

The Education of a Messiah

A Light-Hearted Report

by
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Free Edition from OBOOKO

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Cover Image: Star-Forming Region LH 95 in the Large Magellanic Cloud

Cover Credit: NASA, ESA, and the Hubble Heritage Team (STScI/AURA)-ESA/Hubble
Collaboration

This book is dedicated to Jane Roberts, Robert Butts, and Seth.

I want to thank Robert Butts, the husband of Jane Roberts, for his permission to quote
from Jane's Seth material.

Author's Note

If you have read *Prelude To A Golden Age* or will read it, you should know that this book is the novelization of the screenplay for *Prelude To A Golden Age*. As is true with most screenplays derived from books, substantial changes have been made to the story. The main changes are that the characters Daniel and Paul have been combined into one character—Paul—and Michael is called Daniel. Also, the point of view has changed from omniscient to Ato in the first person with a twist, as Ato is omniscient when he wants to be.

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“Commissioners, sirs, may I remind you that I haven’t finished the Regs 225-36 Assessment of Methods and Results?”

“That’s OK. Just give us the...what do their accountants call it...the ‘quick and dirty’ report. But imagine you’re speaking to them, not to us.”

“To their accountants?”

“No. The humans.”

[Part One: The Messiah Meets His Master](#)

The Valkarians

“Prepare messiah #18,432 for planetary service.”

It began as a routine training assignment, which we usually complete in the dream state, but when the Valkarians reached Earth sooner than we expected, I had to get my boots, I mean my sandals, back on the ground.

Their black, oval-shaped spaceship materialized above the valley of Megiddo in Israel at sunrise on Sunday, March 15. The Valkarians arrived on that day because John, their advisor on Earth culture, had told them it was the day humans would celebrate the luck of the Irish with St. Patrick’s Day parades. But St. Patrick was the guy who chased the snakes *out* of Ireland.

Within a few hours, thousands of people had come to Megiddo to see the spaceship, which hung over the valley like a dark cloud. In the afternoon, the Valkarians, using their superior technology, interrupted all TV and Internet transmissions with this caption in white letters on a blue background: “Standby for an important announcement.”

A moment later, a middle-aged man in slacks and a sweater, who could have passed for an American or a European, appeared on the world’s TV and computer screens. He was sitting on a sofa that was next to a fireplace with a crackling fire. Turning toward the camera, he said, “Greetings, people of earth! I am Almar from your neighbor in space, the planet Honam. We have come to tell you that you are on a path that will lead to the end of life as you know it. But like your great President FDR said, the only thing you need to fear is fear itself. In one week, we will present a plan before your United Nations to help you save the earth.”

Over the next six days, the Valkarian spaceship made picturesque stops above the Taj Mahal in Agra, India; Tiananmen Square in Beijing; St. Basil’s Cathedral in Moscow; the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Great Sphinx of Giza in Egypt (on the same day); Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro; and the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan in Mexico.

Their world tour ended in New York City on the morning of March 22, when they parked their spaceship above the UN Secretariat building. By noon, the ship was casting a shadow over all the UN buildings while thousands of people waited below for something to happen. I was surprised the people weren’t being more careful, but maybe they hadn’t

seen the movie *Independence Day*.

Early the next morning, two men, a fortyish, tall black man—the previously mentioned John—and Almar, stepped out of an elevator in the forward area of the ship's hold and began walking toward two desks about thirty meters away.

Sitting at the desks were androids. The androids were two and a half meters tall and had many of the features of men. But they were incapable of smiling, laughing, crying, etc. The permanent expression on their faces could best be described as contempt or disdain.

When John and Almar were a few meters from the desks, the android on the left looked up and said, "As you know, Terrak wants to try diplomacy first. But remember, don't tell them who we are."

"You have one earth month to get the humans to accept our terms," the android on the right said. "If you fail, we'll use methods that worked on your planet. Dismissed."

As John and Almar walked away, the android on the right said, "Negotiating with men only makes them harder to control. When will Terrak learn?"

Nodding his head, the android on the left said, "The time to talk is after they are on their knees."

An hour later, a shuttlecraft carrying John and Almar landed on the roof of the General Assembly building. They were met there by UN security people, who escorted them to the General Assembly Hall, which was packed with delegates and VIPs.

After they were introduced by the Secretary-General and received polite applause, John said, "No planet in the galaxy can equal the earth in its beauty, diversity of species, varieties of climates and geography, or richness of cultures. The earth is unique."

The audience clapped and cheered.

After the audience had quieted down, Almar added, "However, your planet has many problems. We'll help you solve them if you get rid of your weapons of mass destruction and create a world government."

There were cries of "Absurd!" and "Impossible!" and other things not so polite. Then a delegate stood up and shouted, "Why? To make it easier for you to kill us?"

"We have come in peace," Almar said.

"Why do you look like us and speak English so well?" another delegate demanded. "Maybe you're not really from space."

"We believe our ancestors came from earth," John said. "And Almar and I have been studying English since we were children."

There were more protests from the audience, which was in an uproar. Finding it impossible to continue, John and Almar returned to the shuttlecraft through the door behind the UN logo.

Perhaps this would be a good time to introduce myself. When the Valkarians arrived on Earth, I was a non-physical personality. Some of you might say I was a ghost, but that's not true. (You may, if you want, call me a ghostwriter, but I have better things to do with my time than hanging around old buildings and scaring people.) In my previous lifetime in the nineteenth century, I'd been a Tibetan Buddhist monk of the Gelug tradition, also known as the Yellow Hat sect. This is the same sect the Dalai Lama belongs to.

As a result of long and continuous effort in that lifetime, I achieved enlightenment. One of the perks of enlightenment is omniscience, but that doesn't mean I have infinite knowledge and wisdom at my fingertips. I can know what people are thinking and see what they are doing, but I have to specifically desire that information to get it. It's not like picking apples from a tree.

After the scene at the UN, I decided to consult with Silva, my superior. Silva and I belong to a cosmic alliance called the 24 civilizations. The mission of the 24 is to promote peaceful development throughout the galaxy.

We met in a dimension where we appeared as points of light.

"The Valkarians have reached Earth," I said, using an inner sense similar to what you call telepathy.

"I know. Is the Chosen One ready to begin his service?"

"He needs more training."

"Then you'll have to get him up to speed quickly."

"I'm going to teach him personally."

"How will he find you?"

"His impulses will lead him to me."

"Excellent. Let's meet again in one Earth month."

The Three Musketeers

The next morning, the Valkarians ordered John to visit Paul Heart, a professor of marine biology at a college in San Diego, California. They told him to find out what Paul knew about dolphins and to learn if he could communicate with them.

John telephoned Paul and arranged to meet him that evening at his home, which was on a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

After talking to John, Paul returned to his desk, where he'd been working on an article he hoped would be published in *The New York Times*. Paul believed that if scientists could make people understand that cetaceans—dolphins, porpoises, and whales—were intelligent, experienced emotions, and had complex social interactions, they would support cetacean rights, especially their right to safety from fishing practices. Besides the intentional killing of dolphins by the Japanese and whales by the Norwegians, Icelanders, and Japanese, thousands of cetaceans died every year in fishing nets.

Paul looked at the poster on the wall above his desk. It had a photo of a grey whale calf circling a processing ship as its mother was being cut up on the deck. That calf would die of starvation, he thought for the thousandth time. Thank God the grey whale hunts had been outlawed!

Paul couldn't concentrate, so he got up from his computer and looked out the window at the seagulls circling the beach. Recently, he'd been feeling there was something missing in his life, but he couldn't put his finger on it. He was a popular teacher and had made important contributions to dolphin research. He had a beautiful home and more money than he needed to live comfortably. He felt he should be satisfied

with his achievements, but he wasn't.

He thought of his teenage years, when he'd been inspired by the mystery of life to ask questions about things other people took for granted. Had that fire died in him or had it just been allowed to burn too low? Or had he lost the thrill of adventure in the demands of academic life? He wondered if his restlessness was tied to the arrival of the spaceship and thought his meeting with the alien John might help resolve it.

John, wearing a baseball cap and sunglasses to hide his identity, flew to the San Diego airport on a private jet. From there he took a taxi to Paul's home.

After the taxi had driven off, John removed the cap and sunglasses and noticed that Paul lived in a ranch style house. He had studied American home styles before he left Honam and from its long, low shape and large windows, he thought the house was built in the 1950s. The yard had a rock garden that reminded him of the *karesansui* garden at Ryoan-ji that he had seen in a book about Japanese monasteries.

The front door opened and a heavyset man walked out. John was surprised by the man's appearance; intuitively, he'd expected Paul to be much thinner.

Sensing John's confusion, the man smiled and said, "And I thought you were my drug dealer. Slim will be out in a minute. I'm his older brother Daniel. Why don't you join me on the deck?"

Daniel led John through the living room and past a sliding glass door to a wooden platform attached to the back of the house. They sat down at a table beneath a large umbrella.

"We just built this. How do you like it?"

"It's nice," John said.

"We still need to stain the wood," Daniel said. "Do you want something to drink?"

"No. I'm fine."

The sliding glass door opened and Paul came out of the house. Paul appeared to be in his mid to late forties and was nearly 170 centimeters tall. He had, as John had thought, a slender build.

"You'll have dinner with us, won't you?" Paul said after they shook hands. "It'll give you a chance to enjoy Daniel's cooking." Paul looked at Daniel, smiled, and added, "He sure does."

"That would be great."

"When will dinner be ready?" Paul asked.

"It won't take long to reheat the lasagna with that laser blaster you've got," Daniel said as he pretended he was firing a gun.

"It uses microwave radiation, not light. I think you've watched too many *Battlestar Galactica* reruns," Paul said.

"When do you want to eat?" Daniel asked as he blew away the imaginary smoke from his imaginary gun and put the weapon in his imaginary holster.

"How about in an hour? I'm going to take John down to see the dolphins, if they're there."

"Aye, aye, sir," Daniel said as he saluted Paul.

Below Paul's house was a small cove with a concrete breakwater on its southern end. The breakwater, which was built during World War II, was about thirty meters long

and five meters wide.

When they reached the cove, the sun had just gone down and the pink-orange sky reflected off the water. Two adult bottlenose dolphins and a pup were swimming in the cove near the breakwater.

“We’re fortunate the dolphins are already here,” Paul said.

The Valkarians have nothing to worry about, John thought, if Paul isn’t aware of the dolphins’ psychic abilities.

They played with the dolphins and discussed Paul’s research. Paul told John he was learning that dolphins were sensitive to the moods and feelings of others, but their language, which they communicated by high-pitched sounds, lacked a large vocabulary. He said he was teaching the dolphins new concepts through visual images and was developing a written language that would allow scientists to record their speech.

When they got back to the house, they found Daniel waiting for them on the deck.

“I rolled a joint with my best weed just for you, John,” Daniel said. “You need to try it if you’re going to say you’ve been to California. California is famous for its marijuana.”

“Be careful with that, John,” Paul said.

Before he lit the joint, Daniel said, “Paul wants me to stop playing tricks on people. So to be fair, I’m going to warn you: This stuff is truth serum. It’s impossible to tell a lie or hide your feelings after you’ve smoked it.”

During dinner, which was eaten on the deck, John felt comfortable with Paul and Daniel and said things he hadn’t planned to say. He told them about his family and how he’d met his wife. He talked about how the Valkarians had taken over his planet and slaughtered whole villages with their robot armies. As you can imagine, Paul and Daniel were horrified to learn what the Valkarians were capable of.

When they finished eating, Paul said, “How about dessert? I can offer you some good old-fashioned American apple pie.”

“I’ll get it,” Daniel said.

After Daniel had returned with the pie, he asked John, “What’s your planet like?”

“Honam is similar to earth, but smaller. Even our days and seasons and years are like yours. But Honam doesn’t have as much variety in climates and life forms as earth. And my planet’s land area is eighty percent forest because we stopped our population growth in time. Our forests contain many groves of giant redwood, cedar, mahogany, and teak trees that have never been logged.”

“Our rain forests are burning as we speak,” Paul said.

“I know. In our forests we have some magical beings. When I was a boy, I used to play with elves and fairies in a forest near my home.”

“Really!” Daniel said.

“One day, the elves took me to see their king. Their king told me about a prophecy that said I would help save a great planet and at the same time my soul would be healed.”

“Why do you need to be healed?” Daniel asked.

“I feel guilty. I should have fought the Valkarians when they came to Honam instead of letting them enslave my people. And now I’m helping them take over your planet.”

"If you'd fought them, you'd be dead now," Daniel said.

"Maybe that would be better."

"No, you have a mission. The elf king told you so," Daniel said.

"I feel so weak and powerless here. What can I do to save the earth?"

John buried his head in his hands for a few seconds. When he looked up, there were tears in his eyes.

"I think you're worried about your wife and daughter," Paul said. "What are their names?"

"Leia and Cyndi... Paul, do you understand that I was sent here to spy on you?"

"Why do the Valkarians care about my research?"

"My guess is that they think dolphins are involved in a plot against them."

"What are you going to tell them?"

"The truth. That you haven't learned to communicate with dolphins yet."

"Finish the pie," Paul said to Daniel. "I know if I don't offer it to you, you'll take it anyway."

It was quiet for a moment while Daniel ate the last piece of pie.

"What's the purpose of life?" John asked.

Paul looked at Daniel.

"Aristotle, Spinoza, and the Dalai Lama said the purpose of life is to seek happiness," Daniel answered after he quickly swallowed what was in his mouth. "Joseph Campbell said we should follow our bliss. I think what they were all talking about was fulfillment, which comes from being able to pursue your potential and express your abilities. That makes you happy."

"I'm not feeling fulfilled these days," John said.

"Neither am I," Paul said. "Since the arrival of the spaceship, I've felt restless, like I should be doing something else."

"Let's make a pact, a brotherhood," Daniel said. "When I had my gang, we sealed the pact by mixing our blood, but we can put our hands together instead."

Daniel placed his right hand, palm down, in the center of the table and Paul and John placed their right hands on top of his. Then they placed their left hands on top of their right hands.

"Repeat after me: 'One for all. All for one.'"

"'One for all. All for one.'"

"That's the motto of the three Musketeers," Paul said.

"It's also the motto of Switzerland," John said. He added, "I think we'll have some interesting adventures together. By the way, don't tell anyone about the prophecy. The Valkarians would not be pleased if they heard about it. In fact, don't tell anyone about anything I said tonight."

"What happens in my house stays in my house," Paul said.

"I have a joke," Daniel said. "What did the Buddhist monk say to the man selling hot dogs?"

John and Paul shook their heads.

"'Make me one with everything,'" Daniel said. "When the man gave the monk the hot dog, the monk paid him with a twenty dollar bill. The man put the money in his

pocket and said, 'Enjoy your hot dog.'

"The monk said, 'Hey! Where's my change?'"

"The man said, 'Change comes from within.'"

That night, Paul dreamed he was speaking to a small crowd of Chinese. When he awoke in the morning, he didn't remember what he had said, but he did remember the sense of purpose he felt.

He told Daniel about the dream and said, "I have a strong feeling I should go to China."

"Aren't you glad you followed my advice and took a sabbatical?" Daniel said. "I wouldn't say this to anyone, but you can trust your impulses."

Daniel was right about impulses, of course. Most people can't trust their impulses because they've been taught by Western religions and science not to trust themselves: Western religions teach men they're naturally evil and their impulses come from the devil. Science tells men they're the products of millions of years of violence, the best killers in a survival-of-the-fittest world.

But Paul was not like most people. Despite being raised a Catholic and trained to be a scientist, he'd never taken to the ideas of original sin, the devil, or aggression built into his genes. Paul was a maverick and wasn't interested in conforming to popular beliefs. He always had the—what some would call naïve—faith that he lived in a safe universe and that people were inclined to be good. If he didn't have this faith, this report would be about somebody else, because he would be nowhere near being the messiah the world needed at the beginning of the Age of Aquarius.

The Long Road to the Present

Several days later, Daniel drove Paul to the airport.

"I'm going to miss you, little brother," Daniel said after he parked the car outside the terminal. "But I have a feeling you're going to meet someone important in China. Maybe a girlfriend or a guru. Or both."

"You never know. Any last words of advice?"

"Just be careful," Daniel said. He added, "Jane Roberts said that natural impulses lead to your fulfillment and to the fulfillment of everyone else at the same time. She said you can't be fulfilled at another person's expense. So if you follow your natural impulses, they'll lead to a win-win situation for everyone. Life doesn't have to be a zero sum game."

"What's an unnatural impulse?"

"An impulse that tells you to hurt another person or yourself. People have unnatural impulses when they've suppressed impulses for action for a long time or because they believe they're evil."

Daniel reached into his pocket and pulled out a bangle made of silver and copper. He said, "I want you to keep this on your wrist. It was given to me in India by a holy man. He told me it would minimize the negative effects of karma and help protect me from harm."

Paul didn't believe in karma, but he put the bangle on to please his brother.

After the plane took off, Paul closed his eyes and tried to sleep, but these lyrics from a Grateful Dead song popped into his head: "Sometimes the light's all shinin' on me. Other times I can barely see."

Paul remembered his dilemma at the age of five that caused him to make a crippled boy cry. That morning, his kindergarten teacher had said that everyone should sit in the same chair after recess. But when he came back from recess, the boy with polio was sitting in his chair. He told the boy the chair was his and, when the boy didn't move, he panicked and grabbed the chair and shook it. The boy became frightened and started to cry and his older sister had to come from her class to calm him down.

Paul felt bad about what he'd done, but what choice did he have? His teacher had told him to sit in that chair. The painful incident helped him understand at an early age that it was sometimes wrong to do what parents, teachers, and other people in authority told you to do.

In second grade, his father took him out of public school and enrolled him in a Catholic school. When he graduated from the eighth grade, he was given an award for being the best male student in religion.

His parents wanted him to go on to a Catholic high school, but he insisted on going to a public high school like his brother. The first blow to his Catholic faith came when he was introduced to the theory of evolution in his freshman year. Then, in the winter of his sophomore year, he read *The Story of Philosophy* and fell in love with the beauty of reason and the search for truth. He felt that if the bread and wine in the Mass were really transformed into the body and blood of Christ as the nuns had taught him, the communicants would crawl on their hands and knees to get the host instead of walking up to the communion rail.

In his junior year, freed from the bonds of Catholicism and inspired by the great philosophers, he began to doubt the existence of God and to wonder if the world wasn't an illusion. This freedom was good for his intellectual development, but it left him without the anchor that Catholicism had provided—the knowledge of what his purpose in life was—and he fell into a yearlong bout with melancholy.

Paul felt that it was impossible to tell his father, the product of a Jesuit university, about his loss of faith. One day, when his father saw that he had come home from the public library with a book on the religions of the world, he pulled out from the bookcase two thick textbooks from his class on Church history and said, "Read these first."

It was at about this time that Paul decided to pursue a career in science, instead of the priesthood, as his parents wanted him to do. This decision was not arrived at easily, however, because he feared that a career in science offered a future without meaning. The sonnet he wrote in his English class in his senior year expressed his feelings about the scientific view of the universe:

Once men believed the heavens circled them
Until a monk disproved this vanity.
And hopes akin received their requiem
So that we fell to triviality.

For here is how we stand along our star:
Of stars, the Milky Way has billions, and
A billion other galaxies there are.
Yes, we are like a grain among all sand.

Has man importance in the universe?
When earth has war, do heavens tremble, or
If all men died, would heaven feel the curse?
Who knows we live? These questions underscore:

As is one grain to sand irrelevant,
So then we men are insignificant.

He graduated from high school with an award for being the best student in history. He entered the University of California at Santa Cruz majoring in astronomy because he believed astronomy had the best chance of answering what was, to him, the most important question in life: "Where did we come from?" But when he realized he couldn't do the math and physics necessary to be an astronomer, he changed his major to marine biology.

He thought of his early twenties and the two experiences that had renewed his hope that there was purpose and meaning to life. The first, when he was unhappy about the fact that he'd never had a girlfriend, was half a page of automatic writing. The main message was: "Stop wanting and you will have what you want or you will find that it is not important." The second, at a time when he was feeling overwhelmed by life, was an expansion of consciousness experience in which a voice in his head told him: "The power you seek is within you." These experiences gave him the confidence that there was more to the world than what science or Christianity was willing or able to fit into their versions of reality.

For a moment, Paul felt that the main events in his life had been part of a plan to lead him to where he was now. Then he fell asleep.

Ani and Ato

On a sunny morning about a week later, Ani Lee, a tall, thirtyish Chinese woman with long black hair, rode a bicycle up to an old apartment building in Beijing. As she was chaining the bicycle to the railing in front of an apartment, the door opened and Paul stuck his head out.

"Come on in," he said.

Paul was sitting on the sofa in the living room when Ani entered. The song "For What It's Worth" by the group Buffalo Springfield was playing from a small cassette deck on top of the TV.

While Ani was removing her shoes, Paul said, "It's a violation of ethics for a

teacher to date his student.”

“You should have thought of that before you slept with me. Or did you think I was just another ‘slam, bam, thank you, ma’am’?”

Ani spoke English well but a bit slowly. She had been the best English student in her class all the way from elementary school to university.

“Blame it on your girlfriend. She kept pouring you beer.”

“I accept responsibility for what I did.”

Ani kissed Paul.

“Do you want something to drink?” she asked.

“No. But help yourself to whatever you can find.”

Ani went to the kitchen and came back with a glass of orange juice.

“It smells like something died in your refrigerator.”

“I cleaned it as best I could.”

Ani took a sip of orange juice and said, “How did you get a job teaching English at the university?”

“On the plane, I met the head of the English department.”

“Did you sleep with her too?”

Paul threw a sofa cushion at Ani. “No, she’s too old.”

Ani threw the cushion back at him. “What kind of music is this?”

“I call it music from the 1960s. Maybe you’ve heard of The Beatles, the Grateful Dead, The Who, or Bob Dylan?”

“The Beatles. Everybody likes to sing ‘Yesterday’ and ‘Something’ at karaoke.”

“Do you like to sing?”

“Sure. Don’t you?”

“No. In fifth grade my singing was so bad my teacher said I didn’t have to sing with the rest of the class.”

“Everybody can sing. Let me hear you sing.”

“You’ll only hear me sing when I’m drunk.”

“But you told me you don’t like to drink a lot.”

“Then maybe you’ll never hear me sing.”

“Why do you listen to such old music?”

“I think it’s because my brother was always playing this music. He said it came from a time when young people believed they could change the world and stop a war.”

“Did they?”

“No, but they brought down the president who started the war. Unfortunately, America then elected a worse president, failed to learn the lessons of the Vietnam War, and repeated the mistakes thirty years later in Iraq.”

“What are the lessons of the Vietnam War?”

“That it’s immoral, un-American, and stupid to attack countries that don’t threaten you. That wars always involve massive violations of human rights and should never be undertaken lightly. That leaders who start wars are war criminals.”

“You’re so passionate about war.”

Ani’s cell phone rang and she went to the kitchen to answer it.

The music stopped and Paul turned on the TV as a CNN announcer said, “The

aliens are beginning intense diplomatic activity. This week they have meetings scheduled in Washington, Brussels, and Moscow. Next week they'll be in Beijing, Tokyo, Jakarta, and Delhi. And there are rumors they've contacted governments in Africa and Latin America."

Ani returned to the living room. "The police are coming here," she said. "The university gave them your address. What did you do?"

Paul thought for a moment and said, "I don't know. Maybe it's because when I arrived, I posted an April Fools' joke about Tibetan independence on a blog at school. But it was just a joke."

"The government doesn't know how to laugh about Tibet," Ani said. "What are we going to do?"

Paul's eyes fell on a computer printout on the coffee table. It was a black and white photo of the Valkarian spaceship suspended above the UN. He picked it up and stared at it for a few seconds and said, "Let's get out of Beijing!"

They ran into the bedroom and began throwing things into Paul's backpack.

A few minutes later, three policemen arrived at Paul's apartment. The oldest of the policemen knocked on the door and said in Chinese, "This is the police!" He waited several seconds and when there was no answer, he placed his ear against the door. "I can hear people talking," he said. He pounded on the door and shouted, "We know you're in there! Open up!"

Again, there was no response, so he told the other policemen, "Break down the door." They twice threw themselves against the door without success. But on the third try, the door gave way and they crashed into the apartment's living room. The TV was on, but the room was unoccupied, as were all the other rooms in the apartment. However, they did find an open door in the kitchen that led to an alley.

As Paul and Ani were running down the alley, they saw it was a dead end and they stopped.

I quickly realized that this unforeseen event could be turned to my advantage. But first I needed to help them escape. Using what you would call imagination, I created a thought-form of a small room with a door and a window next to the building on their right. Then I visualized and entered the body of my eighteenth century Taoist monk incarnation. The body was about sixty years old, 150 centimeters tall, and had an athletic build. I dressed myself in a grey hooded sweater, slightly baggy blue jeans, and sandals, and I gave myself the name Ato.

When Paul and Ani looked to their right, they saw me standing in the doorway of the room. With a gesture of my hand, I invited them in and together we watched the policemen run by and then return.

After the policemen were out of sight, I pushed Paul and Ani back out onto the alley and made myself and the room disappear. When they turned to thank me, all they saw was the wall of the building.

They looked at each other and then ran to the main road where they hailed a taxi. Ani told the driver to take them to the Haihutun bus station. When they arrived outside the station, Ani informed Paul that she had to "pee" and went to find a restroom.

After waiting a few minutes, Paul took a book—*Taoism: The Road to Immortality*

—from his backpack and sat down on the curb. When he opened the book, his eyes fell on this passage:

In their piety they burnt fragrant herbs to the stellar divinities and made offerings to the genie of the rocks and pools, seeing in everything the universal spirit that underlies and permeates the world of form. To them the entire universe was holy, awesome on account of its majesty and vastness, but never fearsome.

Paul thought, “Do any of these masters still live in China? If so, I’m going to find one and sit at his feet and learn the Way.”

In his mind’s eye, Paul saw a remote mountaintop shrouded in clouds. Peeking through the clouds was a quaint monastery with moss growing on its tile roofs.

While Paul was daydreaming, Ani came up behind him and covered his eyes with her hands.

“Guess who?”

“The Easter Bunny.”

Paul turned around.

“You have beautiful eyes,” she said.

“Let’s go south. I want to meet a Taoist master.”

Ani took two bus tickets from the pocket of her T-shirt and waved them in Paul’s face.

“I’m one step ahead of you,” she said. “I got the idea to buy tickets for Guizhou. I think it’s a good place to hide. It’s the poorest province in China.”

Paul stood up. “Where’s Guizhou?”

“It’s next to Sichuan, where they had the big earthquake.”

As they were walking to their bus, Paul said, “Wasn’t it strange how that man disappeared after he helped us hide? Actually, I don’t even know if he was a man. I couldn’t see much of his face.”

“That was a good sign. We’re being helped,” Ani said. “Don’t question it.”

One afternoon about a week after they had left Beijing, the bus they were riding in stopped at a police roadblock. A sign on the side of the road said in Chinese, “Welcome to Guizhou Province.”

Paul and Ani were in the rear of the bus, which was packed with people, shopping bags, chickens, and ducks.

Two policemen came on the bus and showed the driver a photo. When Paul heard the words “Meiguo ren”—“American”—and saw the driver point toward the back of the bus, he pulled his baseball cap down over his eyes and pretended he was sleeping.

The policemen forced their way through the bus, looking at the men as they moved past each row of seats. When the policeman checking the side of the bus Paul and Ani were on reached the row in front of them, a passenger whispered to him, “He’s not on this bus.” The policeman turned to the other policeman said, “Let’s go. He’s not on this bus.”

The two policemen walked off the bus and the bus continued on.

I was the passenger who whispered to the policeman.

An hour later, after the bus had stopped in a small city, I said to Paul, “Let’s get off

here.”

“I feel like I’ve seen you before,” Paul said suspiciously. “Who are you?”

“I’m Ato. That’s A-t-o. You’re Paul Heart, M.I.T.”

“Listen, Ato. I don’t know what you’re selling—”

“I am your teacher. And my name is pronounced like your word for car: auto.”

Ani held out her hand. “Nice to meet you, Mr. Ato. My name is Ani Lee. Ani is spelled A-n-i, but it’s pronounced like the name spelled A-n-n-i-e.”

I shook Ani’s hand and said to them, “If you’re ready for the adventure of a lifetime, follow me. If not, stay on this bus.”

Paul looked at Ani and she whispered, “I trust him. He reminds me of my grandfather.”

As we were getting off the bus, on the TV on the wall of the bus station, a Chinese newscaster said, “The aliens demonstrated an anti-gravity device in Beijing today. They said they would make it available to us if we cooperated with them.” On the TV, a car was seen floating in the air a few feet above the ground as people stared in amazement.

I led them around a corner to where Max, a teenage boy, was waiting for us in a Volkswagen Beetle convertible. I got in the front seat and Paul and Ani got in the back and Max drove off.

“Where are we going?” Paul asked.

“To my monastery. Unfortunately, we left our anti-gravity device there.”

“That’s OK,” Paul said.

“How long have you known each other?” I asked.

“Two weeks.”

Ani corrected him: “Eleven days.” She took Paul’s hand in hers and said, “It was love at first sight.”

“What was it about him that made you fall in love?”

“It was his honest eyes and his warm heart,” Ani said without hesitation.

“That’s why I was attracted to him too. Or maybe it was his warm eyes and his honest heart,” I said, scratching my head.

“I was attracted to her because of her pretty face and nice legs,” Paul said and smiled.

“All men think about a woman’s body first,” Ani said.

“When I first saw her,” Paul said, protesting his innocence, “I thought she was an angel among mortals.”

“What are you two doing in an out-of-the-way place like Guizhou?”

“I wanted to meet a Taoist master,” Paul said.

“Well, this is your lucky day,” I said.

After leaving the city, we turned onto a dirt road and headed into the mountains.

The Monastery

We arrived at the entrance to the monastery in the early evening. On the gate was a small wooden sign with the Chinese character for “stillness.” The gate was attached to a

stone wall that seemed more ornamental than practical, as it was less than a meter high and did not extend all the way around the monastery. The wall reminded me of a dragon because of its undulations as it followed the contours of the mountain.

We drove through the gate and parked near a small temple.

"It's so beautiful here," Ani said as she got out of the car.

"This will be your home for a few months," I said.

The monastery consisted of four buildings made of wood and plaster and with sweeping, earth-colored tile roofs, some with moss growing on them. Surrounding the monastery were pine and cedar trees.

