsia) and the Latin dis- (as in dishonorable) are both derived from 'duo'....Traces of that 'second which leads you astray' can be found in 'dubious,' 'doubt' and Zweifel--for to doubt is to be double-minded." American slang has its 'two-timers.' "Obscurely and unconsciously wise, our language confirms the findings of the mystics and proclaims the essential badness of division--a word, incidentally, in which our old enemy 'two' makes another decisive appearance.

Among the Sufis and the Christians the concern is with the human mind and the divine essence. As demonstration, Huxley offers a series of famous texts:

"My Me is God, nor do I recognize any other Me except my God Himself"--St Catherine of Genoa.

"In those respects in which the soul is unlike God, it is also unlike itself"--St. Bernard.

"I went from God to God, until they cried from me to me, 'O thou I'"--Bayazid of Bistun. One time someone knocked on the Sufi



saint's door and cried, 'Is Bayazid here?' Bayazid answered, 'Is anybody here except God?'

"To gauge the soul we must gauge it with God, for the Ground of God and the Ground of the Soul are one and the same"--Eckhart

"The spirit possesses God essentially in naked nature, and God the spirit"--Ruysbroeck

"For though she sink all sinking in the oneness of divinity, she never touches bottom. For it is of the very essence of the soul that she is powerless to plumb the depths of her creator. And here one cannot speak of the soul anymore, for she has lost her nature yonder in the oneness of divine essence. There she is no more called soul, but is called immeasurable being"--Eckhart

The "Inner Light," often used by spiritual writers, gained clearer formulation in the writings of Quakers. William Penn founded the colony of Penn's Woods (Pennsylvania) for his followers to freely practice their faith. "There is something nearer to us than Scriptures," he wrote, "to wit, the Word in the heart from which all Scriptures come."

"Goodness needeth not to enter into the soul, for it is there already, only it is unperceived"--Theologica Germanica.

To summarize what many of these mystics are saying, Huxley offers intermittent comments: "It is because we don't know Who we are, we are unaware that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us, that we behave in the generally silly, the often insane, the sometimes criminal ways that are so characteristically human."

"When the Ten Thousand things are viewed in their oneness, we return to the Origin and remain where we have always been"--Sen T'sen.

"Plato speaks in the same sense when he says, in the REPUBLIC, that 'the virtue of wisdom more than anything else contains a divine element which always remains.'"

Huxley explains how our divine heritage is often supplanted by our too human endeavors: "Our perceptions and our understanding are directed, in large measure, by our will. We are aware of, and we think about, the things which, for one reason or other, we want to see

and understand. Where there's a will there is always an intellectual way. The capacities of the human mind are almost indefinitely great. Whatever we will to do, whether it be to come to the unitive knowledge of the Godhead, or to manufacture self-propelled flame-throwers--that we are able to do, provided always that the willing be sufficiently intense and sustained."

As immediately above, and as the following excerpts from ensuing chapters will show, Huxley often underscores the role of the will in this upward journey.

"When the will, the moment it feels any joy in sensible things rises upwards in that joy to God, and when sensible things move it to pray, it should not neglect them, it should make use of them for so holy an exercise; because sensible things, in these conditions subserve the end for which God created them, namely to be occasions for making Him better known and loved"--St. John of the Cross.

"The creature has nothing else in its power but the free use of its will, and its free will hath no other power but that of concurring with, or resisting, the working of God in nature. The creature with its free will can bring nothing into being, nor make any alteration in the working of nature; it can only change its own state or place in the working of nature, and so feel or find something in its state that it did not feel or find before"--William Law.

"It was when the Great Way declined that human kindness and morality arose"--Lao Tzu."Chinese verbs are tenseness. This statement as to a hypothetical event in history refers at the same time to the present and future....The individualized will and the superficial intelligence are to be used for the purpose of recapturing the old animal relation to Tao, but on a higher, spiritual level. The goal is perpetual inspiration from sources beyond the personal self; and the means are 'human kindness and morality,' leading to the charity, which is unitive knowledge of Tao, as at once the Ground and Logos."

"Your life is not your own. It is the delegated harmony of God. Your individuality is not your own. It is the delegated adaptability to God"--Chuang Tzu.

"Grace is necessary to salvation, free will equally so--but grace in order to give salvation, free will in order to receive it. Therefore we should not attribute part of the good work to grace and part to free will; it is performed in its entirety by the common and inseparable action of both; entirely by grace, entirely by free will, but springing from the first to the second"--St. Bernard.

"Two students from the University of Paris came to visit Ruysbroeck and asked him to furnish them with a short phrase or motto, which might serve them as a rule of life. Ruysbroeck answered. 'You are as holy as you will to be.'"

"The will is that which has all power; it makes heaven and it makes hell; for there is no hell but where the will of the creature is turned from God, nor any heaven but where the will of the creature worketh with God"--William Law.

As a final comment on free will, Huxley connects it with the virtues of the Eightfold Path, whose first branch is Right Belief. He goes on: "the root and primal cause of bondage is wrong belief, or ignorance--an ignorance, let us remember, which is never completely invincible, but always, in the last analysis, a matter of will. If we don't know, it is because we find it more convenient not to know. Original ignorance is the same as original sin."

Before leaving this first chapter, "That Art Thou," Huxley offers comment on thinking and awareness: "In the modern world...the child tends to grow out of his direct awareness of the one Ground of things; for analytical thought is fatal to the intuitions of integral thinking, whether on the 'psychic' or the spiritual level....But direct awareness of the 'eternally complete consciousness,' which is the ground of the material world, is a possibility occasionally actualized by some human beings at almost any stage of their own personal development, from childhood to old age, and at any period of their race's history."

I would like to enter a comment here made by Bede Griffiths when he pointed out the difference between a child raised in the west, and one born in India. He said that during the forty years he lived in England, whenever he asked a child, "Where is God?" the child always pointed up to the sky or heaven. During his forty years in India, whenever he asked the same question of a child, the youth always pointed inwards or towards his heart.

Huxley introduces his second chapter, "The Nature of the Ground," with the following: "Our starting point has been the psychological doctrine, 'That art thou.' The question that now quite naturally presents itself is a metaphysical one: What is the That to which the thou can discover itself to be akin?"

"To this the fully developed Perennial Philosophy has at all times and in all places given fundamentally the same answer. The divine Ground of all existence is a spiritual Absolute, ineffable in terms of discursive thought, but (in certain circumstances) susceptible of being directly experienced and realized by the human being. This Absolute is the God-without-form of Hindu and Christian mystical phraseology. The last end of man, the ultimate reason for human existence, is unitive knowledge of the divine Ground--the knowledge that can come only to those who are prepared to 'die to self' and so make room, as it were, for God. Out of any given generation of men and women very few will achieve the final end of human existence; but the

opportunity for coming to unitive knowledge will, in one way or another, continually be offered until all sentient beings realize Who in fact we are."

The Absolute Ground of all existence has, however, a personal aspect. Huxley points out how the inexhaustible riches of the divine nature can be obtained by analyzing, word by word, the invocation with which the Lord's Prayer begins. "Our Father who art in heaven" means that God is ours--ours in the same intimate sense that our consciousness and life are ours. It also means that God is the Father of each and everyone of us, whether it is friend or foe, whether it suits us or not.

"But as well as immanently ours, God is also transcendently the personal Father, who loves his creatures and to whom love and allegiance are owed by them in return....And, finally God's being is 'in heaven;' the divine nature is other than, and incommensurable with, the nature of the creatures in whom God is immanent. That is why we can attain to the unitive knowledge of God only when we become in some measure Godlike, only when we permit God's kingdom to come by making our own creaturely kingdom go." I think a quote from St. John of the Cross is fitting here: "One of the greatest favours bestowed on the soul transiently in this life is to enable it to see so distinctly and to feel so profoundly that it cannot comprehend God at all."