The buildings were arranged around a courtyard that was about fifteen by twenty meters. At the front of the courtyard was the temple. Behind it on the left was our kitchen and dining hall. On the right was where the other monks and I had our rooms. And across from the temple was a comfortable hut for overnight guests. In the courtyard were several fruit trees and many plants and flowers in pots.

I led Paul and Ani to the hut. The furnishings in the hut were quite simple: a double bed, a dresser, a table and chairs, a small bookcase, and a stove. I told them dinner would be ready in fifteen minutes and left them so they could freshen up.

When Paul and Ani entered the dining room, my companions and I rose from our chairs and I said, "I want you to meet the two monks who live with me. Abel, our chief, is very able and strong." A tall, well-built man in his seventies bowed. "Sam is the best cook among us. You won't want to miss his meals." A thin, but healthy looking man in his early sixties bowed. "And Max you've already met. He's our helper and driver." The teenage boy who drove us to the monastery bowed.

As we ate, Abel gave Paul a short lesson in the history of Taoism. He talked about the legendary Yellow Emperor, Huang Ti, and the wisdom of Lao Tzu and Chung Tzu. He said that at the height of Taoism's influence during the Tang dynasty, Taoist monasteries had numbered in the hundreds and Taoists had advised emperors. He said that when the Communists came to power in 1949, most Taoist monasteries had been forced to close and the rest had not been allowed to recruit new members. Recently, Abel said, the Chinese government had become more tolerant of Taoism and other religions, except Falun Gong.

"Are you different from the Taoist priests in the cities?"

Abel laughed. "Yes. The temple priests practice popular Taoism. They cater to the needs of the people by contacting their dead relatives, giving them a place to pray to the gods, and telling their fortunes. It's hard to find any masters among them, but they serve a purpose."

"Then the city temples are to true Taoism what Christian churches are to true Christianity," Paul said.

"We'll talk about that at another time," I said.

Early the next morning, Max drove to the city to do some shopping. When he returned, he showed me a poster he'd seen in the market.

An hour later, I visited Paul and Ani as they were just finishing breakfast.

"Do you want some tea, Mr. Ato?" Ani asked.

I nodded and sat down at the table. As Ani was pouring the tea, I unrolled the poster

and said, "Max found this in the city this morning."

The poster had Paul's picture on it and some words in Chinese.

Ani translated the Chinese for Paul: "American spy wanted. If you have any information, call the police..."

"I'm not a spy!" Paul said.

"You haven't been honest with me!" I said, pretending to be angry. "You're hiding from the police. What did you do?"

Paul stood up and walked to the other side of the hut. He looked out the window for a moment and then turned around.

"When I arrived at the apartment the university provided for me in Beijing," he said, "I was jet-lagged and I couldn't sleep. I went online and stupidly wrote something about Tibet on the university blog. I guess I thought it was an April Fools' joke."

"April Fools' joke!" Ani said. "Do you call 'The Tibetan Declaration of Independence' a joke?"

"The police following you here seems an overreaction to one blog entry in English. There must be more to it," I said. "Maybe it was something you did in class." I smiled and added, "Well, it doesn't matter. Congratulations! You've been in China less than two weeks and you've already offended the authorities. Now you've got no choice but to stay and become a philosopher."

"The arrival of the aliens is a sign of the new age," Paul said. "A revolution is coming and men need to be free so—"

"The truth shall set them free."

"...they can..."

"...take the next step in the evolution of consciousness," I said.

"Yeah," Paul said and sat down.

It was time for Paul to ask me a question. But when he looked at me thinking I was supposed to say something, I decided I needed to instruct him in protocol.

"This is where the apprentice asks his master a perceptive question," I said.

Paul thought for a few seconds and remembered the metal bangle Daniel had given him.

"Is our destiny determined by our karma?" he asked.

I'm sure my eyes must have given away my surprise. That was the first question I'd asked my master in my last Tibetan incarnation. But I was able to give a better answer than my master gave me.

"The idea that your present life is punishment or reward for past lives is short-sighted," I said. "Past life experiences should be looked at as opportunities for growth. Challenges in each lifetime are chosen in the between-lives period in order to advance spiritual development."

"That reminds me of what my father used to say to my brother before he spanked him: 'I'm doing this for your own good.'"

"He never spanked you?"

"No. I was the good kid in the family."

"Sure. I bet you just never got caught."

We both laughed.

“When we met, you said my name was Paul Heart, M.I.T. In my country, MIT is a very prestigious—”

“M.I.T. means messiah-in-training, but don’t let that go to your head. There have been thousands of M.I.T.s. Most failed and were never heard from again.”

“That’s good to know.”

“I can show you the bottom of a cliff that’s littered with bones from messiahs who thought they could fly.”

“OK, I get the point. I should keep my feet on the ground.”

It was true; he needed to learn what the Hindus called God’s favorite virtue—humility. He was fond of saying to himself things like this: “Intelligence is not wisdom, nor is it morality or justice. How else could so many smart people have voted for George Bush?” And this: “I may not be as sharp as some people, but at least I know the difference between right and wrong.” I would have preferred that he’d been more like the Greek philosopher Socrates, who had said, “That man is wise who knows that he knows nothing.”

“And what are you training me for?” he asked.

“To save the world from the Valkarians, first of all. But before you do that, you’ll have to learn discipline. You worry too much. You focus on what you don’t want to happen and you obsess over grievances and mistakes. And you also have a bad temper.”

“You’ve described me to a T, but it’s hard to break old habits.”

“You’ve got no choice. How can you save the world if you can’t save yourself?”

“Who are the Valkarians?” Ani asked.

Paul had kept his word to John and had not told anyone about their meeting in San Diego.

“This is a secret,” Paul said. “The aliens you’ve seen on TV are working for androids from the planet Valkar. They want to take over the earth.”

“What are androids?”

“Robots that look like men.”

“That’s scary,” Ani said.

“Let’s go for a walk,” I said.

I led them out the door and behind the hut. As we walked, I said, “Every choice you can make has a past and a future and the paths not taken by you are explored by other yous. Jane Roberts called these other yous ‘probable selves.’ You created a probable self when you decided to run from the police.”

“Parallel universes!” Paul exclaimed. “There were ideas like that in science fiction for a long time, but they only became respectable in scientific circles after—”

“Jane Roberts was writing about parallel universes, which she called ‘probable realities,’ forty years ago,” I said.

“What do you think of Jane Roberts? My brother talked about her a lot, but I haven’t read any of her books.”

“Jane Roberts was, in my opinion, the most important philosopher to live on Earth. Of all the world’s philosophers, she presented the most beautiful, believable, and comprehensive picture of the nature of reality. Plus, she offered extremely practical advice for use in daily life.”

We were on a trail that wound slowly upward along the ridge of the mountain for about a kilometer. After we went around a sharp bend, we saw below us a small green valley with a waterfall.

"We're entering a power center," I said.

A few minutes later, we reached a grassy area where several deer were grazing. I went up to one of the deer and stroked its back.

"This deer knows you," Paul said.

"No, I've never seen deer here before."

"Why aren't they afraid of us?"

"They've never been hunted by men. Now come over here."

I led them to the bank of the stream created by the waterfall where there was an apple tree that had both blossoms and fruit.

"This tree has apples all year," I said. "I call it the Tree of the Knowledge of the One."

Ani picked an apple from the tree, bit into it, and said, "It's delicious."

She gave it to Paul, who took a bite and said, "I feel naked."

"You're the new Adam," Ani said.

An apple fell from the tree and bonked Paul on the head.

"Newton," I added while laughing.

We returned to the monastery and had lunch. As they were leaving the dining hall, I said to Paul, "I have a question for you, Western Man: Is the world the result of scientific evolution or was it created by God in six days? You can give me your answer tomorrow."

The next day after breakfast I strolled over to their hut.

"Good morning!" I said as I walked through the open door.

"Do you want some tea, Mr. Ato?" Ani asked.

"Yes, please."

After we sat down, I said to Paul, "Do you have an answer to my question?"

"Even when I was a scientist, I thought living things were too complex to have been designed by random genetic mutations and natural selection."

"Then you must be a creationist!"

"No. To believe there were days and nights before there was a sun is silly."

"Genesis could be read symbolically."

"The Bible, by its brutality, errors, and inconsistencies, is itself proof it wasn't inspired by God."

I got up from the chair and walked across the hut with my arms folded, as if I were thinking. Then I turned around and said, "But what if the Christians are right? Should you be taking chances with your future? Maybe you'd better get down on your hands and knees right now and beg the forgiveness of the God of the Bible for your blasphemy. If there's no biblical God, then you've only wasted a few seconds. But if the Christians are right, you might save yourself from the fires of hell."

I turned my back to Paul for a moment to wipe the grin off my face and then continued to press my point. "We Chinese are a practical people. If you go into a temple in the cities, you'll see us praying to many different gods. We think of this as insurance."

I headed for the door and said as I was putting on my shoes, "Think about what I've

told you. I'll be back tomorrow."

A few steps beyond the door, I stopped to hear Paul's reaction and heard a thud, like a book had been thrown across the room.

"I didn't come here to study Christianity!" he said. "I'd leave now if I had somewhere to go!"

I had to cover my mouth to keep from laughing out loud. Then I heard Ani say, "Honey, you take yourself so seriously. Don't you see Mr. Ato is...what do you call it... hitting your buttons?"

"Pushing."

At that moment I thought, "Maybe I'm training the wrong person." But then I remembered why he'd been chosen in the first place—for his unique combination of passion, thoughtfulness, empathy, and intelligence, and, most of all, because he needed to finish what he had started.

He also had the rare ability that allowed him to see through the values of his culture. This enabled him to recognize the foolishness of men, who so often accepted without question beliefs handed down to them from previous generations.

Besides this ability, he was skilled at summarizing and synthesizing the ideas of others and producing results greater than the sum of their parts. In him I saw these words of Isaac Newton personified: "If I see farther than others, it's because I stand on the shoulders of giants."

First Lesson

While walking over to the hut the next morning, I thought I looked pretty sharp in my navy blue suit, striped shirt, and green and black tie. I could have passed for a professor.

After they sat down, I began: "Your first lesson is entitled 'Christianity Dribbles the Ball off Its Foot, and Science Misses a Slam Dunk.'"

I paused because I thought Paul, an American, would appreciate my basketball metaphors. But he was whispering to Ani.

"Listen carefully. This is going to change your life," I said. "In Nicaea in 325 A.D. in what is now Turkey, Christians debated the divinity of Jesus and wrote the Nicene Creed, a statement of their beliefs."

The two lovebirds were now staring into each other's eyes and holding hands like high school sweethearts. So I decided I had to do something to grab their attention.

Another perk of enlightenment is transport, which allows me to travel to other places and times and to take people with me. It's accomplished in a similar manner to how I created the thought-form of the room when Ani and Paul were running from the police. But instead of imagining a physical object, I imagine an event.

"The best way to study history is to be there," I said.

In the next instant we were standing in a large hall a short distance from the Roman emperor Constantine.

"What happened? Where are we?" Paul asked.

"If you'd been listening to me," I said a little sternly, "you would know we were in Nicaea, Turkey in 325 A.D."

"Wow."

There were over a thousand Christian bishops, priests, and deacons in the hall. Two bishops were talking about the relationship of Jesus to God.

"Jesus and God the Father are of the same substance!"

"No! Jesus was created by God! He cannot be equal to the Father!"

The hall became very noisy as many people spoke at the same time.

"Paul, what is the central belief of Christianity in your time?" I yelled to be heard above the roar.

"The Son of God came to earth and died for our sins," he shouted back.

We had to get out of there; it was impossible to hold a conversation under those conditions.

"I'm going to take you to the Sistine Chapel in 1512 Rome," I said.

When we arrived inside the chapel a few seconds later, I said, "And what do Christians base their belief on, Paul?"

"The Bible, which they say was divinely inspired. Yet the Bible contradicts itself and has God ordering massacres."

"Shh," Ani said. "This is a holy place, isn't it?"

"They can't see us or hear us," I said.

I looked around and realized the chapel was empty except for a man on scaffolding. The man had his back to us, but he could only have been Michelangelo. He was repainting the *Fall of Man*, the fresco where Adam and Eve were told to leave the Garden of Eden after they had disobeyed God by eating the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

I pointed to the fresco of the *Creation of Adam*. "At the time that Michelangelo painted God as an old man with a beard," I said, "scientists believed the Earth was the center of the universe and man was the pinnacle of creation."

"Maybe God is a She, a Goddess," Ani said.

"That would be an improvement," I said.

We spent a few minutes admiring the skill of Michelangelo and then I said, "Science's idea of the universe has changed since the sixteenth century. Shouldn't Christianity's idea of God also change?"

I brought them back to the monastery and we ate the delicious lunch Sam and Abel had prepared.

The next morning, I arrived at the hut in my usual jeans, long sleeve shirt, and sandals.

"What do scientists know about the universe today?" I asked Paul.

"Like you told us yesterday," Paul said, "educated men used to believe the earth was at the center of the universe. Now we know we live on a spiral arm of a galaxy that has billions of stars among billions of other galaxies in a universe that is expanding like a balloon."

"Do you remember how the movie *Men in Black* ends?"

"Two creatures are playing a game with marbles," Paul said. "One of the marbles

has our universe inside it.”

“What if our universe really is only a small part of reality like in *Men in Black*? There is no way of disproving this idea and it opens the door to more sensible explanations than the theories of the scientists.”

I turned a chair around and sat down facing the table. “Scientists believe the universe can be explained without relying on nonphysical or spiritual influences. That belief works fine to explain the motions of the planets, but it doesn’t provide a good explanation for the origin of the universe, the complexity of living things, or the existence of psychic phenomena. When you realize science is based on a belief, you see science is, like Christianity, a mythology.”

“My high school science teacher said science only studies facts,” Ani said.

“That’s what scientists believe, but science is not an unbiased observer. Science has an agenda—to deny or ignore any evidence of a spiritual reality. This agenda forces scientists to come up with awkward ideas like the Big Bang theory and the theory of evolution and to ignore experiences like precognition, clairvoyance, and telepathy. To be a real seeker of truth, science should be willing to explore all avenues, not just the road it chooses to travel on.”

“So what you’re saying is that seekers of truth,” Paul said, “cannot accept science’s view of reality because science has limited its scope.”

“You’re getting a little ahead of me. Did you read the Buddha’s sermon about the elephant and the four blind men?”

“No.”

“Buddha said four blind men were asked to touch different parts of an elephant and then to say what it was. The man who touched the tail said the elephant was a rope. The man who touched a leg said the elephant was a pillar. The man who touched the trunk said the elephant was a snake. And the man who touched the elephant’s ear said it was a piece of cloth. Buddha’s point was that when you make judgments based upon incomplete information, you’re going to make mistakes.”

“The scientist Sir Isaac Newton wrote,” Paul said, “‘I feel like a child gathering seashells on a beach while the great ocean of truth lies before me.’”

“We all could use his humility,” I said. “If scientists were to be realistic, they’d admit that the universe is too complex to have been created by chance. They would then see the logic in accepting that there is a spiritual or non-physical influence on the physical universe.”

I turned the chair back to its normal position and sat down.

“When you look at what science has done,” I said, “you have to laugh. Science has essentially said, ‘OK, we admit there are events at the beginning of time that we can’t explain—the creations of matter, the laws of physics and chemistry, etc. But after that, we can explain everything and what we can’t explain doesn’t exist!’”

“That kind of thinking—that you’ve got to believe us because we’re the experts on the matter, pun intended—reminds me of Christianity. Christian leaders have basically said, ‘Two thousand years ago, God spoke to the men who wrote the Bible. But God doesn’t speak to men anymore, so you have to believe us when we say the Bible is the Word of God.’”

“Except the Catholic Church,” Paul said.

“What?”

“The Catholic Church says God still speaks to the Pope.”

“And no one else, I suppose!” I laughed so hard I fell off the chair.

After I got up from the floor, I said, “Are you guys hungry? Let’s see if lunch is ready.”

On the way to the dining room, I said, “If you look at the photos of deep space taken by the Hubble telescope, you’ll see a universe of incredible dimensions. Those photos present a real challenge to Christian theology.”

“What do you mean?” Paul asked.

“Since the arrival of the aliens, men know they are not alone in the galaxy. And if there are billions and billions of galaxies in the universe as the Hubble telescope shows us and if God has only one Son as the Christians say... Well, you do the math. I feel sorry for the Son of God. He must be so busy being born and dying that he doesn’t know whether he’s coming or going.”

During lunch, Paul said, “A couple of days ago you talked about probable realities. Scientists have theorized, using superstring theory, that parallel universes exist—”

“Scientists don’t need math and physics to find other universes. All they have to do is to study their thoughts and dreams. And then they’ll discover they’ve been asking the wrong questions.”

“What are the right questions?” Paul asked.

“Where do thoughts and dreams come from? Where do they go?”

“What are the answers to those questions?” Ani asked.

“Physical reality is only the tip of the reality iceberg. The great adventure of the coming age will not be the exploration of outer space, but the exploration of the uncharted universes within us, where our thoughts and dreams come from and go.”

When we arrived back at the hut, I said, “Isn’t it logical to assume that the creator of all these universes is not like a man or anything else we can conceive of? Isn’t it more sensible, given our knowledge today, to assume God is some kind of giant consciousness beyond our comprehension?”

Seth, All That Is, Stillness, and *Wu Wei*

The next day, Paul asked me, “Who or what is God?”

“The best answer I’ve found to that question is in the books by Jane Roberts that she dictated while she was in trance. The books came from a non-physical being named Seth.” I took *The Seth Material* from the bookcase, found a page I had marked, and began reading:

(God)...is not one individual, but an energy gestalt...a psychic pyramid of interrelated, ever-expanding consciousness that creates, simultaneously and instantaneously, universes and individuals that are given—through the gifts of personal perspective—duration, psychic comprehension, intelligence, and eternal validity....Because its energy

is within and behind all universes, systems, and fields, it is...aware of each sparrow that falls, for it is each sparrow that falls.

“According to Seth,” I said, looking up, “before there were universes, God, who Seth called ‘All That Is,’ was alone with Its thoughts, so to speak, but It could not express them. This was a great agony for God, to have this urge to create, but to not be able to do so.

“Finally, All That Is understood that It must give freedom to the portion of Itself that yearned for expression. All That Is released Its thoughts and universes were born. All consciousnesses retain a memory of that state of agony when creativity was not possible.”

I turned to another marked passage and read:

It is for this reason that each minute consciousness is endowed with the impetus toward survival, change, development, and creativity. It is not enough that All That Is, as a primary consciousness gestalt, desires further being, but that each portion of It also carries this determination.

I put the book back in the bookcase and took down a copy of the Bible. “John wrote in his Gospel,” I said after thumbing through it to find the excerpt, “‘In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God.’ Later on the same page, he wrote that the Logos ‘became flesh and dwelt among us.’”

“Logos is Greek,” Paul said. “It’s translated in English as the Word, and the Word is Christ, the Son of God, according to the Christians.”

“Another interpretation is that the Logos is the first expressed thought of God, what Seth referred to when he said All That Is released Its thoughts and universes were born.”

I returned the Bible to the bookcase and said, “We’ll talk again tomorrow.” Then I walked out the door.

Paul had never before heard such a beautiful description of what God is and was. He took Ani in his arms and they waltzed around the room before they fell on the bed and made love, god to goddess.

When I arrived at the hut the next morning, Paul said, “If God created all universes, then what created God? And what created God’s creator? I realize the question of what created the creator could be asked *ad infinitum*.”

“Your question is the result of your belief that time is linear and that events occur one after the other. It’s a question you won’t ask once you understand that time is simultaneous. You might say the logical dilemma revealed by your question is proof of simultaneous time. But that’s a lesson for another time,” I said, smiling. “Actually, since time is simultaneous, I’ve already answered your question, but in your terms, you’ll have to wait to hear the answer.”

“Then tell me this: Does life have a purpose?”

“For most people, their purpose is to learn about the nature of reality and to become aware of their relationship with their soul. There is so much to learn! Western man, even with his science, has only begun to touch the possibilities. I would say to your scientists what your Shakespeare wrote: ‘There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than

are dreamt of in your philosophy.’

“One of the first things people need to learn is that they create their experiences through their beliefs and expectations. They draw to themselves what they concentrate on. Collectively, men create the world’s events in the same manner that an individual creates his experiences.”

“Can you explain why, when I’m feeling under pressure or when I’m in a hurry,” Paul asked, “things always seem to go wrong?”

“If you’re stressed, you’ll seem to have bad luck. If you’re relaxed, confident, or happy, you’ll have what is called good luck, although it’s not a matter of luck at all, but the natural result of your mental actions. If you feel in the morning that this is going to be a bad day, watch out! Because you may find things going wrong all day unless you change your attitude. It’s a good idea to check your attitude several times during the day by listening to the thoughts going through your head.”

“When I’m upset about something,” Paul said, “or not feeling well, or in a bad mood, I don’t make good decisions, simple things become difficult, I meet grouchy people and rude drivers, and generally life becomes a pain in the ass. In the worst cases, I have one negative experience after another until I get to the point where I can’t believe this is happening to me. Then I just want to go and hide from the world.”

“You’d better stay away from power tools and avoid walking near buildings under construction when you feel that way,” I said and began laughing. “And don’t drive,” I added. I laughed so hard that tears started running down my cheeks.

I wiped my face and eyes and said, “It’s important to understand your beliefs and expectations act like filters, forcing you to see and experience what you believe or expect. For example, if you believe man is naturally evil, you’ll meet more than your share of shady characters and you’ll telepathically invite people to behave badly around you. The belief will make it harder for you to recognize acts of kindness and cooperation in the world—”

“I once worked as a short-order cook,” Paul said. “I thought I was a bad cook, but one day a customer came up to me and said the pancakes I’d made for him were the best pancakes he’d ever eaten. I thought he’d said they were the worst pancakes he’d ever eaten and I told the other cook that. The customer heard me and came back and said, ‘I said they were the best pancakes I’d ever eaten.’”

“Your belief that you were a bad cook caused you to hear what you expected to hear.”

After lunch, Paul and Ani visited the valley with the waterfall. When we met the next morning, Paul said, “I have two questions for you. First, what will we do if the police follow us here?”

“We’ve put a lock on the door to the monastery, and the police don’t have a key for the lock. In plain words, you’re safe here because we’re not on the Earth that has the police who are looking for you. We have slipped through a door into a probable reality, or as your scientists would say, into a parallel universe.”

“How is it that nobody lives in the valley behind the monastery?”

“I think my answer to your first question answers your second question. Your questions remind me of a poem in the book you brought with you.” I picked up Paul’s

copy of *Taoism: The Road to Immortality* from the table and found the page I was looking for and said, “The poet Li T’ai-po, who lived in the court of a Tang dynasty ruler until he fell out of favor, received a messenger one day who told him the emperor wanted him to return to the capital. His answer was,” and I read:

You ask me why I dwell
Amidst these jade-green hills?
I smile. No words can tell
The stillness in my heart.
The peach-bloom on the water,
How enchantingly it drifts!
I live in another realm here
Beyond the world of men.

“Thoreau wrote,” Paul said, “Sometimes, as I drift idly on Walden Pond, I cease to live and begin to be.”

“The real achievement is to know such peace in a city—that’s very hard to do,” I said. “That’s why Taoist monks usually live in the mountains.”

“What is the key to inner peace?” Paul asked.

“The inscription above the door to my room says, ‘The recluse’s heart is a placid lake unruffled by the winds of circumstance.’ We call this state of mind ‘stillness.’ To know stillness is to be a stranger to fear, anger, hatred, envy, worry, longing, and regret and to be unaffected by desires for pleasure, wealth, and power.

“Now, I’m not saying to suppress your emotions. That’s not healthy. I’m saying, don’t have strong emotions. That’s done by an act of will over time. Anyone can do it if they set their mind to it.”

“But what should I do if I feel angry?”

“In an ideal world, you would express your anger,” I said. “When anger is expressed naturally—at the time you first feel it—it’s part of a communication system that is meant to tell another person that a violation has occurred. Its purpose is to prevent violence, not to start it. But if you all of a sudden start expressing your anger, you’ll probably overreact to small things because you’ll be letting off steam built up from previous angers that were suppressed. So in the real world, you should be careful about expressing anger.

“But, like I said, getting angry is your choice. No one forces you to get angry. When you learn humility and patience, you’ll find few reasons to be angry with anyone. Of course, sometimes it’s necessary for a teacher to pretend he is angry,” I said with a twinkle in my eyes.

“The great thing about stillness is that once it’s achieved, your life is not empty as you might think, but is filled with joy. You have, for the first time in your life, the clarity to really appreciate the beauty of the world. And on top of that, stillness increases longevity because you don’t put a lot of strain on your mind or body.

“Another important principle is called *wu wei*, which literally means ‘no action.’ It’s being spontaneous and only doing what needs to be done. It’s going with the flow,

swimming with the current. The master Chung Tzu said, ‘He who practices the Way does less every day, does less and goes on doing less until he reaches the point where he does nothing, and yet there is nothing that is not done!’”

“I like that,” Paul said. “I can watch baseball on TV and the grass will get mowed and the garbage will be taken out.”

“Not by me!” Ani said and she punched Paul on the arm.

“Ouch! That hurts!”

“*Wu wei* means avoiding strain and not going to extremes,” I continued. “So if you feel like having a glass of wine, do it, but don’t get addicted to it. By following the principle of *wu wei*, you achieve balance and harmony in your life. Life becomes effortless and serene.”

“*Wu wei* reminds me of something my brother told me. He said I should follow my natural impulses. That’s being spontaneous, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, but did he tell you what unnatural impulses were?”

“He said they’re impulses to hurt someone or yourself. He said we have them if we believe we’re evil or after we’ve suppressed impulses for action for a long time.”

To Lead the World to a New Age

Over the next few days, we studied the two most important texts of Taoism—the *Tao Te Ching* (also known as *The Way of Life*) and the *Book of Change* (also known as the *I Ching*)—and more of the Seth material from Jane Roberts. The time went by quickly and, before I knew it, the day of my appointment with Silva had arrived.

“What news of the Chosen One?” Silva asked when we met in a non-physical dimension. “The Valkarians are planning a ‘shock and awe’ demonstration like they had on Honam.”

“He still needs time, in human terms, to develop self-discipline.”

“In human terms we don’t have more time. Let him develop self-discipline out in the world.”

“Can’t we ask the 24 civilizations for a demonstration of their power?”

“That’s a last resort. The only way humans will learn is if they overcome the Valkarians themselves.”

Late the next morning, I arrived at the hut carrying a picnic basket. I said to Paul and Ani, “Today we’re going to have lunch in the valley behind the monastery.”

It was a glorious spring day in the valley: The sun was warm; a few round, lazy clouds roamed the sky; and the birds in the trees chattered away like happy children on a school trip.

After we had finished eating and were drinking tea on large rocks near the waterfall, I said, “Hey, why don’t we go for a swim?”

“I don’t have anything to wear,” Paul said.

“That’s the point, silly,” Ani said.

“Last one in’s a rotten egg,” I said as I dashed toward the water, shedding my clothes as I ran.

An hour later, we were sunning ourselves—fully clothed—when a golden brown dragonfly came by, zigzagging through the air as dragonflies do. Paul put his hand out and the dragonfly landed on his fingertips for several seconds before flying off and disappearing in the mist from the waterfall.

I figured that was the sign I was looking for, so I beat out a drum roll on my pants and said, “It’s time for you to face the police.”

Paul appeared surprised. “I’m not ready. Really, I’m not.”

He stood up and walked to the bank of the stream.

“You’ve always been afraid of making commitments, of getting too involved,” I said loudly.

“I always have more to do.”

“There is always more to do.”

“You said I need to learn self-discipline.”

“We’ll have to go with what you’ve got now. Why did you come to China?”

“I dreamed I was giving a speech in Chinese.”

“You were Chinese in a past life. Now debts are to be paid.”

“Don Juan said to only travel on paths that have heart.”

I needed to light a fire under him, so I said firmly, “There’s no more time for your excuses.”

With a look of resignation on his face, Paul walked back and sat down. Ani and I waited for him to speak.

After a few moments he said, “When I was a little boy, I used to wish that I was king of the world so I could help all the poor people. Do you know that the combined wealth of the 500 richest people is greater than the combined wealth of half the people on earth?”

“I didn’t know that!” I said.

Paul’s thoughts wandered back in time to when he was a student in a Catholic elementary school. He saw himself in the school uniform—brown corduroy pants, white short sleeve shirt, and brown tie—and with pimples on his face. It was recess and he was alone, while people near him were in small groups, talking and laughing.

“When I was in elementary school, I was very shy and I didn’t understand that was why I had few friends,” he said. “By eighth grade, I decided people ignored me on purpose. I told myself then that someday I’d be an important person. I even imagined a future where I’d been elected president and my classmates had come to the White House to congratulate me.

“When I was in high school, I lost my faith. I couldn’t tell my parents about it because they wouldn’t understand. I always hoped that they would realize that I was being the best son I could be. A good son should stand on his parents’ shoulders and see farther than they do. If I had children, I would want them to do that.”

I laughed and shook my head from side to side. He had gone from being Mr. Reluctant Messiah to Mr. Out-of-the-Closet, Hopeful Messiah in a few seconds.

“Be careful what you wish for,” I said. “By the way, you need to write a short speech in Chinese. Ani can help you.”

“Ato, tell me again what I’ve been training for.”

“To lead the world to a new age.”

We heard the hoot of an owl and looked around and discovered that animals and birds had gathered on all sides of us. Then the birds began singing. Their singing was beautiful and enchanting. A perfect sendoff, I thought, for messiah #18,432.

While Paul was working with Ani on his speech that night, he remembered the conversation he had with Daniel when they smoked their last joint together the day before he flew to China. Daniel had asked him if he knew what his purpose was in going to China, and he'd said without thinking, “Mankind is standing on the brink of disaster; before us lies the abyss. The only sane act is to turn around and find a new path. This can only be done by free men working together. It is my intention to make the people of China aware of their power.”

After they finished writing the speech, Paul said to Ani, “Tomorrow, Max will drive you to the city. From there, you can take a bus to Beijing.”

Ani took Paul's hands in hers. “I want to be wherever you are.”

Paul kissed Ani on her forehead. “This is for your own safety. I have a job to do.”

“What about your safety?”

“Ato will protect me.”

“When will I see you again?”

“I'll call you when I think it's safe for you to join me.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

The next morning, Ani and Paul said their goodbyes while Max waited in the car. Abel and Sam and I stood nearby.

Ani got in the car and we all waved as Max drove off.

When the car was out of sight, I said to Paul, “We'll wait for a sign before you go to the city.”

“What kind of sign?”

“A good sign.”

“After I go, what will happen to all of you?”

“Max will return to his hometown. Abel and Sam and I will lift the veil that hides the monastery, for you will want people to think that you spent the last two weeks right under the noses of the police. The police will of course try to arrest us, but we'll vanish before their eyes. Our time has come to ride the dragon.”

A couple of mornings later, I walked up to the hut and found the door was open. Paul was in his pajamas, sweeping the floor.

“How are you this morning, Ato?” he asked.

“Fine.”

Paul seemed especially cheerful, so I asked, “Did you have any interesting dreams last night?”

“One.”

“Tell me about it.”

Paul closed his eyes to help himself remember. “I was outside in a field with a lot of people,” he said. “The police were coming to arrest me for kidnapping a young boy, but I knew I was innocent. Then my brother Daniel and the boy arrived on a magic carpet. I

got on the carpet and we soared into the air and disappeared behind the clouds.”

Paul opened his eyes and saw that I was tossing his things into his backpack.

“What’re you doing?” he asked.

“The dream has relaxed you. You feel strong. That’s as good a sign as we need.”

“But who’s the boy in the dream?”

“I don’t know. Maybe it was you as a child. Do you remember the magic in your life then?”

Paul looked puzzled.

“Didn’t you say books were your best friends when you were young?”

“Yes.”

“And wasn’t it books that inspired you to dream about doing great things?”

Paul nodded his head.

“Well, it’s time to reach out for that little boy’s dreams. So get dressed.”

I sat down at the table. As Paul was putting his clothes on, he said, “Shouldn’t the master be giving the apprentice his final advice now?”

“You’re right. I almost forgot. You send your energy in a hundred directions. Learn to focus on the moment. The title of that book you read many years ago is good advice for you: *Be Here Now*. And you should have more self-confidence. Believe you are the messiah the world needs at this time.”

Paul packed the rest of his things into his backpack and loaded it into the car. Abel, Sam, and Max came out to see Paul off. He hugged them and then he hugged me.

After he got into the car, I thought of something I had wanted to tell him. I walked up to the car and said, “You and I are alike, and that’s why I’ve been able to teach you. We’re both awed by the mystery of the world. Unlike most adults, we continue to ask the question children ask themselves.”

“You mean, ‘Where did I come from?’”

“Yeah. What an adventure we’re on, to try to make sense of this amazing world!”

I then noticed his eyes had a glassy look and his energy level had dropped suddenly.

“You should eat something before you go,” I said.

“I’m not hungry, Ato. I’m scared.”

“We haven’t talked about fears yet, have we? Fears, if you dwell on them, act like expectations or beliefs. Try to face your fears. You’ll find most fears will disappear if you do this. If you can’t face a fear, at least examine it. Then you’ll probably find that you’re making a mountain out of a molehill.”

“I once saw an interview,” Paul said, “with a woman who had been born without arms. She said she’d never felt bad about not having arms because she didn’t know what it was like to have them. She had learned a martial art and how to drive a car, but she said she had been afraid to learn to fly a plane. Then she told the interviewer that Eleanor Roosevelt had said, ‘When you’re afraid of something, run toward it.’ So she learned to fly a plane. She was very good with her feet.”

“I bet. Well, you know what you need to do. You just have to do it. Now, a belief that’s a good defense against danger is a belief in your own health, worth, and safety. This belief should lead you away from dangerous situations unless you choose to participate in them.”

“And did we discuss why I’m *choosing* to participate in danger?”

“Sorry. My bad. The plan is for you to escape from prison after you get arrested. You want to make the people here think you’ve got special powers or are some kind of a prophet.”

“Me? A prophet?”

“Why not? You’ve got to start somewhere.”

“Do you know what happens to prophets? They get killed.”

“You’re making this more difficult than it has to be. I want you to repeat this several times a day: ‘Infinite intelligence guides and protects me in all my activities.’”

“What if the police torture me?”

“Tell them whatever they want to hear. And be sure to give them directions to the monastery.”

“Give them directions?”

“In fact, to help them find the monastery, I’ll make a map. Give me the piece of paper with your speech.”

Paul took his speech out of his shirt pocket and a pen out of a pants pocket and I quickly drew a map on the paper.

As I was drawing, I saw in my mind’s eye a scene from his childhood. He was crying as he was listening to a record album.

“Do you remember your favorite song when you were young?” I asked.

Paul shook his head, so I sang a few lines (badly):

To dream the impossible dream,
To fight the unbeatable foe,
To—

“That song brings back memories of my loneliness as a child.”

“Stop feeling sorry for yourself!” I said. “Concentrate on the power and the promise of great deeds you felt when you heard that song.”

I was losing my patience. Then I remembered it wasn’t his fault we were in a hurry. So I relaxed and went with the flow. *Wu wei*, you know.

“Why don’t you just go home and forget we ever met?”

That seemed to strike just the right note.

“Are you crazy?” he said. “I’ve got a job to do.”

I patted him on the shoulder. “You’re going to be all right.”

He started the car and said, “Ato, don’t tell anyone what a coward I’ve been.”

As he passed through the monastery’s gate, he said out loud, “I’m protected and supported. I’ve always been protected and supported.”

I have to admit I felt bad about sending him back into the world before he was ready, but the Valkarians were forcing my hand.

[Part Two: The Messiah Masters Himself](#)

Riding the Dragon

Paul arrived in the city around noon and parked near the market. Not sure what to do next, he slowly got out of the car and unzipped his backpack, pretending he was looking for something. A small group of farmers and city people soon surrounded him.

“Why did you come to China?” someone asked in Chinese.

He was nervous and didn’t understand the question. So he said, “My name is Paul. I’m from America.”

“We know that,” another voice in the crowd said. “Tell us something we don’t know.”

“Can you speak Chinese, Paul America?” a third voice asked.

“A little,” Paul said.

Paul took the speech from his shirt pocket and read the words that Ani had written for him in romanized Chinese. In English, he said:

My birthday is on July fourth. In America, the Fourth of July is the day we celebrate the signing of the most important political document in history, the American Declaration of Independence. I would like to read a part of it now:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it.”

Some people say the values of the West are not suitable for Asia, but I disagree. The great lesson from the West is that the individual has rights no one can take away, not even a government. This is true in all times and places.

In December 2008, 303 Chinese citizens signed a political document called Charter 08. Like the men who signed the American Declaration of Independence, they risked their lives and their liberty in doing so. In Charter 08 they wrote: “Human rights are not bestowed by a state. Every person is born with inherent rights to dignity and freedom. The government exists for the protection of the human rights of its citizens.” One of the signers of Charter 08 is in prison now. Others are under surveillance—

Paul stopped when he saw several policemen forcing their way through the crowd. When they reached him, one of them asked politely, “Would you come down to police headquarters with us?” As I had instructed him to do, during the interrogation he answered all the questions truthfully and gave the police directions to the monastery.

A few days later, one of Paul’s prison mates, a university student who spoke good

English, told him the story being spread in the city: The police raided the monastery in four vans; there were twenty policemen in all. When they arrived, they found three old monks sitting in a hut drinking tea. Not wishing to be disrespectful of the monks, the police captain asked the oldest one, “Did the American Paul Heart stay here?” The three monks laughed uproariously as if they had just heard something very funny. “Yes,” the oldest monk said, “but he has gone now. Please sit down and have some tea with us.” The captain asked, “Did you know he was wanted for teaching dangerous lies to his students and for visa violations and to help him was a crime?” Again the monks belly laughed and the oldest one said, “Yes, yes. But we will feel we are poor hosts if you won’t have tea with us.” The captain felt sympathy for the old monks, for one reminded him of his grandfather, and he wanted to arrest them gently, so he agreed. As there was not enough room for all the policemen in the hut, the three old monks served the tea outside under the trees, where there were tables and benches.

When the policemen finished drinking the tea, one of them spoke quietly to the others: “We’d better arrest these old men now or it won’t look good for us.” Just then a violent wind arose. The wind was so strong that it was all the policemen could do to hold onto a tree or a rock to avoid being blown away. After about a minute, the wind stopped and a great green and gold dragon, roaring and belching flames and smoke, appeared from behind the clouds and landed nearby. Petrified, the policemen did not move. But the three monks laughed and ran over to the dragon and climbed onto its back. Then the dragon gave a snort and flew off into the sky. The monks could be seen waving to the policemen as they disappeared from sight.

The official police report said no one was at the monastery when they arrived, but everybody in the city knew better, as the dragon story had come from one of the policemen and had been verified by another. Some people in the city wondered where the three Taoist sages had come from, for that monastery had been abandoned ever since the Communists came to power in 1949. Were they aliens? Was the dragon a spacecraft? There was even some talk that Paul was an alien. An exaggerated story of Paul’s escape from the police in Beijing was also being spread in the city.

Prison Thoughts

In prison, Paul incorporated what I had told him—that both Christianity and science were mythologies—into his view of the world. He began by recalling what the nuns had taught him during his Catholic school days.

The nuns had said that after God made the earth, God created a beautiful garden for Adam, the first man. Later, God made Eve, the first woman, out of one of Adam’s ribs. God told Adam and Eve they could eat any fruit in the garden except the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. But the devil, in the form of a serpent, tempted them to eat the fruit, telling them they would be like God if they did. After they disobeyed God and ate the fruit, God told them to leave the garden and said that from that time on mankind would know pain and suffering. And then, about two thousand years ago, God sent His Only Son down to earth to be crucified in order to reopen the gates of

heaven to us.

When we died, we had to satisfy three requirements to be allowed to enter heaven. First, we had to believe Jesus Christ was the Only Son of God. Second, we had to have had the sin of Adam washed from our souls by having been or intending to be baptized. And third, our souls had to be free of all sins, mortal and venial. Mortal sins were serious sins like premeditated murder or staying home from Mass on Sunday to watch football. Dying before confessing a mortal sin to a priest and obtaining forgiveness from God would get you thrown into hell for all eternity. If you died before confessing your lesser sins, your venial sins, you would be allowed to enter heaven after you spent some time being purified in purgatory, a place like hell except that it is temporary. The lucky Catholics were those who confessed their sins to a priest just before they died because they would go straight to heaven without spending any time in purgatory.

But what if you failed the first or second requirement? It got complicated here, but generally, you would go to hell. However, there were exceptions. For example, if you had never heard of Jesus Christ, you could still get into heaven. And if a baby died before it was baptized, it would be sent to a place that is neither heaven nor hell called limbo.

Paul thought he saw a flaw in the Catholic Church's rules for getting into heaven. What would prevent a man from intentionally leading a life of sin with the plan of being baptized and confessing his sins on his deathbed? He could then go straight to heaven when he died, just like someone who had led a good Catholic life. This was supposedly what the Roman Emperor Constantine did. Of course, the risk was that a priest wouldn't be around when you died or that you wouldn't be in any condition to confess your sins, but a powerful man could make sure a priest was always at his side.

What an incredible, arbitrary, and unfair mythology, Paul concluded. Surely we could come up with a better mythology today. We've learned a lot about ourselves and the universe in two thousand years.

When Paul turned his attention to the birth of modern science in Europe in the 16th century, he couldn't help thinking that it reminded him of his teenage years, when he rebelled against the authority of his parents. Modern science was in part a reaction against the repression of thought by Christianity during the Middle Ages. But science had gone too far in the opposite direction from Christianity. So far that it denied or ignored the possibility of a soul or a spiritual realm.

Ato was right, he thought. Science was, like Christianity, a mythology. Science's mythology said the universe created itself in all of its complexity by accident after the Big Bang—the explosion billions of years ago that scattered hydrogen atoms in space.

The central pillar of science's mythology was the theory of evolution, which said all life on earth evolved from simpler life forms through random genetic mutations and natural selection.

Paul thought there were three major weaknesses to the theory of evolution. First, evolution could not explain how the first life came into being. He remembered reading that the odds against basic chemicals forming into a small piece of DNA were ten followed by thirty zeroes to one. Second, the theory of evolution could not explain how the immune system or blood clotting or other complex systems in the body were created. And third, it could not account for the gaps in the fossil records—the missing links

between men and apes and other species. In fact, all of these things could be better explained by some kind of planting process where lines of development were inserted on earth, perhaps by alien races or non-physical beings.

Instead of proposing the unlikely theory of evolution, it would have been better if scientists had just said, “A God or some other force has had a hand in the creation of the universe and life on earth.” Maybe Jane Roberts was right, he thought, when she said that species and individuals alter their genetic structures to suit their needs and goals.

Perhaps by looking for competition in everything, scientists were seeing the world with blinders on. Could the world have been designed around cooperation instead? If the law of the jungle were really cooperation, that would throw a monkey wrench into the theory of evolution.

Maybe the best response to the question of how life on earth came about was just that we were not advanced enough yet to understand the answer. The Hubble telescope has shown us a universe of dimensions beyond our comprehension. And in particle physics, scientists were finding it difficult to draw a boundary between matter and energy and they were learning that events were not separate from the observer. Given these circumstances, the idea that an explanation for the origin of life was beyond our grasp was not unreasonable.

Science’s mythology must be rejected, therefore, because it was, like Christianity, unbelievable. Paul thought science also needed to account for the evidence of non-physical reality: precognition, telepathy, clairvoyance, and instantaneous healings. He had had some of these experiences and he could not explain them in scientific terms.

Christianity was invented at a time when men were not aware of the complexity and size of the universe or of the earth’s place in it. Christianity was, Paul thought, like the fable of the stork that brought babies to their parents—a story for people who were not capable of understanding the truth.

To condemn the world as inherently evil, as Christianity did, was a poor reaction to the pains of life. There was so much more that made the world overwhelmingly beautiful: the very fact of life with all its implications—choice and action, birth, growth, and death; the many forms of life in all their splendor and diversity; the cooperation between species; the great varieties of environments in which life thrived; and the wonderful creativity of men and nature.

Now the world was ready for something more mature, a story that would speak to the experiences of the men and women of today. What the world needed was a myth that didn’t divide people into good and evil, saved and damned, but taught them how to get along with each other and how to respect the earth and other life forms.

Paul remembered what Joseph Campbell had said about the writers of the Old Testament in his conversations with Bill Moyers:

The world was a little three-layer cake and consisted of something a few hundred miles around the Near Eastern centers there. No one even heard of the Aztecs or the Chinese. And so those whole peoples were not considered as part of the problem to be dealt with. The world changes, then the religion has to be transformed.

He thought Campbell's argument could be applied to the early leaders of Christianity, although their knowledge of other cultures had to have been broader than the knowledge of the writers of the Old Testament. But what did the early Christian leaders know about the native peoples of North and South America, sub-Saharan Africa, Australia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific islands? Probably nothing.

Christians said the Bible, including the Old Testament, was the Word of God, but how could it have been inspired by God when the God in the Book of Joshua orders the Jews to kill everything that breathes during their conquest of the Promised Land? Just what kind of a God was it they were worshipping, Paul thought, that orders everything—man, woman, child, and animal—to be killed? Not any God he would want to worship.

Paul remembered what I had told him about the Bible's Book of Genesis. I said the Book of Genesis had the story backwards when it says God created man in His own image. Actually, men create their gods in *their* own image. I told him the Jehovah in the Old Testament was a brutal and wrathful God because the Jewish people at the time believed those characteristics were necessary to survive in the world.

The Old Testament God was past its expiration date then, Paul thought, a God meant for another time and place. It probably would have been better if Christianity had severed all ties with the Old Testament instead of having to carry around the baggage of a bad-tempered and violent God.

To the Christians, the most important texts in the Bible were the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Paul believed that those Gospels were, like the Old Testament, not divinely inspired. How else could you explain the fact that the four Gospels disagree about the events in Jesus' life and present a Jesus who contradicts himself?

Paul knew that the discrepancies in the Gospels were not the only reasons to doubt the truth of the New Testament. According to biblical scholars, the Gospel of John was written too late to have been an eyewitness account. Scholars also said Mark's Gospel, which was the template for the Matthew and Luke Gospels, was written between 70 A.D. and the early second century, so there was the possibility it also was not an eyewitness account. Furthermore, Mark's Gospel lacks the story of the nativity and ends, in its original version, at Chapter 16, verse 8, when the women find that Jesus' tomb is empty. Biblical scholars also claimed the letters of Peter, James, and John were forgeries, as were many of the letters attributed to the Apostle Paul.

Paul thought about the Gnostic gospels that the early Christian Church tried to suppress but that fortunately were not completely destroyed. He remembered that Joseph Campbell said *The Gospel According To Thomas* contains a passage in which Jesus answers a question from one of his apostles about when the Kingdom of God shall come by saying, "The Kingdom is spread across the face of the earth, and men do not see it." A profession of priests would understandably feel threatened by a movement within Christianity that taught that God was already in their midst, for then there would be little need for the services of priests.

Paul remembered reading a book, *The Jesus Mysteries*, that points out there were many similarities between myths in the Near Eastern and Mediterranean Mystery religions at the time of Christ and the events of his life as told in the New Testament.

There were stories of conceptions by virgins, a birth of a Son of God on the winter solstice, baptisms to wash away sins, deaths of a god to atone for man's sins, and resurrections after three days. In a religious ritual associated with the Persian god Mithras, there was even a communion with consecrated bread and wine. In the ritual, Mithras says, in words that bring to mind Christ's statement at the Last Supper, "He who will not eat of my body and drink of my blood, so that he will be made one with me and I with him, the same shall not know salvation."

The *Jesus Mysteries* maintains that the Gnostics were the first Christians and that they believed the story of Christ's life was a myth whose mystery had to be penetrated to find the hidden meaning, which is, basically, that we are to be like Christ. The Gnostics were crushed by the Roman Empire after the Empire united with a sect of Christianity the authors call the Literalists—Christians who thought the Christ story was literally true. History is written by the conquerors, and the Literalist Christians, with the Roman Empire supporting them, were able to make the world believe the Gnostics were the heretics instead of themselves.

Besides its weaknesses and errors, Paul felt that Christianity had been corrupted long ago. By 1000 A.D., Christianity had grown into a large and powerful institution with vast land holdings and art and architectural treasures. It had developed complex rules and rituals for salvation and had compiled a book it claimed was inspired by God. Over the next thousand years, Christianity broke up into the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, and many Protestant churches. These churches had sponsored wars, crusades, and inquisitions against each other and against non-believers.

The institutions of Christianity were far different from the world of Jesus the Christ, a mystic who wrote nothing down and preached in the open air. Jesus often told men who wanted to follow him that they should give up their possessions first. He said, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Jesus told men to love God with all their hearts and to love their neighbors as they loved themselves. He even taught men to love their enemies. Paul believed that Christ would be horrified if he came back today and saw what had been done by men using his name.

Scientists ridiculed the beliefs of men of religion, but could any belief be more incredible than one that said the wondrously complex universe was formed without intent or design? What a wild imagination scientists had to claim life on earth was solely the result of random genetic mutations and natural selection. No number of years could have produced by accident the beautiful and intricate creatures of earth or the marvelous cooperation between species. How could chance have created men of symmetry, with bodies that repaired themselves, with mental processes capable of activity far in excess of what was needed for survival?

Paul saw problems with science that went beyond its philosophical weaknesses to its psychological, social, political, and economic implications. Science's belief in a universe formed by chance caused men to see themselves living in a universe without meaning, in a universe that placed no value on the individual. Moreover, the theory of evolution gave men an excuse for every crime: "My genes made me do it." And the theory of evolution's survival of the fittest or natural selection could be used to justify

war and the brutal, every-man-for-himself economic system known as capitalism.

Paul believed in his heart that life had purposes and meanings that offered challenges and opportunities for fulfillment far more exciting than what either science or Christianity had to offer.

In moments of peace it was possible to feel a oneness with the world. Experiences such as these convinced Paul that an unseen Source was behind physical reality. It was a puzzle, though, why this Source had chosen not to reveal itself openly. You would think God would have at least left some sort of manual. For Paul, God was the ultimate trickster: God created the universe and then left men alone to try to understand it. Nothing could be more exciting than to attempt to unravel that mystery.

The Way

I visited Paul after he had been in prison for ten days and found him sleeping on a cot in a private cell.

“Wakeup, sleepyhead!” I said.

Paul opened his eyes and sprang to his feet when he saw me.

“I can see you’re getting the royal treatment.”

“Ato, I’m so happy to see you again! I didn’t know if I ever would!”

He hugged me and then stepped back to look at me.

I wasn’t wearing my usual jeans, long sleeve shirt, and sandals, but the traditional clothing of a Taoist monk—a long, thin, blue robe over loose white pants. My shoes were made of cloth with felt soles.

“What’s with the outfit, Ato? I’ve never seen you dressed like this.”

“I’ve just come from a Taoist convention in heaven. Boy, am I glad to get out of there. All we did was drink tea and talk about the old days.”

I was hot, so I removed my robe. Underneath it was a thin jacket that barely reached my waist.

“Do you have any questions?” I asked.

After thinking for a few seconds, Paul said, “What is the Way? Is the Way the path to enlightenment?”

“Good question. A Taoist might say about someone, ‘He knows the Way’ or ‘He has found the Way.’ This means that person has achieved what Taoists call immortality, which is similar to Buddhist enlightenment. But since a Taoist doesn’t believe in reincarnation, it’s much more important for a Taoist to achieve immortality. If he doesn’t, according to Taoism, his consciousness will disintegrate when he dies. If, on the other hand, he attains immortality, his consciousness will return to the cosmic Source, The Tao, and he will become infinite, literally one with God.”

“That sounds like fun, but how do you reach immortality?”

“In a nutshell, you live according to the principles of Taoism—I introduced you to the two main principles, stillness and *wu wei*—and you recognize that the Tao or God is in everything.”

“Do I need to find the Way?”

“No. The Way is for recluses; it’s not your path. Your path is in the world.”

I sat down on his bed. “Do you remember what Abel told you about Huang Ti, the Yellow Emperor?”

“Abel said the Yellow Emperor lived thousands of years ago and was one of the five emperors of the Golden Age. He taught the people many things, including how to use fire and make ploughs and silk looms and boats. He was said to have created traditional medicine and to have been the founder of Taoism.”

“So he was a mythical figure and you shouldn’t take the account of his deeds literally. As you know, that’s the mistake the Christians make about Jesus. Now I’m going to tell you a story of how he achieved immortality or enlightenment.

“During the Yellow Emperor’s reign, there was a government official in the province of Henan whose name was Liu. After a long period of loyal and honest service, Liu was called to the capital to dine at a banquet given in honor of exemplary officials like himself. After they had eaten, the Yellow Emperor asked each man if there was anything he would like to request of His Majesty. When Liu’s turn to speak came, he said, ‘There is only one thing, your Highness. I would like to be released from your service so that I may spend the rest of my days in cultivation of the Way.’ The Yellow Emperor replied, ‘I cannot deny such a modest request. However, I would like you to promise to return to the capital after you have found the Way and to teach me the Way.’ To this Liu gladly agreed.

“In the mountains south of the city where Liu had worked there were rumored to be many recluses searching for the Way and a few elusive immortals who had attained the Way. Hoping to meet the latter, Liu wandered in the mountains during the spring and summer of that year, meeting no immortals, but many recluses looking, as he was, for the sublime experience. Several invited him to stay with them, but he always declined, preferring to be alone if he could not find the proper teacher.

“When the leaves began falling from the trees, Liu built a hut near a small stream in a beautiful little valley far from any other recluse. He lived there through the winter, rejoicing with the dawning of each day. When spring came, he planted a garden. In the summer and autumn, he found joy in the heat and the rain. The winter came again, and again he saw beauty in the wind and the cold and the nature all around him.

“Three years passed for Liu in this valley. He meditated and studied all day except when he was working in his garden or taking walks or performing household chores. He practiced stillness and *wu wei*, but he nevertheless felt that what he was seeking eluded him. If only an immortal would hear his prayers and visit him!

“One day during his meditation, he heard a knock on his door. Arousing himself from his deep trance, he opened the door and saw a tall, well-dressed courtier on a horse. The man said he was a messenger from the capital and had come to remind Liu that he had promised to visit the Emperor and teach him the Way. Liu told the messenger that he had, unfortunately, not yet found the Way.

“Suddenly, the messenger’s appearance changed into that of a youthful but sage-like man dressed in the robes of a recluse. Liu realized immediately that he was in the presence of Han Hsiang-Tzu, the Immortal who was known to enjoy music and poetry and whose symbol was the flute. Liu begged Han to stay for awhile, but Han insisted that

he was on a mission from the Moon Goddess and could only stop for a short time.

“After Liu had served him tea, Han said, ‘The Moon Goddess is very fond of the Yellow Emperor and she has asked me to help you. So I will tell you the secret you have been searching for.’

“‘When your mind is still and you have achieved the spontaneity of *wu wei*, you are close to the Way. But there is still one more step. The next step is for you to understand that you are part of everything and the entire universe is holy. That knowledge is all you need, Liu, to cross the threshold.’

“The Immortal got up to go, but Liu asked him if he would first play a few notes on his flute. He obliged Liu with a short, charming melody he said the Moon Goddess had often asked him to play. Then the Immortal patted Liu warm-heartedly on his back and said, ‘I really must be going. But I think we will be seeing each other again soon.’ He walked out the door and disappeared in the forest.

“Liu looked at the spot on the floor where he had spent countless hours meditating. At that moment, he understood that the Tao was not to be found only there, but also in the singing of the birds in the morning, in the drinking of the afternoon tea, in the setting of the sun against the pine-covered hills, in the cooking of the evening rice, and in all the pains and sorrows of life, and he was satisfied.

“Laughing and dancing with joy, he knew that nothing could hurt him. He knew that he had always been, and always will be, a part of everything. He saw his life as a flower that was meant to blossom and then to grow old and die. It could be no other way. But there really was no death, because there was no birth. There was only the changing of form.

“Liu felt he was ready to join the other immortals in heaven, but there was one task that tied him to the world—his duty to his Emperor.

“That same night the Yellow Emperor was awakened by a cool breeze in his chamber. Looking up, he saw the figure of Liu floating above the floor. ‘Your Highness,’ Liu said, ‘I have come to tell you that I have found the Way.’

“The Yellow Emperor said, ‘Please inform me, lofty immortal: What is the secret of the Way?’

“Liu replied, ‘Your Majesty, the secret is that there is no secret. The Way is all around us and available to all. Enjoy the simple things of life. Respect others. Laugh a lot. Recognize you are part of everything and understand that the whole world is holy.’

“The Yellow Emperor said, ‘Thank you, Liu, for not forgetting to return to me. Please now go to the heavenly abode. I shall join you soon.’

“Liu slowly faded from the Yellow Emperor’s sight, leaving behind only his sandals, as was the custom, to show that he was not of the world any longer. The Yellow Emperor that very night left the palace, entrusting the kingdom to his eldest son, and journeyed to the mountains to the south of the capital. He spent a few years there living simply and practicing the principles of stillness and *wu wei* until one day, when he was walking in the forest, he had the sudden realization: ‘This is me.’ His experience of oneness with nature was so overwhelming that he could not tell where his flesh ended and the world began. The next day he climbed atop a mountain peak and disappeared into the clouds, leaving behind only his sandals.”

Paul's Escape and Speech

Returning to the world had been good for Paul. He had more energy and more self-confidence than when he left the monastery. He also had put on some weight.

"Are you ready to get out of here?" I asked. "There's a planet that needs to be saved."

"I can't save the world, Ato."

"What? You mean all my work was for nothing?"

"I'm sorry. The world can only save itself."

"I'm glad you've gotten that straight. But you still have a job to do."

After he had packed his things into his backpack, we walked through the prison walls and the chain link fence topped with barbed wire. I then released Paul's hand and he became visible to the people near the entrance.

A peanut vendor recognized Paul and shouted, "Look everybody! It's Paul America!"

The policeman at the gate began walking toward Paul.

"Ato, a policeman is coming. Make me invisible again."

"Relax. Let them arrest you."

This time Paul was not placed in a cell, but in a large room where several policemen had their desks. When I returned the next morning, Paul was sitting on a cot reading Jane Roberts' *Seth Speaks*.

"Stand up and take my hand."

A guard noticed Paul stand up, but after Paul took my hand, he faded from the guard's view. The guard ran over to the cot and shouted, "Call the captain! He's gone! He's gone!"

We continued walking after we had passed through the fence and a few minutes later we reached the marketplace. We climbed onto the monument honoring Lao Tzu, the popular Taoist philosopher. I then released Paul's hand and he became visible to the people in the market, who rushed up to him, curious to see him and hear him speak.

"What would have happened if you'd let go of my hand when we were going through a wall of the prison?" Paul asked.

I laughed. "They would have had to cut you out of the wall."

"Why did you help me escape yesterday and then let me get arrested again?"

"I'm trying to get you some free publicity. Have you heard any of the stories being told about you?"

"No."

"You're being called an alien, a prophet, a messiah, and even a Taoist master. Can you imagine?"

I laughed again. "Gamblers have gotten interested in you. There are some men who will lose a pretty penny because of your escape today."

"You're joking, aren't you?"

"No."

A man in the front of the crowd asked the man standing next to him, “Who is Spaceman talking to?”

“He’s communicating with his spaceship. Any moment now, they’re going to beam him up.”

“Do you remember the dream you had just before you came to China?” I asked.

With my open hand, I hit him on his left shoulder like in a karate chop. My action released memories of the dream, and he began speaking to the crowd in Chinese. In English, he said:

I am here today because I believe we can overcome the challenges that face us—of war, injustice, poverty, pollution, global warming, destruction of the environment, and the extinction of species.

Paul paused and noticed the people had become very quiet.

Your first challenge is to take charge of your lives. Talk among yourselves. Build up each other’s faith that you can influence your world. If your government does not act with humanity, then get rid of it. Remember, I’m not talking about violence. Violence is a reaction against feelings of powerlessness. The power you seek is within you.

Paul felt there was more to the speech, but he couldn’t remember the words. He then noticed that I was no longer beside him and he climbed down from the statue and was quickly engulfed by the people in the marketplace. He could see in the distance that the police were attempting to push their way through the crowd, but the crowd would not let them pass. This reminded him of the opening stanza to poem 78 in the *Tao Te Ching*. Although he knew the poem was about the Tao, he also thought it could apply to people when they worked together:

Nothing is weaker than water,
But when it attacks something hard
Or resistant, then nothing withstands it,
And nothing will alter its way.

For the next few days, the people of Guizhou protected Paul so the police could not arrest him. Even in the hotel where he stayed, Paul was safe because the people would not allow the police to get near his room.

Terrak Appears at the UN

A couple of days after Paul’s speech in the marketplace, the UN convened a special session at the request of the alien Almar. He had told the Secretary-General that diplomatic efforts had failed and there would be an important announcement at the meeting.