Life works better "when the transcendent, omnipotent personal God is regarded as also a loving Father. The sincere worship of such a God changes character as well as conduct, and does something to modify consciousness. But the complete transformation of consciousness, which is 'enlightenment,' 'deliverance,' 'salvation,' comes only when God is thought of as the Perennial Philosophy affirms Him to be--immanent as well as transcendent, supra-personal as well as personal--and when religious practices are adapted to this conception."

Perhaps the most important word in the invocation of the Lord's Prayer is "art." God IS. He exists everywhere at all times, within and without. "Who is God? I can think of no better answer than, He who is. Nothing is more appropriate to the eternity which God is"--St. Bernard.

In talking about the Ground of the spiritual Absolute, we should also consider the indispensable faculty which can ground the human in his or her eventual partnering with the divine: awareness. "The ground in which the multifarious and time-bound psyche is rooted is a simple, timeless awareness. By making ourselves pure in heart and poor in spirit we can discover and be identified with this awareness. In the spirit we not only have, but are, the unitive knowledge of the divine Ground."

"Analogously, God in time is grounded in the eternal now of the modeless Godhead. It is in the Godhead that things, lives and minds have their being; it is through God that they have their becoming--a becoming whose goal and purpose is to return to the eternity of the Ground."

Huxley offers a quotation with explanation from Fr. J. J. Olier, S. S.: "The holy light of faith is so pure that, compared with it, particular lights are but impurities; and even ideas of the saints, of the Blessed Virgin, and the sight of Jesus Christ in his humanity are impediments in the way of the sight of God in his purity." Fr. Olier, "a man of saintly life and one of the most influential religious teachers of the seventeenth century, is speaking here about a state of consciousness to which few people ever come."

Fr. Olier knew, however, as a director of souls, that it was folly to recommend the worship of God-without-form to persons who are in a condition to understand only the personal and the incarnate aspects of the divine Ground. In fact, he recommended certain penitents to read St. Gertrude's revelations of the incarnate and even physiological aspects of the divinity.

Father Olier founded the Society of St. Sulpice, named after the parish church in Paris where he was pastor. Their work was to train and educate seminarians for the diocesan priesthood. The Society established the first seminary in the United States, St Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, MD, in 1791.

Huxley closes this chapter, "The Nature of the Ground," with a few directives that may be considered cautions. He says that "we must be patient with the linguistic eccentricities of those who are compelled to describe one order of experience in terms of a symbol-system whose relevance is to the facts of another and quite different order." He adds that we can never hope to describe the Absolute Reality, even though it is possible for us directly to apprehend it. His closing sentence: "Direct knowledge OF the Ground cannot be had except by union, and union can be achieved only by annihilation of the self-regarding ego, which is the barrier separating the "thou" from the "That."

## CHAPTER IX

### NOTES ON MYSTICISM

At this point, after looking at how various writers and mystics decipher and explain love, I would like to say something about mysticism. I believe that love is behind our desire to know. We have, I think, a primal urge to be one with the object of our mind. I say this because I believe in the deep truth of what Kabir, (c 1440-1518), the Sufi mystic, has enunciated for us: "Behold but one in all things; it is the second that leads you astray."

Love is our true nature, finding expression as life and consciousness. Consciousness is limitless in its breadth and depth. It can operate on many levels. It is marked by a certain nimbleness of perception: it can go above or below, outside or within; it can enter itself or withdraw from itself. I can experience and witness that experience at the same time. Simultaneously I am a part and the whole. I must take care not to assume that what I think and say captures reality as it truly is.

Consciousness alone is the constant feature of all experience. Deep consciousness is the only thing that never leaves me. This consciousness is the real Absolute Self. It is what I am. And since nothing is enough until I am enough, the only thing that can satisfy me is direct and personal experience of what I am. "That art Thou" of the Upanishads needs also to be seen and experienced as I AM, for all is one. The I acknowledges what already is. It is all of this and what is beyond all of this. Yet these two are one. True Self-awareness is Absolute, not related to anything. It is self-effulgent, known only from within.