At nine o'clock in the morning New York time, an android came out from behind the UN logo and walked to the lectern as the audience at the UN gasped. This was the first time the people of Earth had seen a Valkarian.

The android was about two and a half meters tall and was made of a blue-black metal covered by a thin glass shell, except for the head, which was a kind of plastic that allowed it to make facial expressions.

The android began speaking in a soothing voice:

I am Terrak from the distant planet Valkar. It is true that the men you have seen from the spaceship are from your neighbor in space, the planet Honam. These men work for us.

There are four hundred million others like me on Valkar. You may call us robots or androids, but we were once men like you. When our planet got caught in a run-away warming trend, we had to place our minds inside machines.

When Terrak paused, the audience became very loud as everyone talked at once. Terrak waited for the people to settle down and then he continued:

You need to understand that the earth is our ancestral home. And just as the Hebrews returned to Israel to reclaim their homeland, we have returned to earth.

We will give you until the end of the year to accept our terms, which are that you set up a world government under our control.

If you cooperate with us, the scientific and technological advances of our civilization will be made available to you. Under our guidance, you'll be able to reverse the effects of global warming, reduce pollution, increase food production, and save the forests, oceans, lakes, rivers, and endangered species. We can end your reliance on fossil fuels by showing you how to tap into a virtually unlimited energy source. Together, we can make the earth a paradise again.

In order for you to realize the seriousness of our intentions, a demonstration will be necessary, just as it was necessary for the United States to drop atomic bombs on Japan.

You could hear a pin drop.

The demonstration will take place in Jerusalem, where a small asteroid will fall on the Old City. For their own safety, all the people in Jerusalem and the surrounding area should leave within forty-eight hours.

The Israeli ambassador swore loudly in Hebrew and then pulled a gun from under his coat and shot at Terrak. The bullet bounced off Terrak's torso and fell to the floor. The ambassador was restrained by people in the audience before he could fire his gun again.

People were quickly evacuated by the authorities in Jerusalem. Most left peacefully,

but some had to be dragged from their homes.

That night, the Valkarians moved their spaceship to a position above Jerusalem and projected a force field down from the ship to the Dome of the Rock, the Western Wall, and the Al-Aqsa mosque.

Forty-eight hours after the speech, an iron asteroid guided by two rockets began a rapid descent to Earth. When the asteroid slammed into the Old City, it made a small crater and destroyed from its impact all structures within about a two hundred and fifty meter radius except for the three religious sites protected by the Valkarian force field.

The next day, alien workers put up an electrified fence around the area of the destruction. On the fence they put a sign with these words: Future site of NEW ATLANTIS, CAPITAL OF THE WORLD GOVERNMENT.

Terrak's appearance at the UN seemed to affect the people of Earth in a way that the appearance of John and Almar had not. Maybe it was because John and Almar looked like men.

After seeing Terrak at the UN, the people on Earth began doing what the great American Benjamin Franklin said was the first responsibility of all citizens: questioning authority. In the weeks that followed, there were protests against government policies in every country in the world; wives demanded input on decisions their husbands used to make alone; children asked their parents more "why" questions when they were told to do something; and students were not content to merely listen and take notes while their teachers lectured.

When the change began in China, the people who had been protecting Paul left the hotel where he was staying and joined the protests.

About a week after Terrak spoke at the UN, John visited Paul in his hotel room. Paul was watching TV when John arrived. Paul hugged John and they both sat down on the bed to watch the news.

The CNN anchor said, "Spontaneous demonstrations have broken out in many Chinese cities. Thanks to our iReporters, we can bring you these amazing videos."

On the TV, protestors were seen marching and demonstrating with signs in Chinese and English in the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, and Xi'an. Some of the signs read: "Prosecute polluters." "Protect workers' safety, not owners' profits." "Protect us from makers of contaminated drugs and food." "End police brutality and government corruption." "Give us free elections."

Back at the CNN studio, the anchor said, "We also have an iReport that comes from the city of Urumqi in the western province of Xinjiang."

On the TV, protestors were seen marching with signs in the Uighur language, Chinese, and English: "Give us religious freedom." "End Han immigration and preferential treatment." "Release our fathers and brothers from prison." "Respect our human rights."

At the CNN studio, the anchor said, "This last iReport comes from Lhasa, Tibet."

On the TV, protestors were seen demonstrating with signs in Chinese, Tibetan, and English: "End special treatment for Han Chinese." "Hands off Tibetan religion and culture." "Let the Dalai Lama come home."

"I've been negotiating with the Chinese leaders to allow the Dalai Lama to return to

Tibet,” John said.

“The world really is changing very fast,” Paul said.

“I have to go,” John said. “The Valkarians suspect that we’ve become friends. I just want you to know that I told the Chinese leaders the Valkarians would be displeased if you were arrested again.”

“Is that true?”

“No, but it is true the Valkarians are watching you. And the Chinese leaders believed me, so you should be safe now.”

John got up to leave. They hugged and John said, “Take care of yourself.”

“You too. I hope we can meet again soon under better circumstances.”

“I’m sure we will.”

A Wedding and Some Fun Before Things Get Serious

Now that he thought it was safe, Paul called Ani. He asked her to meet him in Guangzhou, a large city not far from Hong Kong.

Ani arrived two days later on the train. She was dressed to kill in a black cheongsam side-slit dress, but she was worried that Paul had changed, despite the fact that he’d told her several times on the phone that he loved her.

It was raining when the train pulled into the station. Paul, who had forgotten to bring an umbrella, ran to Ani when he saw her get off the train. She put down her suitcase and they embraced in the rain.

“I didn’t know how much I loved you until you were gone,” he said.

“I don’t want to ever be away from you again,” she said through her tears.

“I’ll take you with me wherever I go from now on. I want to give you this.”

Paul slipped a ring onto the index finger of Ani’s left hand. “Will you marry me?” he asked.

“Of course. But honey, that’s the wrong finger.”

In a simple ceremony a few days later, Paul and Ani were married.

For their honeymoon, they took a short trip to Lhasa. They were just like typical newlyweds there, holding hands in public and spending a lot of time in their hotel room.

One morning while they were in bed, Ani said to Paul, who was just waking up, “You have hair growing in your ears. It’s growing on your back too. Your uncle was a monkey!”

“Oh, no! Darwin was right.”

“Let me see if you have a tail...”

“Hey, that tickles.”

“Not yet.”

“You’re lucky I’m not Daniel.”

“Why?”

“His chest looks like a forest. I think he actually evolved from a bear.”

Ani hit Paul with a pillow. “I know why you’re so honest.”

“Why?”

“Because you’re such a bad liar!”

“You’re right. I couldn’t tell a good lie if my life depended on it.”

They were silent for a moment and then Ani said, “I want to have a baby.”

“Do you want a boy or a girl?”

“I just want a healthy baby that doesn’t have your big nose,” she said, and she squeezed Paul’s nose.

After the honeymoon, Paul and Ani visited Ani’s parents in Beijing for a week. On their last day, I appeared to them while they were alone, having lunch.

“Ato!” Paul said.

“I’m sorry I missed your wedding. Where did you go on your honeymoon?”

“We went to Tibet. We wanted to go to Egypt, but I was afraid the Chinese government wouldn’t let me back in.”

“For my wedding present, I’ll take you to Egypt.”

“Really?” Paul said.

“Really. You’ll need hats and you should put on light clothing.”

A few minutes later, we were standing in front of the Great Pyramid in the bright early morning sun. A guide ran over to us and asked if we wanted to take a camel tour. We agreed and spent several hours exploring the site. We had camel races, posed for photos with an imaginary camera in front of the Great Sphinx, and did a little hiking. It was a lot of fun.

Around noon, I said, “Let’s go back. Paul, pay the guide.”

Paul checked in his pockets and could only find a few coins. Ani looked in her pockets and only found a ten yuan note.

The guide smiled and pointed at Paul’s new sneakers, a gift from Ani.

“Ato, help me out here,” Paul said. “Ani paid a lot of money for these shoes.”

I crouched down behind Ani and started sifting through the soil. After a few seconds, I lifted up a twenty euro note. I began sifting again and I quickly found another twenty euro note. I looked at Paul and he shook his head, so I sifted some more and pulled up a ten euro note. I gave the money to Paul and he paid the guide.

I had them back in Beijing in time for dinner. Before disappearing, I said to Ani, “You’ll need a visa for your next trip.”

“Visa for what country?” Ani asked Paul after I had gone.

“America, of course. You married me for the green card, didn’t you?”

Paul, who was on his way to the bathroom, ducked just in time to avoid the plate thrown at his head. It hit the wall behind him and made a loud noise as it broke into pieces.

The Chinese Democratic Revolution

Paul set up his headquarters in city of Guangzhou in the southern province of Guangdong. The people of this province were far from the center of power in Beijing and were the most independent of the Chinese. The leader Sun Yat-Sen, who was involved with the revolution that overthrew the Qing dynasty a century earlier, was born here.

Now the ruler of China was the Communist Party. The Communist Party had become like a dynasty, and like every other dynasty in human history, had been corrupted by its power.

A few days after returning from Beijing, Paul spoke at a protest rally in Yuexiu Park between the Sun Yat-Sen Monument and Memorial Hall. Ani translated Paul's words as he spoke:

I read a newspaper article that said ninety percent of the twenty thousand richest people in China have connections with Party leaders. The Party has betrayed the people who made the revolution possible in 1949.

Before the Olympics, the government promised to allow protests in Beijing if the protestors got permits. But during the Olympics, the government denied all requests for permits and arrested some people who had applied for them.

The government even threatened to send two elderly women, Wang Xiuying, 77, and Wu Dianyu, 79, to a re-education labor camp for wanting to protest about not being fairly compensated for their homes, which were demolished in a redevelopment project.

After the Olympics, the government arrested protestors and sent them back to their hometowns. Two female protestors were stripped naked in front of policemen to prevent them from trying to escape.

I hope you will join with us in a nationwide strike on the day before the Mid-Autumn Festival. It is time to tell Communist Party leaders that they should be your servants, not your masters.

We're meeting in the shadow of the monument to the great democrat Sun Yat-Sen. He never saw his dreams realized. Let us begin today to make his dreams a reality.

After the speech, Paul unexpectedly found Daniel waiting for him behind the stage.

"Dan the Man!"

"The Paulster!"

"You've lost weight," Paul said as they hugged.

"I can see you've found it," Daniel said. "I thought I would surprise you. I wanted to show up for your wedding, but being your brother made it hard to get a visa. Chinese officials acted like you were a toxic substance."

"I guess I'm a thorn in their sides."

"I watched you give the speech and I had the impression that you've become more relaxed and confident. Now that I'm near you, I can see it's true. You've grown a lot since I last saw you."

"Ani has helped me, but studying with Ato has really made a difference. Besides, I've been given the opportunity to fight for truth, justice, and peace. What more could an Irishman ask for?"

“Dad would be proud of you. Do you remember the Irish joke Joseph Campbell told Bill Moyers?”

“An Irishman comes up to some people fighting in the street and asks, ‘Is this a private fight or can anyone get in?’ That’s me, all right.”

For a foreigner like Paul to be so closely involved with a revolution in China would not have been possible a few years earlier. For that matter, a revolution in China would not have been possible a few years earlier. But these were not normal times in China or anywhere else in the world where the arrival of the Valkarians was known.

During the summer months, Paul spoke in many of the large cities in the provinces near the coast. He didn’t realize when he started his speaking tour that there were so many big cities in China.

At a staff meeting in his headquarters in Guangzhou on a hot afternoon at the end of August, Paul was in a joking mood.

“I want to read the results of a poll on the Internet,” he said. “20% of Chinese think I’m human. 39% say I’m an American spy. And 41% say I’m an alien. Hooray! Aliens beat spies!”

“Ever since the aliens came to earth, people are ready to believe anything,” Ani said.

“The good thing is that their arrival has made people question old beliefs,” Daniel said.

“Daniel, what would Gandhi do now?” Paul asked.

“When Gandhi went to help the indigo farmers in Champaran, India, he spent several months collecting information before he took action.”

“That’s a good idea,” Ani said. “We’ve only visited cities near the coast. We can travel around the country and meet people and listen to their stories.”

“The Communists rose to power on the backs of the peasants,” the staff leader said. “Only when the peasants show they don’t support the Communist Party will the Party consent to real reform.”

In September, Paul, Ani, and Daniel rode hard seat class trains through the southern provinces. They talked to peasant farmers and visited mountain villages where they met ethnic minority people. They traveled to rural areas in the province of Sichuan and talked with parents of school children who had died in the 2008 earthquake.

They next went to the province of Xinjiang, where they met Uighur Muslims who complained of arbitrary arrests and unprovoked police violence. They told of job discrimination and also of restrictions placed on the practice of their religion. They said they could only go on government-sponsored hajj tours to Mecca because their passports had been confiscated to prevent them from traveling on their own. They said that in the sacred fasting month of Ramadan, the government required students to eat during the day, in violation of Islamic law. They said Muslim government workers and Party officials were not allowed to worship in mosques. They also said the government had banned all versions of the Koran except its official one.

A few days later, Paul, Ani, and Daniel stopped in the province of Gansu, where Tibetan Buddhist monks told them of Chinese interference in their religion. They said the Chinese had kidnapped the Panchen Lama, whose main job was to lead the search for a

new Dalai Lama when the present one died. The Chinese had replaced him with a Panchen Lama they had chosen. Clearly, the monks said, the Chinese had done this so they could pick a Dalai Lama who would answer to them. The monks also said they had to pass “patriotism” courses where they were required to denounce the Dalai Lama. If they refused, they were kicked out of their monasteries. The monks complained that the Chinese had destroyed many important religious buildings in Lhasa and they said that some monks who had taken part in the protests in 2008 were still in prison.

At the last stop on their tour, Ani, Paul, and Daniel visited a small village market in a northeastern province. They were talking to vendors in the market when a good-looking, fortyish lady came up to Daniel and started pulling on his sleeve. She didn’t speak, but Daniel let himself be led away by her.

Ani looked up from her conversation with a woman selling cabbages just as Daniel was about to leave the market area with the lady.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“I don’t know.”

The woman selling cabbages spoke to Ani and Ani said, “Her mother wants to tell you what happened to her daughter-in-law.”

“Wait. We’re going with you,” Paul said.

Ani and Paul joined Daniel and the lady and all four of them began walking out of the market.

“You can’t just let a woman take you somewhere. She might be a robber or a prostitute,” Ani scolded.

Paul laughed and said, “Daniel needs to get laid and he has no money, so what’s he got to lose?”

A few minutes later, after a short taxi ride, they were in a peasant family’s home. Ani was holding the hand of a very old woman.

The old woman spoke and Ani translated: “One December, county officials wanted a certain number of babies born before the new year.”

The old woman spoke again and Ani said, “Family planning officials formed an early birth shock brigade. Their goal was to find nine women who could be forced into labor.”

The old woman caught her breath and spoke and Ani said, “They found her daughter-in-law, who was seven months pregnant. Even though a doctor told them she was too weak to have forced labor, the family planning officials insisted.”

The old woman had the energy to speak to Ani one more time. Ani said, “The baby died and the daughter-in-law was crippled. But no one was punished. All the government did was tell the family planning officials not to do it again.”

When they were outside the home, they walked quietly for a little ways, but you could see a fire was burning in Paul’s eyes.

“This is madness,” he finally said. “How can government officials be so cold-hearted and arrogant?”

“Government officials should serve us. We’re not born to serve them,” Ani said.

“Do you remember, little brother,” Daniel said, “that John told us they have a saying on his planet: ‘Unchecked power always corrupts.’”

“‘Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely,’” Paul said, quoting Lord Acton. He added, “Thomas Jefferson said, ‘I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility toward every form of tyranny.’”

Ani, Paul, and Daniel arrived in Beijing several days before the strike date and decided to meet some of the petitioners in the capital. Petitioning government officials for a redress of grievances was a practice that began in the fourteenth century. However, at the time of the Beijing Olympics, secret prisons had been set up to hold petitioners, who were often beaten before they were escorted back to their provinces. Some of those prisons, called ‘black houses’ or ‘black jails,’ were still in operation.

They talked to parents of college graduates from the town of Wubu in north-central China. The parents said they had been locked in a black house for nine days for trying to petition officials in Beijing about their children’s school records, called dangans, which had been stolen by local officials and sold to students with poor school records. Without their dangans, the parents said, their children were unable to compete for good jobs, a right they had earned from years of study. Paul and Daniel were surprised that pieces of paper, possibly stolen, could determine someone’s job prospects in China, but Ani said it was true.

Despite the prisons and abuse, petitioners continued coming to Beijing hoping for relief. Former factory workers told them they wanted help from the government because they had not been paid when their factories were shut down. Some peasants claimed they had not been given a fair price for homes flooded in dam projects. Some people said their land had been illegally seized by government officials and sold to developers. Some parents demanded the right to file product liability lawsuits after their babies had gotten sick from milk made from a powdered formula that was tainted with melamine. Some parents of school children who had died in the Sichuan earthquake wanted an investigation of the schools that had collapsed. They complained that local government corruption had resulted in substandard construction. There were people who said the police had refused to help them after their children had been kidnapped. And there was one old woman from a group called the Tiananmen Mothers who said her son had been jailed during the demonstrations in 1989 and died in prison. She said he was the man who had become famous in the West for standing in front of a tank.

They also met secretly with members of Falun Gong, who told them of persecutions, arrests, and tortures orchestrated from the top of the Communist Party hierarchy in an attempt to stamp out their religion.

On the morning of the strike, students and teachers all across the country stayed home from their schools, workers did not go to their factories or offices, and millions of peasants took a day off. It was a beautiful day and many people visited parks, relaxed at home, or began their holiday travels early.

During lunch in Ani’s favorite restaurant in Beijing, they talked about the future between interruptions from well-wishers.

“There are rumors the Chinese government will soon allow the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet,” Daniel said. “I want to be there when he arrives.”

“That’ll be something to see,” Paul said. “By the way, I’ve been asked to speak at the rally tonight.”

“Then we’re going to America,” Ani said.

Paul took Ani’s hands in his and said, “We’re going to have a family.”

“Congratulations,” Daniel said.

“If the baby is a boy, we’re going to name him Daniel. If it’s a girl, she’ll be Sarah Danielle,” Ani said.

“I’m honored,” Daniel said. “I just got an email from a friend in San Francisco. She wants me to ask you if you’d run for Congress on the Green Party ticket.”

“As Groucho Marx said, ‘I don’t want to belong to any club that would have me as a member.’”

“Was he related to Karl Marx?” Ani asked.

Daniel and Paul laughed.

At the rally, Ani translated Paul’s words as he spoke:

Ani and I are going to the United States in a few days. I want to thank the people of China for the warm welcome I’ve received. I won’t forget you. I would like to leave you with words from poem 13 of the Tao Te Ching:

In governing the world,
Let rule be entrusted
To him who treats his rank
As if it were his soul;
World sovereignty can be
Committed to that man
Who loves all people
As he loves himself.

Paul kissed Ani passionately, like it was the last time, and the audience gave them a standing ovation. While that was going on, a man climbed onto the stage and began walking toward Paul.

When the man took a gun from under his coat, Paul shouted, “Get down!” and pushed Ani behind the podium. Daniel rushed out from among the people on the stage and tackled the man. He struggled with the man for a moment until the gun went off and he was shot in the head. Like a cat pouncing on a prey, Paul flew through the air and landed on top of the man. Then people on the stage disarmed the man and led him away.

Daniel died in Paul’s arms. The photo that was seen around the world in newspapers and on the Internet was one that showed, amidst the chaos following the shooting, Paul holding Daniel’s head on his lap like Mary holds Jesus in Michelangelo’s *Pieta*.

After the assassination, many influential people who had refused to support the movement now joined in and the movement became an overwhelming force. In the wake of this new energy, the Communist Party—recognizing the truth behind these words of Victor Hugo: “No army can stop an idea whose time has come”—ordered free and open local, county, and provincial elections, including elections for mayors, police chiefs, and governors.

Anti-War Speech and Prison Again

Paul and Ani flew to San Diego a few days after the rally. Back at home, Paul at first considered retiring from public life, but he realized that Daniel would not have wanted him to do this, and he realized, as I had told him, that his fulfillment was to be found in the world.

About a month after he arrived in the U.S., Paul was the main speaker at a peace rally in San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz, California. He attended the rally with Ani, who was then five months pregnant. When his turn to speak came, he said:

If I take a gun or a bomb and kill my neighbors, I'm sure you will agree that I have committed a crime and should be punished. However, if I join the military and kill men, women, and children in foreign lands, I am called a hero and asked to walk in a parade. How is it that an act done by one man is murder, while the same act, done by men wearing uniforms, is a beautiful and patriotic thing?

In the dictionary, patriotism is defined as love for and loyalty toward your country. In practice, it means helping your neighbors when they are in trouble and defending your country when it is attacked.

However, there is a second meaning for patriotism that is not in the dictionary but has been used by powerful nations throughout history, and the United States is no exception. In this meaning, patriotism is the belief that your country's needs, hopes, and fears are more important than the needs, hopes, and fears of people in other lands; that God loves your nation more than any other nation; and that those people who oppose you are evil.

The end result of these ugly ideas is that you feel justified in trampling on the rights of people in other lands. And, in our particular case, as we kill civilians, we often complain that our enemies are using the local population as human shields. But by making sure that we fight our wars in foreign lands, we are using whole nations as human shields.

When God gave Moses the Sixth Commandment, God did not say, "Thou shalt not kill except in war." God said, "Thou shalt not kill." Period. Full stop. There is nothing in the teachings of Christ about killing or war being justified. From what he said, you would have to conclude he was a pacifist: "Love your enemies." "Do good to those who hate you." "Resist not evil."

It is time for us to recognize that killing people is a crime in peace and in war and that no one, not even a President, can decide who has human rights. Human rights are gifts from God and cannot be taken away from us by anyone.

Bullets, missiles, bombs, and artillery shells cannot tell the difference between soldiers and civilians. We, the United States, the Israelis, and our allies, have killed and injured

many innocent people in our attempts to fight militants in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. We have often used the excuse that we have made every attempt to avoid civilian casualties, but when civilian casualties occur again and again, that statement is very hollow indeed. If you really are trying to avoid civilian casualties, then you do not attack populated areas.

After World War II, a Major War Criminals Trial was convened in Nuremberg, Germany to prosecute German leaders for war crimes. The world should convene in The Hague another Major War Criminals Trial. The President and Vice President of the United States at the time of the Iraq War should be put on trial for starting the war, conducting warfare over populated areas, targeting civilians, and abusing and torturing prisoners. The leaders of Israel during the continuing Palestine War should also be tried on many of the same charges plus the charge of imposing collective punishment on the Palestinian people by blockading their borders and preventing food and medicine from reaching them.

Many years ago, Bob Dylan wrote a song in which he asked, "How many ears must one man have before he can hear people cry?" "How many deaths will it take till he knows that too many people have died?" "How many times can a man turn his head, pretending he just doesn't see?" He ended his song with these words: "The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind."

Just as the wind blows from one corner of the earth to the other so that the air that passed through the lungs of the Chinese last week we breathe today, the way to end conflicts between nations is to see that we are connected to each other and what we do to others we do to ourselves.

The new age will be an age of peace based upon this knowledge. It is an ancient wisdom that was beautifully expressed by the Indian Chief Seattle many years ago when he said, "One thing we know: There is only one God. No man, be he red man or white man, can be apart. We are brothers after all."

The philosopher-mystic Jane Roberts wrote what I think should be the first commandment of the new age: "Thou shalt not kill even in the pursuit of your ideals."

While some people were congratulating Paul after the speech, two large men, aliens from John's planet and members of the Valkarian police force, came up to Paul.

"Are you Paul Heart?" the first policeman asked.

"Yeah."

"You're under arrest," the second policeman said.

"For what reason?" Ani demanded.

"Terrak's orders," the first policeman said.

There was a bit of a commotion as some people attempted to get between Paul and the policemen, but Paul raised his hand and they stopped struggling.

Paul was taken to a facility in Tijuana, Mexico, a city just across the border from California. His prison cell was in an air-conditioned, prefabricated steel building. The cell contained two rooms and had a door and four windows with curtains, but no bars. One room had a bed, desk, chair, and filing cabinet. The other room was a bathroom.

His cell was luxurious compared to the cells of the other men in the prison. The other prisoners were in wire cages about two meters wide by two meters high by three meters long. They had been brought to the facility in handcuffs and with shackles on their legs and black sacks over their heads. When they arrived, their heads were shaved and they were required to put on bright orange jump suits. They were kept in isolation from each other and had no access to lawyers and were not allowed to see or write to their families. It was believed the purpose of these procedures was to create psychological distress and disorientation in order to weaken them for their interrogations.

A few of the prisoners had been caught attacking the New Atlantis construction site in Israel or had attempted to attack the spaceship's shuttles, which was useless because the shuttles were protected by powerful shields. Some of the prisoners were only guilty of having planned attacks against the Valkarians. But most of the prisoners had not committed any offense; they were there simply because they had been turned over to the Valkarians by bounty hunters and other people who wanted to collect the large cash rewards being offered for "terrorists."

When I visited Paul a few weeks after his imprisonment, he was reading Carlos Castaneda's book *The Eagle's Gift*.

"Ato, where have you been? It's been six months since I've seen you," he said.

"You didn't think I had abandoned my star pupil, did you?" I said. We've met in your dreams, but obviously you've forgotten, haven't you?"

"I've woken up a few times with a memory of talking to you, but I didn't remember what we said."

"Well, even though you don't remember consciously, I've been giving you lessons in your dreams. And I'm happy to say that you're getting close to the point where I can sign off on your training. You're better about worrying; you've grown more humble; and you've gotten your temper under control."

"The death of someone you love can really help you focus on what's important."

"By the way, that was an excellent speech you gave in Santa Cruz, but I have one comment. People who hate war cannot end war; only people who love peace can. As Jane Roberts said, 'You get what you concentrate on.'"

I sat down and looked at my feet and said, "Hey, how do you like my new running shoes?"

"Do you plan to do some running?"

The sound of boots hitting the concrete floor reminded me of why I was there and I said quickly, "You're going to be tempted."

Almost before I could get the words out of my mouth, there was a knock on the door.

"Come in," Paul said.

The door opened and a couple of prison guards entered. One of them said, "Terrak wants to see you."

We took a shuttle to the spaceship and were escorted to a room on the ship's forward side. The room had a large oval table and a long window with a marvelous view of the Earth. There were no lines dividing the land into nations or even continents. It was like the world was one big, beautiful country.

The Temptation

When Terrak entered the room, he walked up to Paul and put his hand out. "It's nice to finally get the chance to meet you," he said.

Paul shook Terrak's hand reluctantly because he felt uncomfortable shaking the hand of a tyrant.

"Sit," Terrak said and motioned to a chair on the side of the table facing the window. Terrak sat down on the opposite side of the table.

I sat on the table, close to Terrak. Of course, Terrak couldn't see me, but Paul could. When Paul looked at me, I covered my eyes with my hands.

"I've given the order for your release," Terrak said. "We've decided you're not a threat. In fact, your message may be useful to us. 'Religion is the opiate of the people,' as your Karl Marx said."

Terrak was silent for a moment, then he continued: "But we'd like you to consider a proposal."

Paul coughed and looked at me and I covered my ears.

Thinking Paul was looking at the view, Terrak turned around and said, "Isn't it gorgeous? Our spaceships have visited hundreds of solar systems and we've found no planet that can compare with earth."

"It's easy to forget how beautiful it is when you're focused on your own problems. But from here, it's a jewel."

"Now, our proposal: We'd like to make you the first President of Earth. Name your salary, your perks, you can have whatever you want. We'll give you more power than any man has ever had. You can be king of the world if that's what you want."

Paul looked at me a third time and I covered my mouth.

"Why are you offering this to me?"

"We need a human to be our representative on earth. You're honest and a man of the people. You'll give us credibility. If you don't accept our offer, someone else will. Why not take the position and use it to achieve your dreams?"

"Do you know about my dreams?"

"John has told us enough about you for us to think that you care deeply about the poor."

"That's right. Even when I was a boy, I was disturbed by the poverty in the world. I've come to the conclusion that an economic system based upon cooperation within a community would be better than a system based upon competition between individuals. Supporters of capitalism claim that the so-called Invisible Hand of the market leads every man in his selfishness to work for the general good. That might produce lower prices, but it doesn't change the fact that capitalism rewards greed, encourages excessive

consumption and the destruction of the environment, and leads to great concentrations of wealth and poverty.

“On the other hand, a true community-based economic system would respect the rights and needs of all members of the community now and in the future. It would recognize the interdependence of all the world’s communities and would encourage self-reliance, thrift, and sustainability, three virtues that are extremely important today.”

“People would say it’s just Communism warmed over.”

“Twentieth century Communism was brutal and became corrupt and centralized. It made communism look bad, but communism’s main principle is still correct: In terms of justice and morality, no one—no government, no individual, no corporation—can own the earth or its wealth. We’re just travelers here, preceded by others and to be followed by others. How can travelers claim they own the place they’re passing through? We should act, instead, as if we’re leasing the earth from past and future generations.”

“We’ve visited 108 inhabited worlds,” Terrak said, “and in only three is there any talk of individuals owning the planet. And in the two besides the earth, they’re abandoning private ownership of property because of the violence and poverty it causes.”

“The earth existed for billions of years before capitalism was invented,” Paul said, “and suddenly men have the right to do the earth whatever they want, including turning it into a wasteland? What about our responsibility to our children and grandchildren?”

Paul looked at Terrak for a moment before asking, “What makes you think you’ll be able to conquer the world?”

“Having been a scientist, you must know this, Paul. We can drop asteroids on the earth and devastate your cities. There’s no defense against us.”

“I don’t know if I can accept your offer. You—”

“I don’t want you to decide yet. Go home. Take time to think about it,” Terrak said. “I’m going down to earth now. Are you hungry? You can eat while we transit.”

During the shuttle flight, Terrak said, “When our spaceship arrived at earth, I finally understood why our ancestors called your planet a paradise. It’s so green and has so much water. No one needs to starve here.”

“I agree, yet a billion people go to bed hungry...I want to ask you about the plan Almar and John were going to present at the UN.”

“It’s very simple. Humans need to let us show them how to be more efficient. With a world government, the proper laws and enforcement, hunger, war, injustice, and discrimination can be eliminated. Factories can be automated to produce all the goods people need.”

“I wish it were that easy,” Paul said. “You can’t make people act reasonably.”

“I disagree.”

“I’m interested in hearing more about that energy source you mentioned at the UN.”