In the higher states, consciousness does not need an object, and there is no need to look for one. Witnessing consciousness suffices, or as it has been called, "choiceless awareness." Consciousness turned in on itself is the beginning of the end of duality. The spiritual practitioner is not interested in proving how he/she got to a higher state. The person knows when she is there; it is such a contrast to where she was before.

The words of Ken Wilber come to mind: "That simple witnessing awareness...is Spirit itself, is the enlightened mind itself, is Buddha-nature itself, is God itself, IN ITS ENTIRETY....And thus, the ultimate state of consciousness--intrinsic Spirit itself--IS NOT HARD TO REACH BUT IMPOSSIBLE TO AVOID." To realize such a state seems to call for endless evolution on my part. And yet, I might be making something complex that, in reality, is very simple. Wilber explains: "People sometimes have a hard time understanding Spirit because they try to see it as an object of awareness or an object of comprehension. But the ultimate

reality is not anything seen, it is the Seer. Spirit is not an object; it is radical, ever-present Subject." So Spirit can never be a thought, but IT can be realized as presence.

One has a sense of things happening within oneself. Presence creates a sympathetic vibration. One may have a clear awareness that all effort has ceased. Or it could be an unclear holistic body sense. It may be a sweet charged emptiness that one knows intimately but cannot put into words or thoughts. One may experience oneself as a solid immovable block. Or one may experience a flow of energy back and forth between the Great Unknown and herself. One may be aware that at almost every turn the ego enters the picture. One may see that seer, seeing and seen are one.

Much happens when I clearly see that thoughts are just thoughts; they are not me. The same holds for feelings and body sensations. They are objects as the watch on my wrist is an object. The more I get entrenched as the witness watching these fleeting happenings, the fabric of the thoughts breaks down and the thinking pattern changes by itself.

In my deepest, I am Spirit or Soul or Self. Like God, that depth cannot be thought but it can be loved. It cannot be known because it is the Mystery of God abiding in me as me. My mind and heart nibble to ascertain what it is, which may take eons for its attainment. But there is a faculty or organ of this Self that moves me forward to its realization, and that is the Witness. Since energy follows attention, the more attentive I am to what I experience, the more power there is that flows into the Watcher. This can open floodgates of possibilities, chief of which is openness itself. I need to open to the ever-greater Self that I am becoming. That happens only when I regard other people and other things as part of my Self. The ego is ever ready to enter and side-track the issue, but is doomed to fail in the long run. I like to characterize the enterprise as Openness to the Ever-Greater God.

The more I witness, the closer I move toward the All and toward becoming All. I can move from rare to frequent encounters, from a cloudy sky to sunshine and the wild blue yonder. I can have long periods of pure awareness without thoughts. When I experience this silence, this stillness, this depth, this inconceivable fullness, not just now and then, but permanently abide there, I am liberated and ecstatic.

Once we leave the state of bliss and return to the mind's functioning in its ordinary state, questions can arise. Since there was no object but pure blissful awareness, was that God? And since there was pure love without an object, was that pure Being of Love God? With the absence of all duality in the elevated state, comprehension is unavailable. But when one comes out of that

state of wanting nothing, what else could there be? My personal answer is to stay open to the Ever-Greater God, always a Living Presence, and take possession of whatever you experience.

Or, and more down to earth, I can ask oneself, "How can I be a better lover?" What is here to love? Isn't God everything and everyone? Am I friendly? Do I see the world as a friendly place tailored for my own good, or do I see it otherwise? What matters is people, beginning with loving myself. One knows when one is loving.

A friend of mine said that he got a clear statement from God or his higher consciousness speaking to him in meditation, saying, "How can I be kind to the world if you are not?" He didn't care whether it was God or his higher consciousness speaking. He felt it was a single declaration, affirming that God and his own consciousness were not two but one in a common enterprise. It was up to him to be kind to the world, and if he wasn't, God could not. He recalled what he had learned early in his spiritual pursuit: "God created the world without us, but He will not save it without us."