“That answer will have to wait until you’ve joined us.”

“OK. That’s fair. Why do your people have to leave your planet?”

“Our sun is a red giant. Every day the sun grows larger and our planet’s surface temperature rises.”

“Why didn’t you just go to another planet to live when that started instead of placing your minds inside robots?”

“At the time, we didn’t have the interstellar drive and there were no inhabitable planets within the range of our conventional rockets.”

When we got back to Paul’s cell, Terrak sat on the only chair in the room and Paul sat down on his bed. I sat on top of the filing cabinet.

“What do you think of our prison?” Terrak said. “We modeled it after one of yours.”

“Why do you treat the prisoners here so badly?”

“This is something you’ll need to learn if you’re going to work for us: The end justifies the means. We’ve gotten information from them that has saved lives.”

In another part of the prison, a man who looked to be in his sixties and had a full head of grey hair was lying on the concrete floor in a fetal position. He was covering his face with his hands while guards kicked him and a German shepherd dog barked.

Nearby, a guard was holding the head of another prisoner, who was kneeling beside a bucket of water. The prisoner appeared to be in his late sixties, had thinning grey hair and plump cheeks, and was wearing gold wire frame glasses.

The guard shoved the prisoner’s head into the bucket.

When the guard released prisoner’s head, he screamed between gasps for air: “I’ll tell you whatever you want to hear! I’ll name names! I’ll sign anything!”

Back in the prison cell, Paul asked, “How can you trust the information you’ve gotten? And how many people did you torture to get your information?”

“We don’t torture. Besides, terrorists are not protected by the Geneva Conventions.”

“First of all, the prisoners here are not terrorists—”

“Anyone can be a terrorist. It just depends on whether they are on your side or not.”

“You remind me of what Humpty Dumpty said: ‘When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean.’”

“You have a saying: ‘History is written by the conquerors.’ A similar thing can be said about language: Words are defined by the powerful.”

“You’re wrong. Gandhi said, ‘In the long run, no force can prevail against love and truth.’”

“They killed him, didn’t they?”

“What’s your point?”

“He was the symbol of love and truth and his enemies killed him.”

“But the British did leave India.”

“Here’s another thing you need to learn: A ruler’s manipulation of the meaning of words helps him maintain popular support without having to resort to violence. In the right hands, language is an important tool for peace and stability.”

“For *your* peace and stability. Have you read Machiavelli’s *The Prince*?”

“How did you know? Chapter Eighteen is marvelous.”

“I don’t need to go home to make a decision. I’ll never join you.”

“We could do such great things together. The whole galaxy is within our grasp.”

I’d heard enough nonsense from this pompous robot. I jumped down from the filing cabinet and walked over to Paul and entered his body, with his subconscious permission, of course. Paul shuddered as his facial features changed slightly to resemble my handsome features—Just kidding!—and his mind went into a trancelike state.

Through Paul, I said very dramatically, “I’m the voice that speaks with a borrowed

tongue. I'm here to tell you that you will be defeated by the greatest power in the galaxy."

"What power is greater than ours?"

"Love."

"Who are you?"

"I'm the Ghost of Christmas Presents and I came to tell you you'll get nothing this year but a lump of coal because you've violated the universal moral code for nincompoops: 'Don't do to others what you don't want done to yourself.' For normal people, it's known as, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'"

"I don't understand your mumbo jumbo!" Terrak shouted, and he ran out of Paul's cell.

My image faded from Paul's face and I materialized about a meter in front of him.

"What did you do? Where's Terrak?"

"Let's get out of here before he changes his mind," I said.

Paul tossed some books and papers into his backpack and put his baseball cap on and we ran out the door.

We Visit Don Juan's House

The prison guards at the entrance had been informed of Paul's release and they shook his hand when he came up to the gate.

After we reached the road, which was just outside the gate, I said, "Your job is to teach the new gospel—that the outer world is a reflection of the inner world."

Paul was about to say something, but a car blasting modern *norteno* music came down the street. When the car had gone, he said, "Sometimes I feel like an idiot. There must be someone else who can do this."

"Do you see anyone else?" I asked.

Paul looked around. "No...Daniel, but he's not here."

"You have an important role to play in this drama. You're the ringer of the bell. You're going to reveal the Greatest Cover-up of All Time."

"What cover-up?" Paul asked.

"The cover-up that says the world exists independently of you and that you're the victim of events. That shit...What's that expression?"

"Do you mean, 'Shit happens'?"

"Yeah."

"Do you really think men and women are ready to join one another in creating the world consciously and positively?"

"You're right. Maybe just the women."

"What?"

"Just kidding."

A horn blared loudly for several seconds while a car passed by.

"So this is the land of your hero, Carlos Castaneda's Don Juan. Let's pay him a visit," I said.

"It's getting late," Paul said. "Maybe we could do it another time."

“Look! Over there’s his house,” I said.

We suddenly found ourselves in the Mexican desert at twilight. We were about ten meters from a small house with a thatched roof and walls made of mud and straw.

“Let’s see if he’s inside,” I said.

“I have a bad feeling about this,” Paul said.

I walked over to the door and knocked and took a step back. Paul, who was a little nervous and not sure if this was really happening, had stopped about a meter behind me.

A tall, elderly Indian man opened the door and stepped out into the ramada, the covered area in front of the house. The man and I talked so quietly that Paul could not hear what we were saying. But when we finished our conversation, the man looked at Paul and said loudly, “He is shy, isn’t he?”

Paul felt a shiver go down his spine.

“Don Juan, this is my apprentice Paulito,” I said. “He’s a big fan of yours.”

I turned to Paul and said, “Paulito, this is Don Juan.”

“I’ve been trying to find another apprentice ever since Carlos was eaten by the Eagle,” Don Juan said, never taking his eyes off Paul.

Paul felt something scary was about to happen and he said, “I belong to Ato.”

“Ato just told me he’s done with you.”

Paul looked at me imploringly and it was all I could do to avoid breaking out in a grin. “That’s right,” I said. “Paulito would love to have an adventure like one of Carlos’ adventures.”

At that instant, Don Juan changed into a huge man whose head was bumping up against the roof of the ramada. His biceps had become the size of small watermelons and his bare feet were easily half a meter long.

I looked at Paul with terror in my eyes. “We’ve obviously fallen into a trap,” I said. “This is not Don Juan, but one of his allies. Run for it!”

I took off running and Paul followed me a few seconds later. As he ran, he could feel the ally’s breath on the back of his neck.

I was way ahead of him by then. I stopped and shouted in the darkness, “You’ve got to run faster! Run, Forrest! Run!”

Now Paul was really terrified and he put on a burst of speed and caught up with me. We ran alongside each other in the Mexican desert for what seemed to Paul like several minutes.

“I think we’ve lost him,” I said. “Good thing he’d just eaten or he surely would have caught you.”

Paul, barely able to speak through his panting, said, “Oh my God! I’m exhausted. Can we stop now?”

“Yeah, I think so.”

“I need to lose some weight,” Paul said.

We stopped and Paul leaned over, placing his hands on his thighs, so he could catch his breath. He closed his eyes for a few seconds and when he opened them, we were again standing outside the prison.

I laughed so hard my sides hurt. “Let that be a lesson to you. Be careful what you wish for,” I said when I was finally able to speak.

A taxi stopped on the street alongside us. I pushed Paul into the taxi and we waved to each other as the taxi drove off.

An Important Lesson

A few days after Paul had gotten out of prison, I appeared to him in his study. He'd just finished watching the movie *Bobby* on his computer.

"Ato!" he said. "That was some trick you pulled on me the other day."

"That wasn't a trick."

"Did you come to complete my training?"

In my best Yoda voice I said, "Training complete? Ha! Begun has not. Question ask."

We laughed and then Paul became serious.

"Did Jesus die for our sins?"

I had expected him to ask that and I said, "Hold on to your hat, cowboy."

Paul put on his baseball cap and in the blink of an eye we were in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was evening in about the year 30 A.D. The Garden was then just an olive orchard on a hill.

A sudden gust of wind blew Paul's cap off his head and I picked it up and handed it to him. Then we heard voices and we walked a little ways and saw about a dozen men standing under a large tree. A man who must have been Judas was approaching the group with several armed men behind him.

Another man, slender with long brown hair, was watching from a short distance. He was Jesus.

Judas kissed the cheek of a muscular man with shoulder-length black hair, who was so tall that he had to bend over to receive the kiss. Then the armed men grabbed the tall man and took him away.

"Judas didn't betray Jesus," I said. "He saved him by kissing the wrong man. The man he kissed believed he was the messiah."

"Then Peter was not lying when he denied knowing the man who had been arrested."

I next took Paul to the place called Calvary, where the man Judas had kissed was hanging from a cross. He was covered in blood and was wearing a crown of thorns. Near him were several people, including Mary, Jesus' mother, who had come because she felt sorry for the man.

He cried out in Aramaic, "Illli, Illi, lima shbaqtani?" In English, this means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

We'd seen enough, so I brought Paul back to his study.

"Today, men are ready to learn the truth about Jesus," I said.

"And the truth is that Jesus was not crucified?"

"In the physical world. But the Crucifixion was an event in the dream world."

"Then why did he come to earth?"

"He came to Earth to show men their potential."

I looked at Paul's watch. There was time for another lesson before his dinner. So I asked him, "Who's your favorite artist?"

"Van Gogh."

"Why?"

"When I look at his paintings, I feel like I painted them."

My first reaction was to say, "Well, maybe you did," but I decided I'd let him figure that out.

In the next instant, Paul and I found ourselves near a wheat field. We were about ten meters behind a man who was standing in front of a canvas on an easel.

"We're in Auvers-sur-Oise, France," I said. "The year is 1890. Van Gogh is over there."

"Oh my God! Is this real?"

"Yes, this is like our visit to Don Juan's house—we can interact with him. But it's important to understand this is not happening on the Earth that you know. Do you remember that I told you the monastery was in a probable reality?"

Paul was not listening to me; he was walking up to Van Gogh. I didn't want to miss the chance to practice my French, so I ran to catch up with him.

"Excusez-moi," I said when we were a couple of meters from Van Gogh. "S'il vous plait. Nous regardons la peinture? Nous aimons l'art."

"Oh! You startled me. I can see French is difficult for you. You can speak English if you'd like. I lived in England for a few years when I was young."

"I'm sorry to bother you," I said, a little disappointed. "Do you mind if we look at your painting? My friend and I are lovers of art."

"OK. But it's not finished."

The painting had a wheat field with several paths leading nowhere and crows flying away from or toward the viewer—it was hard to tell.

"I love the intensity of your colors," I said. "I feel power and sadness when I look at this painting."

"And loneliness," Paul added.

"We won't bother you anymore, sir," I said. "We hope your recovery from your illness continues."

"How did you know? You must have talked to Dr. Gachet."

I put my hand on his shoulder and gave it a slight rub. "Someday you'll be famous, Mr. Van Gogh."

"Thank you. I feel better already," Van Gogh said.

Paul whispered as we were walking away, "That was one of his last paintings before he died."

"You can say it."

"Before his suicide."

"Maybe in this probable reality he won't kill himself."

"While we were talking to him," Paul said, "I could hear his words in my head before he spoke."

"What do you think that means?"

"That he and I are part of the same soul?"

“I can see that the two of you share the same passion for excellence and honesty of expression. Now let’s look at your lifetime before this one. We need to keep your feet on the ground.”

We were instantly transported to a coal mine that was near a small village in Belgium in the first half of the nineteenth century. A whistle blew and dirty, tired-looking men began emerging from the mine.

“The man with the torn tweed jacket is your father,” I said. “He’ll be Van Gogh’s brother Theo in his next lifetime. You’re over there.”

Paul looked where I was pointing—at a small mountain of slag. Children in ragged clothes were picking through the slag for pieces of coal that could be used for cooking and heating.

The man with the torn tweed jacket called out, “Christiaan!”

A boy came running down from the slagheap and up to the man. They walked together, hand in hand, to a shack about a hundred meters from the coal mine. A woman and a girl greeted them warmly at the door.

“Your family will be visited by a tragedy in another year when a smallpox epidemic sweeps through the village,” I said. “You will die followed by your mother. Now let’s go to the time in Van Gogh’s life just before he started painting.”

We again found ourselves in the same village, but it was a few decades later. It seemed that nothing had changed, but then, looking in the distance, we noticed a man in his mid-twenties talking to a small group of miners and their families. He was Van Gogh.

“Did you see the movie *Lust for Life*?”

“Yeah, I know about this,” Paul said. “Van Gogh is a Protestant minister now. But soon he’ll be asked to leave the ministry because he identified with the poor so much. He lived with them and gave his possessions to them. He was too sensitive to their suffering to please his bosses. They thought he wasn’t dignified, but he took Christ’s words literally.”

The Soul and the Afterlife

When we got back to his study, Paul asked, “Is it true there’s a special punishment for suicide?”

“No. All deaths are suicides because people subconsciously plan their deaths. However, lessons not learned in one lifetime must be learned in another.”

“Are you saying people actually choose to die? That’s hard to believe.”

“Yes, but remember the decision is not made on a conscious level. In most cases, people choose to die because they’ve done what they came to Earth for or they’ve accomplished as much as they could.”

“What is a soul?”

“It’s hard to define the soul given your perception that events occur one after the other. Jane Roberts said, ‘A soul is not something that you have. It is what you are.’ Your soul is not a finished product; it grows and develops as you do. Your soul contains what you would call your past and future lives or selves, plus your probable selves. All of these

selves are alive now. They affect you and you affect them. This won't make sense to you until you realize time is simultaneous.

"You might try to think of your present life as if you were traveling on a string. Your past, future, and probable selves are on strings parallel to the string you're on and you all communicate with each other, although you're not usually consciously aware of the communications."

"So this string I'm on," Paul said, "I call the 'now' string, but from the point of view of my other selves, they call their strings 'now' too. So it's all one big now."

"Good! And so how many present times are there?"

"Well, each of my past, future, and probable selves is living in its present."

"Now let's just talk about your past life as Van Gogh. If your past selves live in their present, this means Van Gogh's life is not completed. That's how you can affect him and he can affect you."

"I think I get it."

"Of course, simultaneous time also means other historical periods exist now. That's why we were able to visit first century Palestine, fourth century Nicaea, and sixteenth century Rome. You could think of simultaneous historical periods in this way: The Earth has countries and it takes time to travel between them, but the countries all exist at the same time. Different historical periods are like the countries on Earth, all existing at the same time."

"The more we talk, the more confused I get. Maybe simultaneous time is just something we aren't able to understand."

"OK, but I think you're getting close. Ask me another question."

"Jane Roberts wrote a lot about the inner self. What is that?"

"Jane Roberts said your inner self is the part of the soul that's within you. It knows what your purpose is in your present life and it inspires and protects you. Perhaps most importantly, it creates your body and the reality you experience in faithful replication of your beliefs and thoughts."

"Do I need to save my soul?"

"Saving your soul implies you can lose it, but you will always be connected with your soul."

"What happens to us after we die?"

"It's hard to generalize because there's no set rule; it depends on your level of development. But generally, after people die they're met by friends or relatives from their recent life or from past lives who help them make the transition to the after death environment. If you expected to be punished after you died, you might find yourself in a hallucinated hell. If you expected to go to heaven, you might find yourself in a hallucinated heaven, probably with others with similar beliefs. It usually doesn't take long to figure out you're in a hell of your own making. It may take longer to realize you're in a heaven you've created and that you have work to do, but guides are available to help you."

"Work to do?"

"Some people think the afterlife is like a lazy summer day that goes on forever. They eventually find out the truth—that their previous life on Earth was only one of

many lifetimes and that opportunities for growth are endless. Then they get involved in preparing for their next life, which should begin with a review of the one just finished. It's important to recognize the lessons not learned and the challenges not overcome. That helps you see what you need to work on in your next life.

"Not everyone follows this procedure. An individual will sometimes choose a kind of vacation life—an existence without a lot of challenges—as a rest after a difficult life. And some individuals have learned all they can from Earth life and go on to other planes of reality or return to Earth as teachers.

"Most individuals wait a while to reincarnate, but they may come back almost immediately or they may wait centuries in your time. Usually, it's a mistake to be reborn quickly."

"Where is heaven?"

"Heaven, or the afterlife, is in another plane or dimension, not another physical location. So you could say heaven is here or nowhere or everywhere."

"Tell me what Daniel's been doing."

"Why haven't you asked about him before?"

"I was afraid you'd tell me Daniel was partying 24/7 in heaven or hanging out in hell for the thrill of it or something equally as crazy."

"Why would you think that?"

"Daniel has always been a clown and a prankster."

Paul had told me what I already knew, without being aware of a lot of details, because I hadn't made an effort to look into Daniel's past.

"Have you heard of the prankster gods?" I asked.

"Wait. I want to tell you a funny story about a burglary he committed when he was a teenager."

"OK."

"Late one night, he broke into the liquor store in our neighborhood with his gang and they stole several cases of beer and whiskey. They dragged the cases through an orchard to our house. It was a miracle no one saw them. Then he realized he didn't know what to do with all the alcohol, so he broke into the store again and returned the cases of whiskey."

"I'm getting impressions about you and foreign coins now," I said.

"Oh... That story's been buried in the back of my mind for a long time. When I was four, I got some worthless foreign coins out of a box of breakfast cereal. Daniel told me, 'Those coins are just like real money.' I didn't believe him, but I stopped an ice cream truck one day and gave the man the coins to see what would happen. To my surprise, the man gave me two Popsicles. I couldn't eat the Popsicles because I believed I had cheated the ice cream man. Daniel, while laughing at me, ate both Popsicles."

"What a rascal," I said. "He reminds me of myself."

Paul told me that after Daniel graduated from college he worked for a Wall Street bank for many years and then for a hedge fund. He made a lot of money for his clients during the stock market and commodities booms. But one Monday morning, after a weekend of camping in the mountains, Daniel went to his office and quit without any warning. By then he was worth tens of millions of dollars. He donated all of his money to

an organization that built schools and gave scholarships to poor children in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. After that he was content to live in Paul's house and meditate and read books and spend a lot of time by himself.

"I'll tell you right off he sends you and Ani his love," I said. "After his death, he reviewed his life and saw what his weaknesses were. He remembered his successes too and made plans to be reborn quickly. He decided he would return with the conscious knowledge of the wisdom he had attained while living as Daniel plus the wisdom he was able to gain in the period between lives."

"You just said it was usually a mistake to be reborn quickly."

"Daniel is a special case. Now one of Daniel's failures on Earth was not to see that almost all men are of good intent. Daniel had long held the romantic notion that the common man was at heart kind, generous, and caring, despite the brutality of mob and group actions. But he had found it hard to accept that the rich and powerful—the men he felt were responsible for much of the world's cruelty, injustice, selfishness, and greed—were of good intent.

"From heaven, he was able to see into the minds of men. And he saw that the rich and powerful were either blind to the results of their actions, or of the belief that they were justified in their actions, or of the belief that what they were doing to others was for the overall good.

"As part of Daniel's training, I had him look at incidents involving love and courage in the world. He first studied the cases of two people who had been badly burned in the attack on the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. He was moved by the love shown by their spouses and by the doctors and nurses who cared for them and by their strength in dealing with the physical and emotional pain. He next observed the lives of people who were severely handicapped and he was surprised at their courage in going on with life.

"Daniel wondered how men could have such great love for people they cared about and such great courage when facing obstacles, yet could display such selfishness, hatred, and fear in relations with strangers and other nations, religions, and races. So I had him observe the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals. He heard one of the prosecution attorneys define evil as 'the absence of empathy for others.' And then, in a flash of inspiration accompanied by great energy and joy, Daniel understood that man has learned to see his unity, his you and I are one-ness with a child, friend, spouse, lover or even an incidental acquaintance. But man has not made the leap yet to see his unity with people of other nations, religions, and races or with nature. The foundation of the knowledge of this unity is that God has placed Itself within every part of Its creation.

"In a second flash of inspiration, he knew that the task or goal of his next life was to help bring about this step in human spiritual evolution—this recognition of man's unity with all things. He knew that when men achieve this realization, they will no longer bomb villages and civilian neighborhoods. He knew that when men recognize this, they will no longer shoot women and children because they might be suicide bombers. He knew that when men truly realize this, they will not kill their enemies because they will know that killing them is the same as killing themselves. In fact, when men truly recognize their unity with all things, they will see no enemy and no evil."

"Wow! Daniel's going to be a messiah when he's reborn, isn't he?" Paul said.

“That’s kind of up to you. Your job is to make the way smooth.”

It was six o’clock and time for Paul to eat his dinner, so I decided to get caught up on John.

John’s Family

Several months earlier, John had been ordered to remain on the spaceship because the Valkarians suspected that he sympathized with humans.

I should mention that there were no days or nights on the spaceship, but John’s planet rotated on its axis in about 23 Earth hours, so John regulated his life in a cycle similar to Earth’s days and nights, using the San Diego time zone as his standard.

Around the time I visited Paul, John received a video email from his wife Leia. Because all outside communication had to pass Valkarian censors, video emails took about half a day to travel between Earth and Honam.

“Hi, love,” she said. “What have you been doing lately? I bet you don’t mind being stuck on the spaceship because it gives you lots of time for research...Do you recognize the blouse I’m wearing? I wore it when we first met. Do you remember that day? You helped me carry my sculpture to art class. Why am I telling you this? I’ve been going through the things in the old chest in the spare room and looking at pictures in my college photo album. You were so handsome then in your tight T-shirts...OK, now Cyndi wants to talk to you. I know you wouldn’t approve of him, but she has a boyfriend. I love you.”

Leia went out of view, but she could be heard saying, “Cyndi, come here.”

Cyndi appeared on the screen. “Hi, dad. What did mom tell you? Did she say I have a boyfriend? That’s not true, dad. We’re just friends...Dad, I’m graduating next week. What are you going to get me for a present? I love you.”

John sent a reply to his daughter: “Hi, sweetheart! I wish I could be there for your graduation...Your mother will take care of the gift. Now about your boyfriend: I’m going to trust that you have found someone who really cares about you and treats you with respect. I love you.”

Then he sent a reply to his wife: “Hi, dear! You’re still as hot as when we first dated...As you know, I’ve been very busy. I think I’ll be able to publish several books on human culture when I get home. The tentative title of the first one is *The Power of Institutions to Manage Public Opinion*. It was inspired by a book I’d read by Noam Chomsky. This is a problem we don’t have on Honam, fortunately...Can you find Cyndi something nice for a graduation gift from me? I love you.”

A few hours later, there was a loud knock on John’s door and an android walked into the room. This android’s appearance was different from Terrak and the two androids mentioned at the beginning of this report. This android had a moustache, was about three meters tall, and wore a military uniform decorated with many medals and pins.

“I’m General Nietzsche,” the android said. “I want you to see our new technology because I know you communicate with humans. They should know what they’re up against.”

“They want peace.”

“Peace is for women and children. War is what makes a man a man.”

“That sounds like the words of a man who has never seen someone he cared about killed.”

“War allows a man to express his natural hunting instincts. A man never feels really alive unless he is killing something.”

John could hardly believe his ears.

General Nietzsche took John to the training grounds, an area in the hold of the ship where John had never been before. What John saw frightened him.

There were tens of thousands of android soldiers standing in formation. The soldiers were at least three meters tall and were much bigger than the soldiers John had seen on Honam.

General Nietzsche approached a soldier and barked an order: “Taban ichta!”

The soldier came to life and quickly scaled the ten meter brick wall on the training grounds.

General Nietzsche gave another order: “Atok meba!”

The soldier smashed through the brick wall with its fists.

“These soldiers can withstand any kind of bombardment, even nuclear, except for direct hits,” General Nietzsche said. “They are better soldiers than I had when I conquered your planet. We think they’re the most awesome fighting machines in the galaxy. Now follow me.”

General Nietzsche led John past the android soldiers to where thousands of large humanoid soldiers were going through hand-to-hand combat drills.

“These mutants are from your own planet,” General Nietzsche said. “They’ve been genetically designed to be supermen. And they’re trained to never give quarter and to never surrender.”

He picked up a belt from the floor that had attached to it a black box about the size of a package of cigarettes. “I want to show you my latest toy, a personal shield,” he said. “Put this on.”

John put the belt around his waist.

“Push the button.”

John pushed the button on the box and a reddish brown, rectangular grid appeared vertically in front of him. General Nietzsche then took his handgun and fired it three times at John. The bullets hit the shield and fell harmlessly to the floor.

“I can’t wait until the humans attack us,” General Nietzsche said. “There’s nothing like the glory of the battlefield. It’s better than sex.”

John dreamed that night that he saw a group of Valkarian soldiers marching by his village singing the Beatles song “Yesterday.” Suddenly, a rocket was fired at the soldiers from the vicinity of his village. Then another and another. The soldiers didn’t stop but continued marching, although at least a dozen of them fell from the rocket attacks.

A few moments later, three helicopters flown by Valkarian soldiers appeared in the sky and fired missiles into the village. John saw several homes burning, including his own, and he saw his wife’s and daughter’s bodies lying in the ruins.

John awoke from the dream screaming, “No! Noo!”

He immediately sent this video email to his wife: “Darling, I just had a terrible

dream. I saw you and Cyndi dead after soldiers attacked our village. Please tell me you're OK. I won't sleep until I hear from you. I love you."

John waited anxiously for word from his wife. The next morning, after a sleepless night, he sent this video email to his friend Laszlo: "Hi, Laszlo. Leia hasn't answered the email I sent yesterday. Are she and Cyndi all right?"

The next day, a very tired-looking John received this reply: "I don't know how to tell you this, John, but—"

John didn't listen to the rest of Laszlo's email. He touched the screen and the video stopped. Then he laid his head on his desk and cried.

A few days later, Almar knocked on John's door. When there was no answer, he opened the door a little and stuck his head in. He saw John lying on his bed in a fetal position, but his eyes were open.

"Am I interrupting anything?" Almar asked as he stepped into the room.

John didn't answer.

"Do you know why I'm here?"

John could barely muster enough energy to say, "No."

"Terrak feels bad about what happened. He's decided to release you from your contract."

John Meets Ani

That evening, San Diego time, John arrived at Paul's house in a taxi. He walked up to the front door and knocked.

A few moments later, Paul opened the door and asked playfully, "John, how did you get here?"

"The Valkarians let me go."

Paul hugged John and said, "I want you to meet someone."

Paul led John to his study where Ani was sitting at Paul's desk, writing an email. Ani was then more than six months pregnant.

The whale poster was no longer above the desk. In its place was a map of the world that, by conventional standards, was upside down.

"This is my lovely wife Ani."

"It's nice to meet you."

Ani put her hands on her belly. "I don't feel lovely."

"But you're beautiful to me...Ani, this is John, the alien I told you about."

"Hi, John!"

"Have a seat," Paul said.

John sat down on the empty chair in the study. Paul left the room and returned with another chair and sat down.

"How've you been?" Paul asked.

"I'm OK."

"Did you know I was taken to the spaceship and I met Terrak?"

"Yeah. The Valkarians told me you refused their offer," John said. "Listen, I saw

their training grounds a few days ago. Their soldiers are scary. But I've learned something by hacking into their computer system that's even more frightening than the soldiers: They want to use genetic engineering on humans to make humans submissive and more efficient."

"You must be kidding."

"I wish I were. There'll be laborers, big and strong and not very smart. There'll be office workers with long fingers and good eyesight for sitting in front of computers all day. There'll be mechanics and farmers and policemen and teachers, all designed to do their jobs well, but not to be very creative or rebellious."

"*Brave New World!*" Paul exclaimed.

"Except in *Brave New World* they didn't use genetics, only conditioning and cell division, to create people the way they wanted them. Now think *1984*. Do you know the aliens probably put a tracking device on you? Did you have any dental work done in prison?"

"They insisted that I have a checkup and then they said I had a cavity."

"Which tooth?"

"Bottom, right side, in the back."

"Open your mouth and face the light."

John looked in Paul's mouth and said, "Uh-huh. They know exactly where you are at all times."

Paul felt disgusted and angry. He went to the kitchen and got a knife and took it to the bathroom. Then he removed the filling from the tooth. Attached to the bottom side of the filling was a hard plastic-like device about the size of a grain of sand. Paul threw the filling in the toilet.

When Paul returned to his study, he said, "How's your family?"

John took a deep breath. "Freedom fighters attacked Valkarian soldiers near my village and the soldiers responded by firing missiles into the village. Leia and Cyndi were killed."

Paul slammed the palm of his hand against the top of his desk.

"I'm so sorry," Ani said.

"We've been inside all day," Paul said, "and we haven't eaten dinner yet. Let me take you to our favorite Chinese restaurant."

The restaurant was empty when they arrived, as it specialized in delivery and takeout food.

After they ordered, Paul and John discussed the Dalai Lama for several minutes. Then Paul looked at Ani and smiled and said, "Ani is very curious about you. She wants to ask you some questions."

Ani was a little embarrassed, but she asked good questions.

"Do all aliens look like you?"

"Advanced alien life has taken many different forms. But the humanoid form is the most common in the galaxy."

"Why did you come to earth with the Valkarians? Paul told me you're an expert on earth."

"They chose me to be their advisor on human culture. I didn't volunteer to come

here.”

“But didn’t they choose you because you were considered *the* expert on earth?” Paul asked.

“I guess so.”

“How long have you studied us?” Ani asked.

“All Honamese children study earth from the time they first start school.”

“How could you study us from so far away?”

“Some of your UFOs were real. They’ve brought us books, newspapers, magazines, movies, CDs, and DVDs. And after we got television fifteen years ago, we started picking up your TV broadcasts.”

“Why haven’t we picked up your TV broadcasts, John?” Paul asked.

“Honam is more than fifteen light years from earth.”

“So you’ve missed reality TV. What a shame!” Paul said. “Tell her about the elves and the elf king.”

“I used to go to a forest near my home to play. Adults called it the Forbidden Forest because supposedly a child went in there once and never came out. The story said the child was kidnapped by elves—”

“Weren’t you scared?” Ani asked.

“No. In fact, I played with the elves. One day they took me to see their king. The king told me I would help save a great planet when I was a man—”

A waitress suddenly appeared with their order on a cart and began putting the dishes on the table.

“Let’s eat,” Paul said. “I’m starved.”

“You’ve come to the right place, John,” Ani said. “We need saving.”

After they had finished eating and had consumed a considerable amount of beer, Paul said, “Hey! John can sing ‘King Tut.’”

“Really? Please,” Ani said.

“Sing for your supper,” Paul said.

John looked at Paul. “OK, but you’re the chorus.”

John sang and danced to the words as Paul provided the backup vocals. Ani clapped when they finished, as did the restaurant staff, who had come out to watch.

Sarah

One night in mid-December, Ani and Paul shared a dream. In the dream, they were having a picnic near the waterfall in the valley behind the monastery.

As he was eating some potato salad, Paul said, “I miss Daniel. I wish he were here.”

They heard some splashing and looked toward the stream and saw Daniel walking on the water. He came up to them and said, “I will soon see you with the eyes of a child.” Then he faded from sight and a small baby appeared next to Ani. Ani picked up the baby and the dream ended.

When Paul and Ani discovered the next morning that they’d had the same dream, they were amazed. It was then that Paul told Ani what I had told him about Daniel’s

experiences in heaven.

On the morning of the winter solstice, even though Ani was only seven months pregnant, she began having the 411 birth signs, so Paul drove her to the hospital.

When it was time for Ani to go into the delivery room, Paul went to the waiting room. He was so nervous that he didn't notice that I was in the room with him. I must admit that I was a little hard to recognize, as I was wearing a fisherman's hat, blue and white striped pirate pants, and a T-shirt with the words: "Go ahead. Make my day."

After watching him pace back and forth for several minutes, I pointed to the other side of the room and said, "Why don't you walk over there for a while? You're going to wear a hole in the carpet."

"Sorry," he said, still not recognizing me.

A few minutes later, a nurse came into the room and said, "Congratulations, Mr. Heart. You have a healthy daughter."

"What about her weight?"

"Even though she's two months premature, her weight is normal for a full-term baby."

I handed him a cigar and patted him on the back. He walked out of the waiting room with a smile on his face as wide as a house.

A few hours later, after going home and eating and showering, Paul returned to the hospital. He bought some flowers in the flower shop and went to Ani's room, where he found Ani holding Sarah.

Paul set the flowers and his digital camera down on the bed and kissed Ani and Sarah.

"She has your eyes," Ani said.

"And your nose."

Paul took Sarah in his arms. "I'm sorry I didn't go into the delivery room with you, but I can't stand the sight of blood."

"It's OK. My sister was there and do you know who I saw? Mr. Ato! It was like he was helping the doctor. But he was wearing funny clothes."

"I wish I could see Ato. Will you take a picture of Sarah and me?"

Ani picked up the camera, turned it on, switched it to play mode, and looked at the LCD monitor.

"You have a picture of Mr. Ato and Sarah on your camera! Mr. Ato is here!"

"I haven't seen him," Paul said.

Ani showed Paul a picture of me holding Sarah in my arms.

"He looks like a proud grandfather," Paul said.

On the morning of New Year's Eve, John turned on the TV to hear the results of the vote at the UN on the Valkarians' demand that the nations of Earth set up a world government under their control.

A CNN reporter holding an umbrella was standing outside the UN General Assembly Hall. "Just before the voting began," the reporter said, "Almar, the Valkarian ambassador to earth, warned there would be serious consequences if the vote failed."

The reporter touched his earpiece and said, "The final vote is in: 168 against the Valkarians and 21 for, with 3 abstentions."

One evening about two months later, Ani and Paul were in their bedroom. Paul was holding Sarah, who was crying.

“What does she want?” Paul asked.

“Give her to me. She can’t stand to have a dirty diaper.”

“I can do it.”

“Why don’t you go talk to John? He looks lonely.”

Ani took Sarah from Paul and put her on the bed and began changing her diaper.

Paul went into the living room, where John was sitting on the sofa reading Jane Roberts’ *The Nature of Personal Reality*.

Paul stared at John until John looked up. “I want to talk to you while Ani is busy,” Paul said and sat down on the armchair.

John closed the book.

“I’ve been having dreams about a man pointing a gun at me. If something happens to me, would you take care of Ani and Sarah?”

“Whoa, cowboy! Nobody’s gonna die,” John said. “How long have you been having these dreams?”

“For about two weeks.”

“Have you had these dreams before?”

“Let me give you some background. When I was twenty-one, I read the book *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut and I identified with the main character, Billy Pilgrim, who is assassinated while giving a speech. A few days after I read the book, I saw the movie.”

“You’re a beautiful girl, Sarah Danielle Heart! Yes, you are,” Ani could be heard saying from the bedroom.

“In the movie, but not in the book,” Paul continued, “Billy Pilgrim is asked what day his birthday is. He replies, ‘July fourth.’ When Billy Pilgrim said that in the movie, I almost went into shock because July fourth is my birthday. Afterwards, I sat in my room and cried. I thought I had just witnessed my death—”

“Your daddy and mommy are so lucky to have you!”

Paul looked toward the bedroom for a moment. “Since then, I’ve decided that being shot is not a bad way to go. It’s quick and people will remember you. I’ve even thought of what I want on my tombstone: ‘He saved the best for last.’”

Paul smiled, but John didn’t appreciate his joke.

“A year before his death,” Paul said, “Gandhi talked of welcoming an assassin’s bullet. And on the morning of the day he was killed, he asked his secretary to bring him all his important papers. Just before John F. Kennedy died, he was warned about the danger of being assassinated and he shrugged it off, as if he had already accepted it. The day before Martin Luther King was killed he gave a speech about how he wanted to be remembered. And Jane Roberts said Robert Kennedy almost knew on a conscious basis that he was going to die like his brother.”

“What’s all that have to do with you?”

“Well...”

“Now that you’ve told me about your dreams, what do you expect me to do?”

“Nothing. Don’t tell anyone.”

“Where are you killed in these dreams?”

“Different places.”

“I guess it’s out of the question for you to stop appearing in public, isn’t it?”

“Yes. My work justifies Daniel’s death.”

“If you’re killed, how do you think I’ll feel? And if anyone found out I concealed this and did nothing, it wouldn’t look good for me, would it? You’ve put me in an awkward position.”

John thought for a few seconds. “This is what I’ll do,” he said. “I won’t tell anyone about your dreams, but from now on I’m going to be your bodyguard whenever you go out. And keep your door locked. If anyone knocks on your door, let me answer it.”

M.I.T. #18,432’s Last Challenge

Didn’t the Bible say something about a prophet being without honor in his own land? Paul had been home for five months, but he hadn’t become a star like he had been in China. He had developed a loyal following, but his face wasn’t on the cover of any magazines. And he hadn’t been invited to be on *The Daily Show* or *The Colbert Report* or any of the national talk shows like *Larry King Live* or *Oprah*. I was kind of surprised by this, but I was doing what I could to help.

The evening after he talked to John, Paul spoke before a small crowd in San Diego’s Balboa Park. The crowd probably would have been larger, but a storm was coming in and it was a windy night. I arrived late, having had a little trouble with my first century A.D. costume and beard. I joined the Christian protesters in the audience, carrying a sign that read:

666

Antichrist

Go Back To Hell

ASAP

As Paul spoke, John stood about a meter to his right, scanning the crowd.

My death will not come a moment too soon nor a moment too late. It shall be the final statement of my life. I only hope I can accept the call with dignity.

If you identify with your body, then growing old can be frightening and death can be terrifying. But if you recognize that you’re part of life and everything is alive, then you know you cannot die, that you only change form. So if you identify with the universe, there’s nothing to fear.

We all must die to make room for new life. Death gives us a deadline to complete our work. Without death, life lacks an edge. And if you believe in life after death as I do, then death should be welcomed because it’s a door to new experiences.

Now a few words for my science friends: It is time to remember the old wisdom. It is time for man to again accept the validity of inner knowledge. In the words of the fox in The Little Prince, "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye."

I want to say something to the Christians here before I go: Men and nature have never been separated from God. Jesus was not, therefore, God's Only Son. It was through purity of soul that Jesus was fit to be a temple of the Christ, Universal Love. Jesus said in The Aquarian Gospel that he lived "to show the possibilities of man. What I have done all men can do, and what I am all men shall be."

The Christians booed and booed. It was great! I thought that would surely get Paul on the eleven o'clock news. Little did I know.

Right after Paul finished, rain began falling and everyone ran to their cars. Paul and John were hungry, so they stopped at an In-N-Out Burger restaurant and ordered a couple of Double-Doubles and some fries and shakes. After they picked up the food, John, who was driving, made a right turn out of the parking lot. They traveled for a few kilometers and found themselves in a rural area of San Diego County. It was raining hard by then and it was difficult to see.

"I think I'm lost," John said, but he did what most men do when they're lost—he continued driving. Suddenly, a man waving his arms rushed out from behind some bushes alongside the road. John started to swerve to the left.

"Stop!" Paul said.

John stopped the car and Paul rolled down the window. "Can I help you?"

The man, a Latino, said in Spanish, "My daughter's sick. Where's the hospital?"

A woman carrying a child and a boy emerged from behind the bushes.

"Vaminos," Paul said.

The Latino family got in the car and the woman said, "Muchas gracias."

John turned the car around and drove back into the city and found a hospital. By then, the downpour had tapered off and become a light shower.

As the family was getting out of the car, Paul handed the man the two bags of fast food.

"Gracias, mis amigos! Muchas gracias!" the man said.

"They need the food more than we do," Paul said to John. "Besides, we're trying to eat only certified organic meat, aren't we?"

As John drove away from the hospital's emergency entrance, he said, "That was a generous act. We could have easily passed that man by. He might have been high on drugs or had a gun."

"A younger me would have driven on. But I felt safe."

"Do you think they're illegal aliens?" John asked. He laughed and added, "Isn't what I said similar to your expression 'the pot calling the kettle black'?"

"Yeah, you're the ultimate illegal alien," Paul said. "I think it's important to remember we took California from them. It's like what Miguel said in the movie *Bobby*:

‘We didn’t cross the border. The border crossed us.’”

“Weren’t their ancestors here before there was a United States or a Mexico?”

“Yeah. The bottom line is they shouldn’t be treated like criminals. Now let’s see if we can get some directions. Stop the car.”

John put on the brakes and Paul rolled down the window and asked a man walking on the sidewalk, “How do I get to San Diego?”

“Lower your buckets, mister. You’re there.”

“I mean downtown San Diego?”

“The freeway’s just a couple of blocks.”

“Many thanks.”

By the time John and Paul arrived at home, the storm had passed. They found Ani in the living room watching the movie *Jesus Christ Superstar* while she nursed Sarah. The scene of Mary Magdalene singing the song “Could We Start Again, Please?” had just begun.

Ani paused the movie and said, “You’re late. I was worried about you.”

“I’m sorry. I should have called,” Paul said. “We got a little sidetracked, helping some people get to the hospital.”

“Are they all right?”

“I think so.”

John kissed Ani on her cheek and went to his room.

Paul kissed Ani on her forehead and sat down on the sofa. He quickly fell asleep and dreamed that he heard a knock on the front door. When he opened the door, he saw a man wearing an overcoat.

“You’re not Jesus Christ!” the man said. The man took a gun from under his coat and shot Paul three times in the chest.

“Oh God!” Paul shouted and fell to the floor.

Ani screamed.

Still dreaming, Paul saw Ani at a cemetery with Sarah, who was just beginning to walk. Ani laid some roses on a grave and pointed to a tombstone.

“Daddy,” Ani said.

“Dad-dy,” Sarah repeated.

The inscription on the tombstone read, “Here lies Paul Heart II, a man who loved truth, justice, and peace.”

Ani laid a rose on the grave next to Paul’s and said, “Uncle.”

“Un-cle.”

The inscription on the tombstone read, “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13 ”

In the dream, Paul saw Ani holding Sarah’s hand as they walked on a beach. Next, he saw Ani teaching Sarah how to ride a bicycle. Then he saw Sarah walking up a platform to get her diploma at her high school graduation ceremony while Ani was in the audience, alone, quietly crying.

Paul, still on the sofa, opened his eyes for a moment. He looked at Ani and closed his eyes and fell asleep again. In a new dream, he began calling out, “Ato! Ato! I need you!”

Stupid me. It was only then that I realized that Paul's fears and expectations were drawing from the field of probabilities a real threat to his life. My excuse was that I'd been distracted by another project. But that's my fault. Fortunately, I quickly saw where this could be turned into the culminating experience of his training.

I entered his dream and said, "Your future is not predetermined. As Jane Roberts said, 'Your point of power is in the present.'"

"But what about the dreams I've been having?"

"Your dreams were showing you where you were heading if you continued on the same path."

Paul smiled and said, "So I don't need your help."

"The power you seek is within you.' Just remember this: You can find fulfillment in death, but you can also focus on a fulfilling future path on Earth. I think the second option is preferable for your development and it will complete your training too."

Paul now had a third dream. He saw the four events of the dream with Ani and Sarah, but he was in each one: He took Ani and Sarah to Daniel's grave. He was holding Sarah's other hand on the beach. He was the one teaching Sarah to ride a bicycle. And he was in the audience with Ani when Sarah was graduating from high school.

Paul woke up from the dream and looked at Ani, who was still watching the movie and had tears in her eyes.

There was a knock on the front door.

"It's for me," Paul said.

Paul walked over to the door and opened it. Outside was a man wearing an overcoat.

"You're not Jesus Christ!" the man said.

"I didn't say I was. I said God is within us and therefore we are all Sons and Daughters of God."

The man pulled a gun out from under his coat and fired it at Paul. Paul blocked the bullet with his hands and it fell to the floor. Now I've been told that young readers would understand if I said he looked like a ninja swatting away bullets. For old farts like me who haven't seen the ninja movies, it was like he was shooing away those little gnats that get in your face in the summer. From Paul's point of view, it seemed like time had slowed down and he was able to change the path of the bullet because it moved so slowly.

The gunman looked surprised and fired two more rounds. Each time, Paul knocked the bullet to the floor.

Paul and the gunman stared at each other for a moment, stunned by what had just happened. Then John and I came running from inside the house. John tackled the man and I wrestled the weapon out of his hand.

Paul hugged Ani, who was standing near the door, and said, "The new age doesn't need martyrs."

"That scared me," Ani said and she began sobbing.

A minute later, a police car drove up as John and I were tying the man's hands with a rope. "We were in the neighborhood and we heard shots," a policeman said. "Was anyone hurt?"

"No," John said. "Somehow the gunman missed."

The police put the man in the back of their car.

Paul and Ani came out of the house and John walked up to Paul and said a bit angrily, “I thought you were going to let me answer the door.”

“I forgot.”

Paul said to Ani, “Let’s go for a walk. We have a lot to talk about.”

Ani went into the house. I was in the living room then, holding Sarah in my arms while I sang to her the Who song “Won’t Get Fooled Again.” I thought Ani might think it was an inappropriate song for a little girl, so I stopped and began singing a nursery rhyme:

Old MacDonald had a farm,
Ee i ee i oh!
And on his farm he had some cows,
Ee i ee i oh!
With a moo-moo here,
And a moo-moo there,
Here a moo, there a moo,
Everywhere a moo-moo,
Old MacDonald had a farm,
Ee i ee i oh!

Ani went into her bedroom and put on a baby carrier that could be worn on the front. And can you believe it? When she came out of the bedroom, she was singing words from the Who song. I couldn’t help but sing with her: “Meet the new boss, same as the old boss!”

Ani put Sarah in the baby carrier facing forward and we went outside.

Everyone—John, Paul, Ani, and I—stood together as one of the policemen took our picture with Paul’s digital camera.

“That was our fellowship-of-the-ringer-of-the-bell photo,” I said.

[Part Three: The Messiah Begins His Service](#)

A Revolution of the Heart

Paul and Ani began walking down to the breakwater in the cove below Paul’s house. The sky was clear and the stars were bright and seemed to pulsate as if they were saying, “Look at me!”

“When I was young,” Paul said, “I read a book called *Be Here Now*. The title was worth the price of the book. I’ve gotten too involved in my work and forgotten what’s really important.”

Paul put his arm around Ani’s waist.

“Don Juan told Carlos to only travel on paths that have heart.”

“I’m on a path with Mr. Heart,” Ani said.

When they got to the cove, they saw three dolphins in the water near the breakwater.

“John is teaching me to talk to the dolphins by telepathy,” Paul said.

When Paul and Ani reached the dolphins, the two adults jumped into the air, slapped the water with their tails and flippers, and made loud clicks and whistles.

“Why are they so excited?” Ani asked.

Paul said after a moment, “They said they’re happy that I’m safe.”

“That’s sweet. I forgot. What are their names?”

“The one on the left is Cetus, the male. The one on the right is Lotus, the female. I haven’t given the pup a name yet... They asked me where John is.”

Just then, a TV camera crew led by a female reporter entered the cove.

As Paul walked toward the reporter, Ani picked up a rubber ball and gave it to Sarah, but it slipped out of her hands and rolled to the edge of the breakwater. Lotus flipped the ball back to Ani and Ani again gave it to Sarah, who this time succeeded in holding the ball in her tiny hands.

“The gunman told the police he fired three bullets at point blank range,” the reporter said to Paul. “How did he miss you?”

“I don’t know. It was like a dream.”

“A superman’s dream. Did the gunman say anything to you?”

“He said, ‘You’re not Jesus Christ.’”

“What did you say?”

“Since God is within us, we’re all Sons and Daughters of God.”

“What do you think his motive was?”

“He may have thought I was a threat to his Christian faith.”

“Are you?”

“If his faith demands a fixed Christ, then maybe I am. I believe the meaning of Christ’s life must change with the times. Maybe at one time it was appropriate to worship him, but today we’re ready for a greater truth. Didn’t he say the Kingdom of God is within us?”

“At Balboa Park, you said, ‘Traditional science and Christianity tremble, for your days are numbered. There is coming a revolution that will knock you both off your thrones.’ What kind of revolution were you talking about?”

“A nonviolent one. A revolution of the heart. A revolution that sees the good in all men.”

“What are you really trying to do, Paul?”

“I’m trying to present the world with a mythology that is far more exciting than what science or Christianity has to offer. I’m presenting people with the possibility of consciously evolving in a universe that cares about them. I’m presenting a philosophy that can be used to build a healthy world.”

“You use the word fulfillment a lot. What is it?”

“It’s achieving or working toward your potential. It’s doing what makes you feel good about yourself. Joseph Campbell was talking about fulfillment when he said we

should follow our bliss.”

“These days a lot of people are wondering what their purpose is.”

“Our souls set different goals for each lifetime, but I think it’s important for mankind’s development that we learn that our beliefs and expectations, propelled by imagination and emotion, create our experiences. We need to learn to control our energy before we move on to more advanced planes.”

“Do you have a message for the world?”

“The power to create peace has always been inside us because the universe’s first rule is that we get what we concentrate on. So don’t hate war; love peace. If enough people do this, there will be peace.”

When they got back from their walk, Paul was wearing the baby carrier. Ani took Sarah to her bedroom and Paul joined me on the deck.

“It’s time for your final lesson as an M.I.T.,” I said. “It’s time to teach you about guarding the One.”

“Teach.”

“The One is the Tao, the essence of God that lies within us all. When you understand the One is in the world, then all things are holy objects. You cannot even mindlessly crush a spider after you have this realization.”

“As Joseph Campbell would say, ‘That’s big stuff.’”

“That’s right.”

Just then Paul noticed that a small spider was walking across a newspaper on the table. Paul picked up the newspaper and brought the spider closer to his eyes.

“Joseph Campbell said the Indians saw all life as a ‘thou,’ an object of reverence. He said in wartime the problem for the newspapers was turning the enemy into an ‘it.’”

“That’s right.”

Paul eyes lit up. “We’re going to win, aren’t we?”

I looked to the right and then to the left and put my index finger to my lips. “Shh! It’s a secret,” I said, and we laughed.

“This reminds me of a story Joseph Campbell told Bill Moyers,” Paul said as he put the newspaper down. “In Hawaii, there’s a mountain peak where people go to commit suicide. One day, two police officers were driving by the peak when they saw that a young man was about to jump off. One of the officers rushed over to the man and grabbed him just as he jumped. The police officer and the man were about to go over the cliff together when the second officer arrived and pulled them both to safety. Later, when asked why he hadn’t let go of the man in order to save himself, the first police officer said, ‘If I had let go, I could not have lived another day of my life.’ Joseph Campbell said that what had happened was a metaphysical realization had broken through for the police officer in that moment. He said the police officer had realized that he and the other man were one.”

“That sort of leads to my next point. A corollary of guarding the One is knowing that your body is a temple of God.”

“So love your body.”

“Yeah.”

I looked at him. It was time to tell him what he already knew subconsciously. But

consciously, he had no idea what I was going to say.

“Do you know why you were named Paul?”

“My mother told me that when she found out she was pregnant, she prayed for advice on a name and she woke up one morning and knew I should be called Paul.”

“In a past life, you were, or more correctly, are the Apostle Paul.”

“You’re joking, Ato.”

“No, I’m serious. What do you know about him?”

“He was the man most responsible for the creation of Christianity. While the other apostles weren’t sure if they should preach to non-Jews—some of them thought of themselves as a sect of Judaism—he traveled around the Mediterranean and told people the Son of God had come to earth and died for their sins. Today, some scholars say he was a Gnostic and his letters that criticize Gnosticism were forgeries. What’s interesting about his letters, which were written before the Gospels were written, is that he makes almost no reference in them to the events in Christ’s life. It’s as if the Gospel stories were made up.”

“What happened to the church he founded?”

“It got corrupted, as all institutions ultimately get corrupted.”

“So what do you think your job is?”

“To reform Christianity?”

“Or to take it to the next level. Before I let you go, I want to talk about abundance.”

“Gandhi said, ‘There’s enough for everyone’s needs, but not enough for everyone’s greed.’”

“So if you were king, what would you do?”

“I would like to answer your question with a quotation from one of my favorite poems in the *Tao Te Ching*, poem 22.”

The crooked shall be made straight
And the rough places plain;
The pools shall be filled
And the worn renewed;
The needy shall receive
And the rich shall be perplexed.

“You should go inside now or Ani will think you’re going to break those promises you just made to her.”

“Do you know that I’m working on a book? I’m going to call it *The Complete Guide to Wisdom*.”

“What! I thought you had learned humility!”

“I’m joking, Ato.”

“You had me going there. I guess that was overdue.”

“Yeah. One last question. What do I do about mosquitoes?”

“Ask for their forgiveness before you kill them.”

“Is after OK? Sometimes they appear out of nowhere.”

“Before or after. But remember, don’t fear them. Fear, like any emotion, creates

currents of attraction.”

Paul went inside.

For Paul Heart’s next miracle, he’s going to change water into wine. Just kidding. I sat there feeling pretty good. Messiah #18,432 had overcome his weaknesses and had learned to focus on fulfilling events. He had gone from an M.I.T. to what we called an M.R.F.S.—messiah ready for service—and, after a few details were taken care of, he would be an M.I.S. and my main work with him would be done.

In the living room, Ani had the remote and was flipping through the channels. On some of them, clips were being shown from Paul’s interview with the TV reporter. When Ani came across a channel where pundits were talking, she turned up the sound.

“Paul Heart is a dangerous man,” the first pundit said.

“You’re an idiot!” the second pundit said. “Heart is just what this world needs.”

“The world doesn’t need another Children’s Crusade!” the first pundit said.

The TV studio erupted into bedlam as the guests, the moderator, and the audience all stood and shouted at once.

Paul took the remote from Ani and turned off the TV. “I’m satisfied with my fifteen minutes of fame,” he said. “Let’s go to bed.”

The Dolphins

When Paul saw John the next morning, he said, “The dolphins asked for you yesterday. I told them I would bring you down after breakfast.”

When John and Paul arrived at the breakwater, they found that Cetus and Lotus were already there along with another adult dolphin.

“Do you remember when I first took you here and I told you we were lucky the dolphins were waiting for us?” Paul asked.

“Your understanding of the abilities of dolphins has come a long way since then,” John said.

“And my ability to communicate with them has come a long way too.”

“John,” Lotus began (telepathically), “there’s a dolphin here who wants to talk to you. His name is Septurn. He’s very wise.”

The third dolphin swam up to John.

“I have a message for you, John.”

“From whom?”

“He didn’t say his name.”

“What does he look like?”

“He is short and thin with a long grey beard and bushy eyebrows.”

“The elf king! What did he say?”

““Tell John he must come to Honam. It’s very important.””

“But how will I get to Honam?”

“I know someone who can take you there.”

“Who?”

“They’re called the 24 civilizations.”

“Who are they?”

“The 24 civilizations are advanced beings concerned about the Earth. They have a spaceship waiting for you now.”

Septurn turned toward Paul and said, “I have something to say to humans too.”

“What is it you want to say, Septurn?” Paul asked.

Septurn’s message included some complicated concepts. Because Paul was still developing his telepathic abilities, John spoke Septurn’s thoughts out loud.

“Men should stop chasing dolphins to catch tuna. It causes a lot of stress, especially for mothers and young calves, who are often separated during the capture. If the calves survive, it is a shock that scars them for life.”

“I’ve heard about that. It must be very frightening,” Paul said.

“Man-made sounds, including the military and scientific experiments with powerful sonar, are damaging the hearing of dolphins and whales and causing internal injuries, disorientation, and death. How would people like it if someone were blasting loud noises in their ears all day?”

“For years, I and other environmentalists have been trying to get people to recognize that dolphins and whales have rights too,” Paul said.

“We know and we appreciate your efforts,” Septurn said and then continued: “Men have very little understanding of the lives of dolphins. We enjoy our interactions with humans and we like to perform in front of people, but there is much more to us than jumping through hoops. We are self-conscious, sensitive, loving creatures. Our family bonds are as important to us as man’s are and we have a greater compassion for other species than man has. Cooperation is what drives us, not competition. When we kill, it’s only to eat, and we treat our hosts—our food—as gods, for they really are. They give us life.

“Some of the beachings of dolphins and whales are not caused by disorientation or disease. These animals have chosen to die in order to make a statement, like the Buddhist monks who set themselves on fire during the Vietnam War. Unfortunately, man doesn’t get it. What they are trying to say is, ‘Man’s destruction of the environment and callous attitude toward other life forms is a serious violation.’ Let me add that if the present rate of destruction of the environment continues, it will lead to the end of life as man knows it. The Earth will stop supporting man.”

The Elf King and the 24 Civilizations

The spaceship of the 24 civilizations dropped John off on the outskirts of the Forbidden Forest. He was met there by elves who escorted him to the underground palace of their king.

At the palace, John was reintroduced to Talembo, the elf king’s chief counselor, whom he had met when he was a child. Talembo had a face only a mother could love, but his lack of beauty was more than compensated for by his intelligence and wisdom.

Talembo took John to the elf king’s private chamber.

When John entered the chamber, the king was seated at a table, signing some

papers. He got up and hugged John and said, "Sit down."

After John and the elf king sat down, the elf king said, "It's been more than thirty years since we talked, my son."

"Yes, a lot of water has gone under the bridge. I've always wondered how you heard about the prophecy."

"From my father. When I was born, a soothsayer told him that I would help a man save a great planet."

"I never understood why you said my soul would be healed at the same time."

"In a past life in the military, you saw people being killed and you did nothing when you could have saved them at no danger to yourself. You have carried that guilt with you into this lifetime."

"So my guilt is not about the Valkarians."

"Maybe some of it is. Now, I asked you to return home because one of our deep trance channels has been contacted by an entity that wants to speak to you. And I think it's time to tell you the second part of the prophecy."

"There's more? I feel burdened already, your majesty."

"Please don't call me that!" the elf king said. Then he added quietly, "Yes, you may be right. One thing at a time."

The elf king looked at Talembo and Talembo left the room.

"I think you should know that Valkarian soldiers have been to the Forbidden Forest several times in the last year," the elf king said. "They have been looking for us, but they are so clumsy we hear them from far away and can hide from their sensors."

"That explains why they've been seen near my village."

"They learned many years ago of a legend coming out of elfland about a man who would defeat them. For your protection, just before you went to earth, one of our agents fed them a different prophecy. Our agent told them the real prophecy is not that a man will defeat them, but that a dolphin will betray them. I think they have been coming to the Forest to find out what that means."

"Did you know that one of my hobbies here was the study of marine mammals?"

"No! When you went to earth, we hadn't seen you for many years."

"Because of my studies of marine mammals, the Valkarians asked me to investigate the human research on dolphins—"

"Because of the prophecy we fed to them, which was meant to protect you."

"Instead, it turned the attention back on me," John said. "But without the prophecy about the dolphins, I would never have met Paul and I wouldn't be here now."

"How strange life is!"

Talembo returned to the elf king's chamber with a young female elf.

The elf king said, "We'll talk about this at another time. Now I want you to meet Long Ears."

After Long Ears drank some wine with the king and John to help her relax, she went into a trance. She then spoke in a voice that at times seemed masculine and at times seemed feminine.

"Good evening, John," Long Ears said. "I'm Silva, a spokesperson for the 24 civilizations. Do you know who we are?"

"I've been told that you're concerned about the earth."

"That's all you need to know for now. John, we're worried about the latest developments on Earth. The Valkarians have three spaceships in orbit and are preparing to send more. Each ship carries one hundred thousand android and mutant soldiers. We see the possibility of a terrible interstellar war. We want you to help us stop the Valkarians before it is too late."

"I'll do whatever I can. They killed my family."

"We know and we offer our sincere condolences."

Long Ears took another sip of wine.

"We believe the Valkarians will soon begin assembling their army on Earth. We want you to find a way to convince them to put their army in Israel. We think the humans will gather their armies in Israel then too. We will work ourselves on getting the Valkarians to go to Megiddo."

"Megiddo! Do you understand the biblical implications?"

"Yes, yes. You must trust us on this. All I can say now is that we will show the Valkarians something that we believe will overwhelm them. Now take a break while we confer."

John, the king, and Long Ears chatted for a few minutes and then Long Ears went into a trance again.

"There is something else, John, that disturbs us. You know about the Valkarians' plans for genetically engineering humans. But have you heard about their implant project?"

"By hacking into their computer system, I've learned they've been talking about implanting their minds into human children so they can have physical bodies again. I thought this was only someone's wild idea, so I didn't say anything to Paul about it."

"It's gone beyond a wild idea. They've begun experiments on dogs. And they have more detailed plans. They want the healthiest, most intelligent females to bear children naturally. These children will not be genetically engineered. And when the children are weaned, the Valkarians will take them away from their mothers."

"This is horrible."

"Then you see how important it is for the Valkarians to be defeated. At this point, they've found that the transfer process kills very young dogs. So they're trying to find the right age to do the implant."

After Long Ears had come out of trance and left the chamber, the elf king said, "You're a popular fella, John. There are two fairies that want to talk to you."

The elf king told Talembo, "Bring in Medina and Tuse."

A few minutes later, Talembo came back with two fairies. Medina, a beautiful, tall female, was a deep blue sea color and Tuse, a robust middle-aged male with a beard, was a rich forest green.