Love sings a loving song. For someone musically inclined, that can serve to get beyond the ordinary mind. I'm not so oriented, but I love music and the emotional change it brings. When I first heard "Young at Heart," I was enchanted and listened to it over and over again. Without trying, I soon had the song and melody memorized. It just resonated with me. It was uplifting in heart and mind. Arousing love in me for something so simple was enough to serve its purpose. But the captivation made me go deeper. It made me realize how much of oneself can be dedicated to a single goal or purpose. Things thought to be impossible, like a fairy tale, can come true. The mind is pushed beyond its boundaries. "You can go to extremes with impossible schemes. You can laugh when your dreams fall apart at the seams." Life can be more exciting with each passing day, if love is in your heart or on its way. No matter how rich or poor you are, the treasure you hold highest allows you to sacrifice all else on earth, like the pearl of great price that Scripture talks about. No matter how long or short you live, you know you made the right choice. All was sacrificed, accepted, or absorbed for what one chooses to be the best. You become what you love.

No one can free us from the limited self that most of us live in; the person must do it him/herself.

Mysticism is the experience of things as they ought to be and ARE, accompanied by profound understanding and deep love of the same. Since it includes all things, it is a beholding of Oneness. Absolutely nothing is missing. I can know that which answers every question, but



which the intellect cannot comprehend. The mystery of love unifies in a blissful enfolding. I must remember, however, what's mystical to some is reality to others.

A modern Sufi, (Kabir Helminski, whom we examined earlier), says that Sufism is the attribute of those who love. If the purpose of religion, according to the word's original meaning, is to "tie back," couldn't we say that every religion is an attribute of love, its purpose being to tie together or unite the loving believer with his/her God? There are many paths to the same goal. I believe love can take us to the most transcendent states. And everyone's love is different. Being follows love. The arm is free to move in any direction it pleases, but never outside the body. Free will is free to exercise as it will, but never outside God's orbit.

All thought comes out of witnessing. If I stay with the Witness, I cannot be controlled by any thought. Herein lies liberation. Getting free, however, is not the end but the beginning. Watching prevents surrendering to attraction, aversion or delusion. A spark of awareness changes things. The Seer is also a Lover. Love conquers the ego. I don't have to identify with my experience. I can be in it and behold it. Can this sighting and holding be akin to the way God lives and loves? (See Andrew Cohen, EMBRACING HEAVEN AND EARTH, Meditation is a Metaphor for Enlightenment).

It seems at times that the poet experiences the essence of the mystical state, and perhaps expresses it better than the mystic himself. Fortunately, we have the two combined in William Blake (1757-1827). I would like to demonstrate what I mean, and see if you agree. I'm quoting from the opening lines of his poem, "Auguries of Innocence," POETRY AND PROSE OF WILLIAM BLAKE, edited by Geoffrey Keynes, p 118:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour.

I feel that Blake had to experience this in order to say it so succinctly.

We know of great creative endeavors, like Michelangelo's painting on the ceiling and walls of the Sistine Chapel, Shakespeare's great plays of tragedy and comedy, the magnificent cathedrals of Medieval Europe. The genius of these artists and architects found expression in what they created. We can be the genius of creating a pristine masterpiece by going within to transform our consciousness. It took Michelangelo years of lying on his back and painting in that position to let us look with awe at his incomparable work. Shakespeare took much of his lifetime

to give us such pleasure and insight into human nature. Many times the cathedrals took centuries to build, with hundreds of workers never seeing their finished product. All of these endure for a time, and then pass, but our soul lives on forever. We should not let any obstacle or setback stand in our way of shaping such an invaluable wonder as our own immortal Spirit. Spirit rhapsodizes and eternalizes. All we need is a mind and a heart and love. Rabindranath Tagore, who attempted a rebirth of the Upanishad ideals in India, and received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913, wrote, "Love is not a mere sentiment. It is the ultimate truth that lies at the heart of creation."