"John, do you remember us?" Medina asked. "You were only a child when we met. You've grown into a fine young man."

"I remember you and Tuse," John said. "And I remember you told me we would meet again. I also remember Tuse taking me for a ride above the forests. Although for many years, I thought it was only a dream or my imagination."

“Would you like to fly above the forests again?” Tuse asked.

“I think I’m too heavy for you now.”

“You don’t have to ride on my back this time. Maybe we can do it later.”

“Yes,” Medina said. “John, we have been in communication with Earth fairies. They’re very upset about the situation there.”

“Do you know that humans are burning tropical forests and killing dolphins and whales as we speak?” John said.

“Is there anything you can do to stop those awful things from happening?” Medina asked.

“I don’t know what I can do. I’m an alien among humans, a stranger in a strange land.”

“Well,” Tuse said, “can you tell the people in the environmental movement not to get discouraged? Tell them help is on the way.”

“I’ll give the message to Paul Heart.”

After the fairies had left, the elf king said, “It’s evening and time for food and merriment. No more serious talk tonight.”

In the main chamber of the palace, rows of wooden tables had been set up parallel to the length of the room. All the seats at the tables were occupied by elfin guests awaiting the arrival of the king and John.

When they entered the room, the guests stood and shouted, “All hail, king!”

The elf king and John sat down at the head table and then everyone else sat down. The banquet was in honor of John, whom some of these elves had met when he was a boy. Many toasts were drunk that night to the success of John’s mission and to the end of the Valkarian occupation of Honam.

After the banquet had been going on for several hours, a very drunk king rose and said, “Friends, I remember the first time I met John. Elvis brought him to me and they said, ‘This boy can see us even when we are invisible and he sees the fairies too!’ Then I knew he was the one my father had told me about. The man who would save the world of humans! John will return to earth soon and defeat the Valkarians! Then he will—”

Talembo, who was sitting on the king’s left, pulled on the king’s sleeve and the king leaned over to hear what Talembo had to say.

“Not now!” Talembo whispered.

“Oh, you’re right,” the king said and sat down.

All the elves stood and cheered. Then they waited for the king to get up to leave, but when he placed his head on the table and fell asleep, they began filing out.

John had been embarrassed by the king’s speech and waited until the king had been carried from the main chamber before he got up. Talembo came up to him as he was walking out and said, “Let me show you to your room. It’s very close.”

When they reached the room, Talembo said, “I need to talk privately with you.”

“I’m tired, but I’ve sensed all evening that there’s something you want to tell me, so come in and sit down.”

Talembo followed John into the room and closed the door. John sat on the bed and Talembo sat on a chair

“I’ll get right to the point,” Talembo said. “The king is getting old and he has no

heir. I'm afraid there will be a struggle after he dies."

"Aren't you interested in being king?"

"I am not so young myself. Now the king has a daughter from a liaison with a lady of the court. She was sitting at the table next to ours. I saw you looking at her. She is quite beautiful, isn't she?"

"She's the fairest elf I've ever seen."

"You know how much the people here and in all of Honam respect you. Would you consider marrying the king's daughter? Then it would not be difficult to make you the king's heir."

"But I am not an elf. How could I be king?"

"These are unprecedented times and they require unusual actions. Your marriage could cement the friendship between elves and men."

"I really need time to think about this. How do you know she would have me? I don't even know her name."

"Her name is Melissa. And I know she would like to be queen."

"How would you know that?"

"I'm not the king's chief counselor for my good looks, John. It's my job to know these things."

"I'll need time to think about this. It's too soon after my wife's death. And first I must go back to earth."

"I understand."

The next morning John had a private breakfast with the king. The king told John things he had told no one else, not even Talembo. As John was leaving, the king said to him, "We're counting on you, John. We know you'll make us proud."

John's Homecoming

Before going back to Earth, John spent a week in his village with his parents. A few days after he arrived, Valkarian soldiers singing Weber's *Hunter's Chorus* passed by the village on their way to the Forbidden Forest. When they returned in the afternoon, their sound systems were playing Rossini's *William Tell Overture*.

John went out to the road and stood in the middle as they walked by. He did not say a word, but the look in his eyes could have nearly melted steel or whatever alloy these android soldiers were made of.

The soldiers walked over him and around him as if he were a bump in the road. Fortunately, he was dragged to the side by his friend Laszlo before he was badly hurt.

"John, you didn't accomplish anything by doing that," he said. "These robots are mindless machines. They're not like the Valkarians you met on the spaceship."

"I know, but I felt overwhelmed with hatred and helplessness."

"You need to get cleaned up."

Laszlo ran to his home and returned with a towel to wipe John's head and hands, which were bleeding.

"I want to apologize for not going to see you at your parents' house," Laszlo said,

“but I never received a reply to the email I sent you. I hope you’ve forgiven me. I’ve been feeling guilty ever since your family was killed. We didn’t expect the soldiers to attack the village after we fired rockets at them. We thought they would chase us. We planned to ambush them in the Forest.”

“Will you show me where the graves are?”

“I’ll be glad to.”

John and Laszlo began walking along the road in the direction from which the Valkarian soldiers had come.

“I didn’t read all of the email you sent me, but my parents told me the story,” John said. “I want you to stop feeling guilty. It wasn’t your fault. But that was a pretty stupid plan.”

“I know. I don’t have any right to talk, but I want to give you some advice that has helped me.”

“Don’t be shy with me, Laszlo. We’re old friends.”

“It’s best not to hate. I know you hate the Valkarians and you hate war, but strong emotions attract. Hate attracts that which you hate, as love attracts that which you love. If you want to end war, love peace.”

“That’s good advice, but it’ll take time for me to stop hating them.”

“Replace your hatred with love and forgiveness, John.”

The graves were about a kilometer outside the village on a small hill under a large oak tree. Two hummingbirds were sitting on a branch in the tree when John and Laszlo arrived.

The hummingbirds flew down and hovered in front of John. For a few moments, they changed into ethereal images of Leia and Cyndi.

“I miss you so much!” John sobbed.

“We miss you too, John!” Leia said. “We’ve met in your dreams, but you don’t remember...John, I’m asking you not to seek revenge for our deaths. We died at the right time.”

“Hi, Dad!” Cyndi said. “Don’t worry about us. We’re busy with plans for our next lives. We love you.”

The images faded and the hummingbirds flew away.

Just before the week with his parents was up, when John was walking in the Forbidden Forest, Tuse appeared to him.

“Are you ready to take that ride I promised you?” Tuse asked.

“I’ve been looking forward to it.”

“Where shall we go?”

“I’d like to see some old trees.”

“Fine. There’s a very powerful redwood grove nearby.”

Tuse touched John’s shoulder and they soared into the air and began flying to the north.

“This is marvelous,” John said. “I can see forests that would take me hours to walk to.”

Tuse took John to a redwood grove with trees as tall as one hundred meters and as old as two thousand years. They spent several hours there communicating with the spirits

of the trees. John left the grove with an appreciation for the ancient and massive consciousnesses that felt secure in the knowledge of their place in the universe and that did not fear their deaths because they could see beyond them.

Fooling General Nietzsche

When John arrived back at Paul's house, he rested.

The next day he felt he was ready to help defeat the Valkarians. He first thought about how he could lure their army to Israel. He decided to phone Almar and ask for a meeting with General Nietzsche.

"Hi, this is John."

"John, it's been a long time. I've heard you've been to Honam."

"How did you find out?"

"We have our spies, you know."

"I want to talk to General Nietzsche."

"I'll see if I can arrange a meeting. You wouldn't tell me what you were doing on Honam, would you?"

"I went to visit my wife's and daughter's graves."

"We think you talked to the 24 civilizations and we would love to know what they told you."

"How come I was never told about the 24 civilizations when I worked with you?"

"It was something you didn't need to know."

"Why are you still loyal to the Valkarians?"

"They're the best thing that's ever happened to my career."

Almar called John later that day and told him General Nietzsche would come to Paul's house the next day.

"Tell him to come at twelve o'clock," John said.

General Nietzsche was late. When he arrived, Ani was the one who let him in. She had told John that she wanted to see a Valkarian in person, so John invited her to be present at the meeting.

General Nietzsche had to duck when he came in the door. When Ani stood beside him in the entrance she looked very small, like a child.

General Nietzsche seemed happy to see a woman. "Hello!" he said. "You must be Paul's lovely wife."

"John is waiting for you. Follow me."

Ani ushered him into the living room, where John was eating lunch.

In the living room, General Nietzsche was himself again. He did not sit down, but said gruffly, "I hope you're not wasting my time, traitor. Have you forgotten the oath of loyalty you took before you left Honam?"

"Have you forgotten Terrak has released me from my contract? The reason I asked you here was because I wanted to tell you that the New Atlantis construction site will be attacked."

"Why should I trust you? This is some kind of trick."

“No, I just want to make sure there’s no war. I know what you’re capable of. If you fortify the site, the humans won’t attack.”

“You pacifists are so afraid of a little violence.”

“War is a license to kill.”

“You’ve forgotten the purpose of war: War allows the strong to take their proper places as rulers over the weak.”

“On my planet, we say an army that doesn’t go to war is an army that serves its people well.”

“And your people are right now licking our boots. Thanks for the information. I’ve been trying to convince Terrak to begin deploying our army on earth. This is the excuse I need.”

General Nietzsche turned and walked to the front door. After waving to Ani, who was in the kitchen, he ducked his head and went out and into the shuttle.

When General Nietzsche got back to the spaceship, he immediately went to see Terrak and repeated what John had told him.

“It sounds like a trap,” Terrak said.

“I agree. It’s not nice to fool General Nietzsche. I want to send troops to that valley we saw when we arrived. It’s a good location for a battle.”

“OK. But don’t let them start any trouble,” Terrak said.

The next day, General Nietzsche began sending soldiers down to Earth. Over a three week period, shuttles and troop transports brought tens of thousands of android and mutant soldiers to the northern end of the valley of Megiddo. In response, the nations of Earth sent thousands of soldiers to the southern end of the valley.

Loving Peace

Early one morning about four weeks after he had become an M.R.F.S., Paul woke up and couldn’t get back to sleep. So he went into the living room and switched on the TV. He heard the CNN anchor say, “Spontaneous demonstrations for peace are breaking out around the world. Meanwhile, we’re getting reports from Australia, Japan, and South Korea that a strange phenomenon is occurring on the moon. First, let’s go to live pictures from Beijing.”

On the TV, Paul saw several hundred people holding candles in Tiananmen Square on a clear night. They were standing behind the bed of a pickup truck, which served as a makeshift stage. A woman was speaking from the stage when all of a sudden she said, “Look!” and pointed to the east. Everyone turned and saw the full moon, which had just cleared the Beijing skyline. There were loud oohs and ahhs from the crowd when they realized that the moon had across the lower part of its face a thin, dark line with a slight upward curve on both ends.

Next, Paul saw on the TV an aerial view of St. Peter’s Square in Vatican City. It was afternoon and thousands of people were in the square.

“I’m told these people are praying for peace,” the CNN anchor said. “Now let’s go to Rio de Janeiro’s Copacabana Beach, where people are dancing for peace.”

On the TV, Paul saw thousands of people in beachwear dancing in front of a stage while musicians performed the popular love song “The Girl from Ipanema.”

“Now let’s go to our own Times Square,” the CNN anchor said.

On the TV, Paul saw thousands of people in New York’s Times Square on a cold morning. They were singing the John Lennon song “Imagine.”

A few hours later in the valley behind the monastery, 24 children from around the world wearing traditional costumes formed a circle as the smiling moon beamed down upon them. They took their neighbors’ hands and leaned back and began swaying to the right and to the left as they chanted in Sumari, which is an ancient language and the basis for all the world’s languages: “We love peace. Peace on earth. Goodwill to all.”

And in homes, schools, fields, offices, factories, and houses of worship around the world, people were praying for peace, imagining peace, dreaming of peace, planning for peace, working and studying in peace, eating in peace, playing in peace, and generally making peace a part of their everyday lives.

The Long-Awaited Battle

In Megiddo, preparations had been completed for a great battle. Some Christians were saying it was the battle of Armageddon that had been foretold in the Book of Revelations of the Bible. They warned that the end of the world was near and those who wanted to survive had to repent of their sins. Some of these Christians were bathing and changing their clothes several times a day, preparing themselves for the rapture they were sure would soon take them, naked, straight up to heaven. However, most of the world was too concerned about the drama unfolding in Megiddo to pay them much attention.

In the early evening inside a large brown tent at the northern end of the valley of Megiddo, a dozen alien aides were sitting at computer terminals while half a dozen Valkarian generals, including General Nietzsche, stood around watching. The generals were wearing medals and pins like General Nietzsche, but they didn’t have as many decorations as he had, and they weren’t as tall as he was.

An alien aide said to General Nietzsche, “We’re picking up spacecraft in the vicinity of their moon, sir.”

At the time the alien aide was speaking, a huge fleet of spaceships was passing silently above the surface of the moon. In the fleet were ships of many sizes and shapes, including saucer, cigar, top, and V.

Inside a large camouflage-colored tent in the human camp, a dozen aides and technicians were sitting at computer terminals, while half a dozen generals of different nationalities stood around watching.

An aide said to the American general, “Sir, we’re picking up a fleet of spaceships emerging from behind the moon.”

“Can you communicate with them?” the American general asked.

“No, sir. We’ve tried.”

“Then we’ll have to assume they’re hostile.”

At the front lines of the Valkarian camp, the android and mutant soldiers to be used

in the first assault began emerging from trenches. They formed two lines, with the androids in front.

While waiting for the command to attack, the mutants began performing some ritualistic motions with their arms and legs. The movements reminded me of the haka of the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team. At the completion of each set of movements, they chanted loudly in their native language. Their chant sounded like this: “O doan santo! Pahta paal hoo ha!”

General Nietzsche and his personal aide were standing near the front lines while this was going on, taking in the scene.

“I love the moments before a battle, when the smell of napalm is in the air,” General Nietzsche said.

“We aren’t using napalm, sir.”

“Why not?”

“Have you forgotten you banned it, sir?”

“Yes, I have forgotten.”

A whistle blew and each mutant soldier took a position behind an android soldier. From overhead, the android soldiers’ metal bodies could be seen gleaming in the light of the setting sun. The mutants’ tanned bodies could be seen leaning forward with their heads bowed as the green-feathered sashes on their bare backs ruffled in the breeze.

“Aren’t they magnificent?” General Nietzsche said.

“Yes, sir!”

A drumbeat began. Over a period of about twenty seconds it built to a crescendo and then stopped. Then the mutant soldiers shouted so loudly they could be heard by the human soldiers on the other side of the battlefield: “It’s a great day to die! It’s a great day to die! It’s a great day to die!”

Trumpets sounded and the android and mutant soldiers started marching forward. As they marched, the android soldiers sang Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s poem, “Charge of the Light Brigade”:

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred:
“Forward, the Light Brigade!”
“Charge for the guns!” he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

General Nietzsche threw his arms in the air and stomped angrily on the ground. “That’s not the song they were supposed to sing!” he said. “Change the song to ‘We Are The Champions.’”

General Nietzsche’s aide ran toward the command center tent. The android soldiers continued singing as they marched:

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”
Was there a man dismay’d?
Not tho’ the soldier knew
Someone had blunder’d:
Their’s not to make reply,
Their’s not to reason why,
Their’s but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley’d and thunder’d;
Storm’d at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

The aide came running out of the tent and up to General Nietzsche. The singing was very loud and he had to shout: “We can’t stop it, sir. Something has taken control of the main computer.”

Flash’d all their sabers bare,
Flash’d as they turn’d in air,
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder’d:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro’ the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel’d from the sabre stroke
Shatter’d and sunder’d.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

In the human command center tent, the American general said, “Let’s show them some firepower! Launch the tac nukes!”

A technician at a computer terminal said, “Yes, sir!” and typed a password. Then an aide came over to the terminal and typed a launch code.

A few moments later, the technician’s monitor displayed a large flashing red message: “FAILURE TO LAUNCH.”

“The nukes are jammed, sir,” the technician said.

“Which ones?” the American general asked.
“All of them!” the technician answered.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley’d and thunder’d;
Storm’d at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro’ the jaws of Death
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder’d.
Honor the charge they made!
Honor the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

When they finished singing, the android soldiers froze in their tracks, as if the main computer had overridden their onboard computers, as indeed it had. Did John and I have something to do with all this? Yes, but humans provided the energy, as Silva had wanted them to do.

The mutants were obviously surprised by the actions of their metal comrades, but when trumpets sounded, they switched on their shields, stepped around the android soldiers, and began advancing toward the human lines.

Paul and Ani were watching these events live on the TV in the living room of Paul’s house. John was in his room, watching a TV as he worked at his computer. When the mutants resumed marching, John lay on his bed. He mustered all his powers of concentration and sent this telepathic message to his countrymen: “Hina bacumal hina. Valkar ris dilt warfer!” Translated, it meant: “Men do not kill men. Valkar is your enemy!”

The mutants heard the words in their heads and spoke them aloud to each other: “Hina bacumal hina. Valkar ris dilt warfer!”

The mutants began to hesitate. Then they stopped advancing too.

An hour later in New York City, a TV newscaster somberly told his audience: “While the eyes of the world are on Israel, a startling new development is taking place in space. Since late this morning, a dark line has been seen across the face of the moon. The Pentagon has told us it is being created by a fleet of thousands of spaceships heading toward earth. Have we become pawns in some galactic chess match? God help us all.”

The following day, the battlefield was quiet, as both sides had stood down. But in

the early afternoon everyone felt a strong vibration and heard a great roar. The sky became dark as thousands of spaceships arrived and hovered overhead. Then the spaceships, except for the few that were several kilometers long, landed between the two armies.

Over a period of a few hours, humanoids and creatures not so human emerged from the spaceships. The visitors from space waited outside their ships, neither going to one camp nor the other. Around ten o'clock, soft, invigorating pipe-like music began coming from the ships. It was heard on both sides of the battlefield and continued throughout the night.

At sunrise, the music stopped and a humanoid wearing a grey hooded sweater, blue jeans, and sandals walked over to the Valkarian camp. The humanoid told General Nietzsche, "The shark eats the big fish, but the orca eats the shark."

In the afternoon, android and mutant soldiers began getting into shuttles and transports and returning to their spaceships.

The first contacts between humans and the new aliens now began. Some soldiers just took pictures. Others were invited aboard the spaceships. A lucky few were taken on short flights.

Over the next few days, landings took place in every nation on Earth.

And in space, the three Valkarian spaceships left Earth orbit and disappeared as their hyper drives kicked in.

The Once and Future King

On an afternoon about two weeks later, John, Ani, and Paul, who was carrying Sarah, were walking into the new UN General Assembly building—the UN had moved its headquarters to the capital the Valkarians had built in Jerusalem—when a female reporter came up to them.

"So guys, what's next?"

"We're going to cultivate our garden," Paul said as he looked at Ani and then at Sarah.

"There are Valkarians on my planet that need to be taught a lesson," John said.

A little while later, the humanoid Silva spoke before the General Assembly. It, for Silva was neither male nor female, said:

I am Silva, a representative of the 24 civilizations. We seeded your planet and even now live among you in human form. We inspire you and send you energy.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to stop you from coming to the brink of destroying life on Earth, the most beautiful planet in the galaxy. This we could not allow. Earth is the legendary home to many of us. Moreover, Earth is unique and pivotal in the evolution of consciousness.

The past is prelude. It is time for a golden age on Earth. A fulfilling age, when men will

recognize their unity with all life and with the Earth herself.

Silva paused while the audience applauded and then continued:

We have come as true friends, for we have no interest here except to want you to grow and develop peacefully. And so we have decided to give you more guidance.

In China, a man in this audience said, "Let rule be entrusted to him who treats his rank as if it were his soul." By his words and actions, this man has shown that he can safely handle power and that he has the vision to lead Earth into the Age of Aquarius.

For these and other reasons, we are going to make Paul Heart the first Philosopher King of Earth.

Paul looked at Ani and she said, "Go. Knock 'em dead. You've been preparing all your life for this. I won't stand in your way."

In fact, Ani was proud of him and had lately begun to think in terms of what kind of life would be best for Sarah: a quiet life removed from the affairs of the world as Paul had promised her or a life around people and issues involved with the world's future. She now knew the second choice would be best for Sarah's development. And she knew in that moment the importance of her role: She was to be the anchor, the indispensable loving support, for the man and woman who would lead the world to the next step in the evolution of consciousness.

Paul handed Sarah to Ani and began walking up to the lectern as many delegates congratulated him. While Paul was on his way, Silva said:

I hope you will always remember that you should treat all things with respect no matter where you are or go. God is not separate from the world, but part of it. The whole universe is conscious and alive.

The audience gave Silva a standing ovation. The people continued clapping until Paul reached the lectern. Then they became very quiet.

Paul suddenly remembered the last part of the speech in the dream he had just before he went to China. He had been unable to remember the words when he spoke to the people of the small city in Guizhou Province, but now he knew why: The words were meant to be spoken in China in the dream world and at the UN in the physical world.

It is time for the development of a world consciousness, a community of men and nature. For the next stage in the growth of mankind lies in the unity that can only be achieved when men rise above the barriers that separate them from each other.

We are like the single drops of a river, with our individual ways flowing over pebbles and rocks, under bushes and trees, but with the common destination to reach the ocean. And as the drops depend on each other, and as they together form the river, so all men create

the consciousness that allows every individual to achieve his greatest fulfillment.

As the audience applauded, Paul motioned for John to join him. When John got to the lectern, he grabbed Paul's left wrist and raised it in the air, like a referee proclaiming the winner of a boxing match.

"Remember, we're brothers," Paul said, and John released Paul's wrist. Holding hands, they raised their arms into the air and, looking at each other, said, "All for one. One for all."

The audience gave them a standing ovation.

As they stood looking out on the people in the audience, they each had the thought, "I've come a long way in a year." John remembered the reception he and Almar had received in New York at the UN. Paul remembered when Ani had told him in Beijing that the police were coming to his apartment.

Suddenly, Paul was back in that moment. He looked down at the coffee table and his eyes fell on the photo of the Valkarian spaceship. He picked up the photo and stared at it while he considered his choices: He could run from the police or stay and face the consequences.

After a few seconds, he decided to stay and he became another Paul, who I will call Paul Two. "Let's tell them the blog entry was a mistake, a joke," he said to Ani Two. "What would they do to me? Deport me? We could go to India. I've always wanted to study the Upanishads and learn more about Indian culture."

"I've always wanted to wear a sari and see the Himalayas," Ani Two said.

There was a loud knock on the door, and Paul Two went to open it.

Back in the other probable reality at the UN, John said, "I wish Daniel were here."

"He is," Paul said and he looked at Sarah and smiled.

The confrontation at Megiddo between the Valkarian and Earth armies was not the precursor to the end of the world as some Christians had hoped, but was the final scene to the prelude to a golden age of peace and personal growth. Many men and women were beginning to accept that they were not the victims of chance events, accidents, or other people. They were starting to understand that their experiences were not determined by previous lifetimes, the circumstances of their birth, their childhood, their unconscious minds, or by dreams, predictions, or prophecies. They were realizing instead that they each created their own reality in the present moment and that together all the consciousnesses of Earth created the reality known as the world at the beginning of the 21st century.

This knowledge, along with two other important insights—that men form their experiences through their thoughts, beliefs, desires, emotions, and mental images, and that God is in the world—would lead to a profound change in human civilization, but it would take some time.

And as for me, messiah #18,432 had gone from M.I.T. to M.R.F.S. to M.I.S. status in one year. In the annals of messiah training, that's a pretty big accomplishment. It'll look good on my resume, if I don't say so myself.

Oh, and how do you like the sign I'm going to put up outside the monastery? I can rent the hut out to overnight guests:

ATO'S PLACE
Paul Heart Slept Here.
(That's Ato like the car.)

So you see, as Daniel told Paul, fulfillment is a win-win proposition for everyone.

"Your results with 18,432 exceeded our expectations. But that last part was an attempt at what the humans call humor, was it not?"

"Irony to be exact, sir. And thank you for the compliment."

"The humor escapes us, but we will defer to your judgment."

"I think the humans will appreciate it, sir."

"We've decided to release your report as it is. We'll see if we can find another assignment for you or perhaps a promotion to a higher grade would be appropriate."

"If I may be allowed to say so, sir, I would like to finish what I started."

"We'll get back to you on that. We have to see how this is received. And there is still the question of whether you were keeping the proper distance."

"It's just that I have an affinity for the subjects because they remind me of myself."

"We wonder why."

"You're not implying—"

"We never imply."

"May I point out that the meaning of 'proper distance' is right now being debated in the higher councils?"

"It's always being debated in the higher councils."

"Then may I add, sir, that I found the assignment fulfilling?"

"We'll certainly take that into consideration. You may go...Wait. We almost forgot. What title do you want to use?"

"*The Education of Messiah #18,432: A Light-Hearted Report*. It's a knockoff of Jane Roberts' title, *The Education of Oversoul Seven*."

"We had in mind something a little different. And how about adding an appendix with his writings during the Bush years?"

"Good idea. We could call it *Oh, The Horror!*"

"We think you're joking."

[Appendix: I Wanna Scream, But
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...Ten years from now, we'll look back on this period of time and see that liberating fifty million people in Afghanistan and Iraq really did represent a major, fundamental shift... in U.S. policy in terms of how we dealt with the emerging terrorist threat--and that we'll also have fundamentally changed circumstances in that part of the world.

Dick Cheney, U.S. News and World Report, January 23, 2006

February 18, 2006

Dear Dick,

When I look back ten years from now, I'll think about the hundreds of billions of dollars that have been wasted on the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War and wish the money had been spent on medical care for the uninsured, rebuilding our infrastructure, fighting global warming, and paying down the national debt.

When I look back ten years from now, I'll think about the hundreds of thousands of people who were liberated from the earth in your wars and ask, "Just when did God give you the right to take human life?" And then I'll ask myself, "Did the wars at least make the world safer?" And I'll answer sadly, "No, they made the world less safe because they sowed the seeds of hatred and humiliation, which often grow into acts of terrorism."

Signed,

Paul Heart

The Decision to Go to War Revisited

November 22, 2005

Democratic Senators have claimed the administration manipulated the Iraq pre-war intelligence. On November 16th, the Vice President said that was "one of the most dishonest and reprehensible charges ever aired in this city." To help clarify this issue, our contact inside the White House has agreed to release its notes from the Cabinet meeting in the spring of 2002 where the decision to go to war was made.

Washington (FWP)—The Cabinet meeting began with the President turning to the Secretary of State and asking, "Do you want to hear the good news first or the bad news first?"

Colin Powell answered, "The bad news."

The President said matter-of-factly, "We have reason to believe Saddam has been helping terrorists, including Al Qaeda."

"I'm afraid to ask," Powell said. "What's the good news?"

The President announced loudly, "It's about time we took %*!#@# Saddam out!"

Vice President Dick Cheney jumped up from his chair and high fived the President.

Powell shook his head from side to side.

The President smiled and said, "I was kidding about the good news. I'll tell you the good news later."

National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice cleared her throat and asked, "What evidence do you have, Mr. President?"

The President winked at the Vice President and then looked at his watch and said, “Hey, it’s already eleven minutes after nine. I think this discussion has gone on long enough.”

“I think you’re watch is fast, Mr. President,” Rice said. “My watch says—”

“The President is right, Connie,” the Vice President said. “9/11. We don’t ever want to experience such a horrible attack again. We’ll fight terrorists in their own countries so we don’t have to fight them in ours.”

“But what evidence do we have that Iraq is involved with terrorism?” an obviously flustered Rice asked.

The Vice President rolled his eyes and said, “The evidence is clear enough for all patriotic, red-blooded Americans: 9/11. How many times do I have to say it?”

Powell couldn’t keep quiet any longer. He said, “Mr. President, do you know that if we go in, we’ll be responsible for whatever happens? It’s like that pottery store rule: ‘If you break it, you bought it.’ And as a former military man, I have to say the casualty estimates seem low. Whose idea was it we would be welcomed with flowers?”

Both Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld glared at Powell and Rumsfeld snapped, “You’re not a military man anymore, Colin!”

Then in a calm voice he declared, “As Defense Secretary, I believe the Iraqis are dying for us to save them from Saddam Hussein.”

“That settles it. We’re going in,” the President concluded eagerly.

The President looked around the room and then continued, “Don has already shown me his plans for fighting the Iraqis with a small, mobile army. I want all of you to go over your budgets and come up with ideas on saving money so we can have a war and tax cuts too. I’ve been told it’s never been done before.”

“We’re just giving the people back their money,” the Vice President added quietly.

The Secretary of State said disgustedly, “You guys talk about war like it’s a game. Do you understand real people will die?”

The President and Vice President stared at Powell.

Powell threw his hands up and mumbled something unintelligible. Then he ran out of the room. A sound like retching could be heard from outside the door.

“What’s the matter with him?” the President asked the Vice President.

“He’s a party pooper,” Cheney replied.

“He didn’t wait to hear the good news,” the President said.

“What’s the good news?” Rice asked hopefully.

“He gets to sell the war to the UN,” the President answered with a straight face.

Again the Vice President jumped up from his chair and high fived the President, who responded, “Bring it on, Saddam! Fool a Bush once, shame on Dad! Fool a Bush twice, shame on you!”

The Interrogation of Osama Bin Laden

March 2, 2006

The book *Stratagery* by Bill Sammon reveals that George Bush believes Osama bin Laden helped him get re-elected. Thanks to our intrepid, but for security reasons, anonymous sources, the complete story can now be told.

Washington (FWP)—Osama bin Laden was captured in September 2004 in a mountainous region of eastern Afghanistan. After a quick stop in Saudi Arabia, he was flown to Andrews Air Force base in Maryland and from there he was taken in a van to the prison cell in the basement of the White House.

The President and Vice President visited bin Laden the next day. The President, apparently trying to be humorous, joked when they entered the cell, “You can relax. We don’t do torture here.”

The Vice President had no time for pleasantries. As soon as they sat down he said, “Let’s cut to the chase, Osama. If you sign a confession, we can make your life a helluva lot better than it is now.”

Bin Laden did not speak nor did he take his eyes off the floor while the President and Vice President were in the cell. The next morning he was on his way back to Saudi Arabia.

On his return to Washington a week later, the President and Vice President visited him again. Bin Laden was sitting on his bed when they came in and he looked at them and laughed.

The President and Vice President were shocked by what they saw: Bin Laden's face was black and blue and he was missing most of his teeth.

The Vice President turned to the President and whispered angrily, "I thought we told them not to leave any marks."

"Maybe that was lost in the translation. Maybe they thought we said not to leave any teeth," the President said, baring his pearly whites.

"He's in no condition to sign a confession," the Vice President said.

"I can see that," the President said.

As they were walking out of the prison cell, Bush said, "I'm sorry about what happened. We're going to have you fixed up."

Two weeks later, after bin Laden had been fitted with dentures, Bush paid him another visit. This time Bush asked the Secret Service to wait outside. Only the interpreter was allowed to enter the cell with him.

After sitting down on a chair across from the bed where bin Laden sat, Bush said, "I came here by myself. You and I need to talk."

Bush waited for the interpreter to translate and when there was no response from bin Laden, he sighed and added, "You and I are alike."

Bin Laden looked up and said in accented English, "We need enemy to make us important. Plato said, 'Wars remind people they need leaders.'"

"That's right. Only let's make that 'strong leaders.' They don't want any wimps," Bush said.

Bin Laden cast his eyes on the floor again.

"I'm glad we got this chance to talk by ourselves. Dick can be a little rough around the edges sometimes."

Bin Laden continued to look down.

"Now, you've got to realize you'll never defeat the greatest nation in the history of the world. Not on my watch."

Bin Laden's eyes lit up and he looked directly at Bush. He spoke Arabic and the interpreter translated: "We don't have to defeat America. We just have to make America

bleed like Vietnam. Your people have no stomach for dying.”

“Here’s the deal: I’m willing to let you live to an old age in a comfortable prison if you’ll call off your jihad.”

“I would rather die.”

“Suit yourself. I can send you back to Saudi Arabia tomorrow.”

“Here’s my deal: Get out of the Middle East and stay out. I mean completely out, from Palestine to Pakistan, and I’ll end this jihad.”

“Over my dead body.”

“If I die in a Saudi prison, my followers will unleash a hurricane on America.”

“You don’t scare me. We’ll kill a hundred terrorists for every American that dies.”

“If my math is correct, that still leaves more than 10 million dead Americans. You will go down in history as the man who started World War III.”

“You’re Satan’s agent on earth. I’m on a mission from God to fight evil.”

“As Allah is my witness, I will not rest until the Great Satan is defeated.”

“We’ll put you on trial for crimes against humanity.”

“We’ll put you on trial for crimes against humanity. We have photographs.”

Suddenly, there was a loud roar and a wall of flames appeared between the two men. After a few seconds, the fire died down and the devil could be seen standing with his hands on his hips, looking from one man to the other with an annoyed expression on his face.

He let a smile escape his lips for a moment and said, “I love hearing my name.” Then he became serious again. “Can’t you two get along? You have so much in common.”

“You know my terms,” bin Laden said.

“They’re impossible to meet,” Bush replied.

“OK. Your Jewish friends can keep Palestine, but I want all the rest.”

“No deal. You’ll be returned to Afghanistan tonight. We need each other.”

“That’s better,” the devil said, visibly relieved. As he slowly faded from sight, he added, “I’m counting on both of you. Don’t let me down.”

Values and Morality for the Left

We on the political left don’t need to run and hide when values and morality are discussed. Values and morality are constantly in our thoughts, even if we don’t think in those terms. Why do we support the poor and the middle class in their struggles to make a decent living? Isn’t it because of our values of justice and compassion? Why are we concerned about global warming and huge budget deficits? Isn’t it because we feel a responsibility to our children and future generations? Why do we denounce the strategy of pre-emptive war and condemn corporate greed? Isn’t it because of our moral outrage?

Today’s Republican leaders may be the most dishonest politicians in our nation’s history. On virtually every important issue—taxes, the economy, budget deficits, Social Security, global warming, air pollution, the threat from Iraq, Hurricane Katrina, torture, spying on American citizens—Republican leaders have attempted to deceive the American people. To be as dishonest as they are, while talking about values and morality, means they are also hypocrites.

God is neither left nor right, but if God had to take sides, I think God would join with the left in a heartbeat. What could God abhor more than war and hatred? Yet today the right in America is supporting a brutal and unnecessary war that has led to the deaths of tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians. The right’s contempt for others is also evident in their favorite novel, *Glorious Appearing*, where everyone who is not a born-again Christian is slaughtered without mercy.

Whether you believe in the divinity of Jesus or not, it is easy to see that Jesus was a man of peace and a great humanitarian. If he came back today, he would be horrified by what the Israelis are doing to the Palestinians. He would be horrified by our abuse of human rights in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Jesus would never condone pre-emptive war. True followers of Christ, therefore, do not support wars against real or imagined threats. True followers of Christ do not look for reasons to fight, but look for reasons to get along with others.

It is the Democrats who should be talking about values and morality, not the Republicans. It is time for the Democrats to pick up their verbal swords and do battle with men of deceit, hatred, and violence who have kidnapped Christ and falsely parade under the banner of God.

Where is the leader on the left who says to the right, “You want values? You want

morality? I'll show you values and morality that should make you ashamed," as he opens the Bible and reads:

1. "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth....Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy...Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."
2. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."
3. "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"
4. "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you...."
5. "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'"

Fun With Ken and Karl

On January 31, 2006, I watched the C-SPAN coverage of the Republican National Committee's winter meeting. I took notes while listening to Ken Mehlman—chairman of the RNC—and Karl Rove give their speeches. I'm going to present my responses to a few of their comments here. Their comments, which I have summarized in some cases, are in italics.

KEN MEHLMAN

President Reagan's policies brought down the Berlin Wall.

I guess Ken never ran that one by Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev's reforms led to the breakup of the Soviet Union and freedom for those under Communist rule. If Gorbachev hadn't become the leader of the Soviet Union at the time that he did, the Soviet Union might have held together until Clinton became President. Then the Democrats could say Clinton brought down the Berlin Wall.

Democrats are people who insist on repeating the same old mistakes.

Hmm. I think Ken is confused again. The Democrats started the Vietnam War. The Republicans started the Iraq War.

NSA surveillance will find terrorists before they strike.

After observing the level of competence and integrity of the Bush administration over the last five years, I think I'll file that statement right next to "Iraq has weapons of mass destruction" and "Saddam Hussein is cooperating with Osama bin Laden."

The President understood that we must take the fight to the terrorists.

Even though there was no significant terrorist presence in Iraq before the war, the President's apparent strategy is to treat every Iraqi as a potential terrorist. How much blood will he spill before he realizes that in the 21st century you can't demonize an entire nation? That was possible in the 19th and 20th centuries because you could get away with genocide, but genocide is not acceptable today.

The central front in the war on terror is in Iraq.

Iraq didn't become the central front in the war on terror until the United States attacked it and Sunni Arabs began traveling to Iraq.

Retreat would increase the ranks of the terrorists.

According to the CIA, the war is increasing the ranks of the terrorists. A CIA intelligence report last year said, "Iraq and other possible conflicts in the future could provide recruitment, training grounds, technical skills and language proficiency for a new class of terrorists who are 'professionalized' and for whom political violence becomes an end in itself."

There is only one exit strategy: victory.

Republicans have never told us what victory is.

Democrats want to weaken our homeland defenses.

The Democrats weren't the ones who were slow to respond to Hurricane Katrina. I know that wasn't a terrorist attack, but it showed how unprepared the Bush administration was for a crisis on our soil.

Democrats love their country. The question is, "Can they protect it?"

It wasn't Democrats who were asleep at the wheel when the report came in that terrorists might hijack airplanes. It wasn't Democrats who wanted to focus on Iraq when Richard Clarke, the terrorism czar, warned that Osama bin Laden was the threat. I don't doubt that Republicans love their country, but can they protect it?

Republicans have learned the lessons of history and know this war can and must be won.

There is nothing in history that suggests a war on terror can be won.

Tax cuts create economic growth.

Economists say that if you really want to create economic growth with tax cuts, you concentrate them on the poor and the middle class, who are more likely to spend the money. But the Republicans gave most of their tax cuts, in dollar terms, to the rich.

The most important reason for the recent economic growth was low interest rates. Paul Krugman of the *New York Times* wrote: "Low interest rates led to a housing boom....High house prices made people feel richer, and they could borrow against the increased value of their homes, feeding consumer spending."

Republicans accuse the Democrats of engaging in class warfare when they question the tax cuts for the rich. I think the Republicans are engaging in generational warfare because our children will have to pay for their tax cuts.

Democrats wanted higher taxes to pay for the Iraq War, the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, and after September 11.

I don't know of any President before who cut taxes during wartime. Wartime in the past was always a time to tighten our belts, not to go out and party.

President Kennedy ended his second State of the Union speech of 1961 with these words: "I have not asked for a single program which did not cause one or all Americans some inconvenience, or some hardship, or some sacrifice." And we were not at war.

The Republican Party is the party of reform.

The Republican Party is the party of corruption. See the Abramoff scandal and the no-bid contracts to Halliburton and Bechtel.

The Republican Party is the party of greed, selfishness, and irresponsibility. See the tax cuts for the rich combined with reduced social spending for the poor and huge budget deficits.

The Republican Party is the party of deceit. See the Iraq War, the budget deceptions, the attempt to "reform" Social Security, the Hurricane Katrina disaster, domestic spying, etc.

Power belongs to the people, not the government.

Then why is the federal government interfering with our right to die with dignity and our right to receive medication for pain?

KARL ROVE

We are the party of ideas.

The Republican Party is the party of Big Brother. With the Republicans in control of all three branches of government since 2002, the United States has been creeping closer and closer to the reality of George Orwell's *1984*.

As in *1984*, we have continuous war: The Bush administration says the war on terror could last decades, which is just fine with Republicans because they have convinced the American people that they are the only ones who can protect America. Continuous war is their friend.

As in *1984*, we have a government engaged in torture. As in *1984*, we have a government spying on its citizens: in our public libraries, on the Internet, and during our phone calls. We have, like in *1984*, a government that believes it can redefine the meaning of words. In *1984* this was called double speak. Al Gore said:

"...They often use Orwellian language to disguise their true purposes. For example, a policy that opens national forests to destructive logging of old-growth trees is labeled Healthy Forest Initiative. A policy that vastly increases the amount of pollution that can be dumped into the air is called the Clear Skies Initiative."

Here are two more examples of Republican double speak: According to Republicans, they don't violate the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War because the men held at Guantanamo are not prisoners of war—they're "unlawful combatants." And they don't send people out to be tortured—sending prisoners to countries with a history of torture in their prisons is "extraordinary rendition."

President Bush is winning the war against terrorism, promoting liberty in places that have never known it before.

He's not winning the war. He's fanning the flames of terrorism by his unnecessary war in Iraq. Ask the CIA. And the President came up with his ideas on democracy rather late. After he couldn't prove that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction or that Saddam Hussein was working with terrorists, he decided that he was going to bring democracy to the people of the Middle East. But I can't believe he really cares about these people. If he did, we wouldn't be killing and abusing so many of them.

Democrats want to cut and run in Iraq. Abandoning our Iraqi friends would signal that America cannot be trusted. We would hand Iraq over to enemies. The global terrorist movement would be emboldened.

Democrats have never said they want to cut and run. But they do want a plan for

withdrawal. Republicans want to stay until some undefined “victory” is achieved. Could it be that the Bush administration’s goal is to have permanent bases in Iraq as the Iraqi people fear?

It is sadly true that America cannot be trusted while George Bush is President. America cannot be trusted to follow the agreements it signed, like the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. America cannot be trusted to respect human rights. America cannot be trusted to tell the truth. It will take years for America to regain the trust of the world after the Bush administration is gone.

Republicans have a post-9/11 worldview on national security, and many Democrats have a pre-9/11 worldview. That doesn’t make them unpatriotic, not at all. But it does make them wrong—deeply and profoundly and consistently wrong.

Look at the consequences of the Republican worldview: an unnecessary war with Iraq that has made the world less safe, dangerous confrontations with North Korea and Iran, and worldwide contempt for America. That doesn’t make Republicans unpatriotic, but it does make them look like idiots.

Democrats see higher taxes as a sign of virtue. They believe taxes should be raised all the time.

Nonsense.

We will make our tax cutting records an issue in 2006.

I can see the Democrat’s television ad now: First, there will be a picture of a crowded emergency room waiting area and then a scene of students on a college campus. Next, there will be a split screen with the same two pictures, but some people will be X-ed out in red. A narrator will say, “At the same time Republicans were voting to extend tax cuts for the rich, they were also voting to cut Medicaid and student loans.”

Next, there will be an aerial view of New Orleans just after Hurricane Katrina as the narrator says, “While Hurricane Katrina victims were waiting for help, Republicans were voting to extend tax cuts for the rich.” Next there will be a picture of an American soldier with upper body wounds lying on the ground. The narrator will say, “While American soldiers were fighting and dying in Iraq without body armor, Republicans were cutting taxes for the rich.” Next, there will be a picture of a very well-to-do neighborhood and the narrator will say, “It seems like the Republican solution to every problem is to cut taxes for the rich. And do you know who also loses when Republicans cut taxes? Our children, because the Bush administration has to borrow hundreds of billions of dollars every year to make up for the revenue lost by their tax cuts.”

The final scene will be of children playing in a playground as the narrator says, “Their

future is not as rosy as it could be. Republicans are spending their inheritance.”

The Paranoid Giant

There once was a giant who lived in a village on a beautiful lake. No one was strong enough to defeat the giant in battle, but one day while the giant was sleeping men who believed they had been wronged by the giant attacked the giant’s village. This made the giant very angry and he promised himself that from that day on he would kill anyone who might be thinking about attacking his village.

Several months later the giant told his villagers, “I’ve been keeping an eye on three evil men who live on the other side of the lake. One of the men is making weapons that can kill many people. He’s a friend of the men who attacked our village.”

The villagers trusted the giant and they said, “We will go to war with you if this will make our village safer.”

The giant replied, “War is only a last resort.”

When the lake villages’ council heard what the giant had said, they sent him this message: “We are concerned about this man too. But before we do anything, we would like to see some evidence that what you said is true.”

After the giant read their message, he said to himself, “God has blessed me with moral clarity so I can detect evil. And God has given me great strength so I can defeat evil. With God as my guide, I can’t be wrong!”

The giant thought for a moment and then said out loud, “I won’t listen to ungodly men!”

Soon afterwards, several village elders came to the giant and said, “We were with your father when he fought against this man ten years ago. Is it possible you are just trying to finish what your father started? Or maybe you want to prove you’re a better man than your father.”

The giant answered, “This is not about my father. You must trust me on this because I cannot tell you everything I know.”

“But did your father not destroy most of his weapons? How can this man be more dangerous now than when your father defeated him?”

The giant pretended not to hear the elders’ questions.

A few months later, the lake villages’ council decided to find out for itself if the man was

a threat to other villages. The council sent inspectors to the man's village and they looked in places where weapons might be hidden, but they couldn't find any dangerous weapons.

When the council told the giant their inspectors had found nothing that would justify an attack, the giant replied angrily, "You are old and useless. I know for a fact this man is evil and is a threat to all lake villages. If you don't join with me and my soldiers and my lion, we will fight him anyway. But you should remember this: Anyone who is not for me is against me."

Several weeks later, the giant's soldiers attacked the man's village and they killed many villagers, including women and children. But they weren't able to find evidence that the man had been making weapons that could kill many people. And they weren't able to prove that the man was a friend of the men who attacked the giant's village. In fact, they learned that these men were enemies.

The next month, one of the other men the giant was watching admitted he had made weapons that could kill many people, but he said he only made them to defend himself from the giant. The third man the giant was watching said he didn't have any dangerous weapons and didn't plan to make them, but the giant was not satisfied.

The giant said he would not attack the man who had weapons that could kill many people. He knew the battle would be terrible and many of his friends and villagers would die. But the giant began making plans to attack the man who said he didn't have any dangerous weapons.

Several years later, the giant's soldiers were still fighting in the first man's village. Tens of thousands of innocent people had been killed and many more had been injured, but the giant still refused to admit he had made a mistake.

By this time, most of the people in the giant's village no longer trusted the giant to tell them the truth or to do what was best for the village. So they decided they would not give the giant any more money to buy weapons.

The giant said the people could not stop him and he complained, "You are not supporting the soldiers who are still fighting in the evil man's village. And if we give up now, evil men may attack our village again."

The people of the giant's village replied, "You have lied to us too many times. And you gave our sons and daughters the worst possible support—you sent them to die for your delusions. The best way to support them now is to bring them home."

The moral of this story is that paranoid giants are the greatest threats to peace. Not only did the giant kill many people, he also made his village less safe by making new enemies. And his plan to attack anyone who might be a threat to his village gave other villages a

reason to want to get dangerous weapons for themselves.

Instead of simply labeling his enemies as evil, the giant should have asked himself if he had done something wrong to make people hate him. But, unfortunately, the giant's pride caused him to believe God was guiding him.

The giant would have been wise to have heeded this warning in God's book: "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Masters of Deceit

When I was in high school, I read a book about the Communist Party by J. Edgar Hoover called *Masters of Deceit*. Someone could write a book today about the Republican Party using the same title. Like the Communists, Republicans cannot be trusted to tell us the truth; they can only be trusted to tell us what they want us to believe. Republicans remind me of what Humpty Dumpty said in *Through The Looking-Glass*, "When I use a word, it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."

There is a reason why Republicans began talking about a threat from Iraq in the summer of 2002. The midterm Congressional elections—which the Party in the White House usually loses—were only a few months away and Republicans knew they were in trouble if the issue of the elections was to be the economy. So they decided to scare the American people by claiming that Iraq was trying to develop weapons of mass destruction. Republicans were employing one of the oldest strategies in politics: Frighten the people so they won't think about how bad their lives are and they'll ask you to protect them.

Hitler's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, understood this strategy and used it on the German people: In his writings and speeches, he often talked about the "threat" from the Jews and claimed they were in alliance with Communists. For example, in an article in 1941 he wrote: "All Jews by virtue of their birth and their race are part of an international conspiracy against National Socialist Germany. They want its defeat and its annihilation, and do all in their power to bring it about." In the same article he also mentioned what could be called the fear equivalent of a WMD, saying that a Jew living in New York had "prepared a plan by which all Germans under the age of 60 will be sterilized."

We now know the claim that Iraq was close to having weapons of mass destruction was made without any evidence to back it up. More disturbing than this deception was a clever psychological trick Republicans used: By mentioning the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington at the same time they talked about Iraq, Republicans encouraged the American people to associate Iraq with 9/11.

These Republican deceptions worked extremely well. By the start of the Iraq War in

March 2003, a majority of Americans believed Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and that Iraq had been involved in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Joseph Goebbels said that if you repeat a lie enough times, people will believe it.

Republican leaders continued trying to deceive the American people after the Iraq War had begun and no proof had been found for their claims. On the second anniversary of 9/11, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz told ABC news: “We know Iraq had a great deal to do with terrorism in general and with Al Qaeda in particular...” And the President said in October 2003: “America is following a new strategy. We are not waiting for further attacks. We are striking before they can strike us again.”

Today, George Bush tells us the war in Iraq is the main front in the war on terror, but he doesn't tell us how it got that way. The war has radicalized Sunni Muslim men and they have come to Iraq to defend Islam and the Arab people. The CIA in an intelligence report this year wrote: “Iraq and other possible conflicts in the future could provide recruitment, training grounds, technical skills, and language proficiency for a new class of terrorists who are ‘professionalized’ and for whom political violence becomes an end in itself.” The Iraq War has made the world less safe from terrorism, not safer.

Republicans have not told the American people the truth about their relationship with Saddam Hussein. I'm talking about the 1980s, when Saddam Hussein attacked Iran with their approval and they supplied him with weapons and intelligence. Even while Saddam Hussein was gassing Iranians and Kurds, he was still being supported by the Republicans. Only when he disobeyed orders and attacked Kuwait in 1990 did the Republicans decide he was no longer their friend.

Republican leaders ignore international agreements when they are no longer useful, which, by the way, was what Republicans accused the Communists of doing during the Cold War. An example is their treatment of prisoners of war from Afghanistan. Hundreds of Muslims have been abused and tortured on the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Violating the Geneva Convention was not a problem for Republican leaders. They simply decided these men were not prisoners of war, but “unlawful combatants,” a term that is not in the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.

Recently, some of these prisoners of war have been put on trial for being terrorists. Republican leaders have twisted the meaning of terrorist to include anyone who takes up arms against the United States. Words mean just what Republicans choose them to mean.

Republican leaders have said that those who oppose their tax cuts are trying to create class warfare. One of the richest men in America, Warren Buffet, wrote in the Washington Post in May 2003: “Supporters of making dividends tax free like to paint critics as promoters of class warfare. The fact is, however, their proposal promotes class welfare. For my class.” Buffet pointed out that he would be paying a lower tax rate on his

dividend income than his secretary would be paying on her income from her job.

Republican leaders have said their tax cuts are just giving people back their money. Unfortunately, that is not true; that money has already been spent. I think a more realistic way to look at the tax cuts is to say the tax cuts are giving people our children's money because the federal government has to borrow money to make up for the revenue lost by the tax cuts. The Republican charge that the Democrats are guilty of class warfare hides the real truth: The Republican Party is guilty of generational warfare by forcing our children to pay for their tax cuts.

Another deception of Republicans involves global warming. Several years ago they wanted us to believe that global warming was a hotly debated topic among scientists, when in fact only a small percentage of scientists disputed it. And many of those scientists were on the payrolls of corporations in the oil or coal or auto industries.

Just after the Bush administration said in August 2003 that it was going to exempt many companies from air quality rules, an official at the EPA said, "We can say categorically that pollution will not increase as a result of this rule." Did that EPA official just re-define pollution? Words mean just what Republicans choose them to mean.

A recent Republican goal has been to reform Social Security. Republicans have insisted that Social Security is in crisis while government estimates say Social Security will be able to pay full benefits for about forty years. One of the most outrageous deceptions perpetrated by the Republicans is that "waiting just one year adds \$600 billion to the cost of fixing Social Security."

Republican leaders have learned to push our fear buttons whenever they need our votes. They did it before the Congressional elections in 2002 when they made the threat from Saddam Hussein the issue. They did it on September 7, 2004, when Dick Cheney said, "It's absolutely essential that eight weeks from today, on Nov. 2, we make the right choice, because if we make the wrong choice, then the danger is that we'll get hit again and we'll be hit in a way that will be devastating from the standpoint of the United States."

In light of the fact that the Bush administration was asleep at the wheel when terrorists struck on 9/11, in light of the fact that the Iraq War has emboldened terrorists and has been Osama bin Laden's best recruiting tool, in light of the fact that Republicans have done little to protect our ports and to help safeguard nuclear materials in the states of the former Soviet Union, and in light of the Hurricane Katrina disaster that was made worse by Republican incompetence, Dick Cheney's argument that we can trust the Republicans to keep us safe would be laughable if it weren't such a dangerous idea.

Republicans question the patriotism of those who oppose their war against Iraq and their other measures to fight their war on terror. It is Republican patriotism that should be

questioned, however. It is they who have put our soldiers in harm's way by their misguided war. It is they who have shredded the Declaration of Independence with their killing, brutality, and torture in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guantanamo Bay. It is they who have trampled on the Constitution with their misnamed Patriot Act and their other violations of the Bill of Rights.

Republican leaders need the war on terror to justify their existence. They remind me of the leaders of the Party in George Orwell's *1984*, who keep their country in a state of continuous warfare. I am not surprised, therefore, that Matthew Kelley, an Associated Press reporter, wrote in October 2003 that private conversations with administration officials revealed that they see the war on terror as lasting decades, like the Cold War. The long Cold War was the best thing that ever happened to Republicans, so now they are hoping for a war on terror that will keep them in power indefinitely.

America has a unique opportunity in this century, an opportunity no other nation has ever had—the opportunity to lead the world to a new age of truth, justice, and peace. We could be the most loved and admired nation on earth instead of the most hated. It is our choice: to be the good guys or, as we presently are, the bad guys, arrogantly strutting on the world stage, thumbing our noses at international cooperation except when it involves finding sheep to follow us, and challenging anyone to take us on.

Our world is at a turning point. Which direction will you choose? The direction of the Republican Party, of deceit, injustice, and war? That direction leads to a violent, ugly world of haves and have-nots. Why not choose truth, justice, and peace? That direction leads to a beautiful, caring world where everyone can enjoy a fulfilling life.

The Arrogance of Power

Throughout history, emperors, kings, generals, princes, prime ministers, and presidents have proclaimed they were doing God's work as they sent their armies to invade foreign lands and kill innocent people. A moral blindness, the arrogance of power has infected many leaders, and has not only led them to believe that they were on a divine mission, but also to believe they were above the law—that the rules did not apply to them.

The arrogance of power has also infected many nations. It has led nations to believe that their power was a sign of their favor in God's eyes and that they, therefore, had the right, even the duty, to conquer and rule weaker people and nations. The arrogance of power has enabled nations to believe that their desires, fears, and needs were more important than the rights of people in other lands and to feel justified in sacrificing the citizens of other lands upon the bloody altars of manifest destiny, empire, anti-Communism, free markets, national interest, national security, and the war on terror.

The arrogance of power is a corollary of that truth expressed so well by Lord Acton:

“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Accordingly, the most powerful nation in the history of the world is especially susceptible to the arrogance of power. Senator J. William Fulbright wrote in 1966:

The dilemmas involved are pre-eminently American dilemmas, not because America has weaknesses that others do not have but because America is powerful as no nation has ever been before.

In this essay I will discuss twelve instances of American foreign interventions resulting from our arrogance of power: in the Indian nations, the Philippines, Vietnam, Iran, Guatemala (twice), Brazil, Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Panama, and Iraq. I would roughly classify these interventions into three groups. Five are cases of invasions of or attacks on foreign nations. Five are cases of encouraging the overthrow of democratic governments. And two are cases of supporting the repression of citizens by their own governments.

I have written this essay because our present actions demonstrate we have not learned from the mistakes of the past and because I believe we can only overcome our faults if we acknowledge them. I also want to prove a point: Not even a nation begun under the most promising of circumstances and based upon the highest of ideals is immune from the arrogance of power.

From the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, we killed Indians and took their land. We rationalized our treatment of Indians by telling ourselves they were heathens and savages and it was our manifest destiny to spread civilization across the continent. However, it can be argued that the Indians’ spiritual perception and wisdom were superior to ours. The Indian nations surviving today, among them the Cherokee, Dineh, Chippewa, Sioux, and Choctaw, should be proud of their heritage, because their ancestors were aware of important truths our civilization has not yet accepted and must learn if it is to survive: that man is part of nature, that the earth is sacred, and that man must share the earth with other forms of life.

After the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States gave Spain twenty million dollars for the Philippine Islands. Samuel Eliot Morison wrote in *The Oxford History of the American People* that since China was being carved up by foreigners at the time, it seemed “like a good idea to many leaders of public opinion for the United States to obtain a base in the Far East.” President McKinley said he wanted to “educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them.”

Almost immediately, the U.S. Army began uplifting the souls of Filipinos to heaven, when really they were only asking for an end to foreign rule. Many of the American generals in the Philippine-American War had seen action in the Indian wars, so it is not surprising that villages were burned and civilians were thrown into concentration camps. One American general ordered his troops to kill everyone over the age of ten. An

American soldier wrote to his family that the fighting reminded him of hunting rabbits.

American involvement in Vietnam began in the early 1950s when the Vietnamese were fighting for their independence from the French. The Eisenhower administration gave the French financial support and offered to drop an atom bomb on the Vietnamese forces besieging Dienbienphu.

After the Vietnamese defeated the French, the Eisenhower administration decided the United States would back the Diem government in the south against the Ho Chi Minh government in the north even though the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Indochina stipulated that an election should be held in two years to reunite the nation. Believing that Ho Chi Minh would win free elections, the Diem government never allowed them to take place.

In the 1960s the United States sent more than 400,000 troops to Vietnam because President Johnson was obsessed with stopping Communism. Johnson told a member of the Senate: "If we do not stop the Reds in South Vietnam, tomorrow they will be in Hawaii, and next week they will be in San Francisco."

Several million Vietnamese, Cambodians, and Laotians died in the Vietnam War. An American official remarked about a South Vietnamese town the U.S. had leveled during the 1968 Tet offensive: "It became necessary to destroy the town in order to save it." In 1970 it was discovered that U.S. forces had killed between 175 and 500 women, children, and old men two years earlier in the village of My Lai. During the Congressional inquiry that followed, one soldier involved in the massacre talked about "killing everything that moved." The commander of the man who led the attack on My Lai declared, "Every unit of brigade size had its My Lai hidden someplace."

The Vietnamese fought the French and then the United States for the same reason we fought the British over two hundred years ago: to put an end to foreign rule. They even wrote a Declaration of Independence that was based upon our Declaration of Independence.

Some people have argued that the lesson from the Vietnam War is that we should only fight wars when we are prepared to use overwhelming force. I believe that the lesson is much more basic: "All life is sacred, and all men have the right to choose their own government."

During the Cold War (1945-1989), the main goal of our foreign policy was the containment of Communism. However, State Department documents reveal that another goal of our leaders was preventing foreign governments from interfering with the activities of American businessmen. In *Detering Democracy*, Noam Chomsky wrote about National Security Council document No. 5432, dated August 18, 1954:

The major threat to U.S. interests is posed by “nationalistic regimes” that are responsive to popular pressures for “immediate improvement in the low living standards of the masses” and diversification of the economies. This tendency conflicts not only with the need to “protect our resources,” but also with concern to encourage “a climate conducive to private investment” and “in the case of foreign capital to repatriate a reasonable return.”

In simpler terms, our politicians saw independent governments in the Third World as a threat to our markets and supplies of raw materials and oil. They feared American corporations would have their investments nationalized if the common people were allowed to, god forbid, govern themselves.

The two ends—containing Communism and promoting and protecting U.S. business interests—became intertwined and inseparable in our foreign policy during the Cold War, and we used the same means to achieve both ends: hostility toward democratic, nationalistic, and socialist governments and support for dictators who could be bought off with money and weapons.

In 1953, the U.S. and British governments plotted to bring down the democratically elected government of Mossadegh in Iran. The United States and Britain were not happy with Mossadegh because he had nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The plot succeeded in August 1953 when the military arrested Mossadegh and the Shah assumed power.

Soon afterwards, the CIA began training the Iranian secret police in torture techniques and providing them with cattle prods and other tools. According to State Department documents, the police are able to “first detect discontent among the people” and “should serve as one of the major means by which the government assures itself of acceptance by the majority.”

The following are some of our significant interventions in Latin America from the 1950s through the 1970s: In 1954 the CIA backed a military coup in Guatemala that overthrew the democratically elected government after that government had confiscated the land of the United Fruit Company. In 1964 the U.S. gave its blessing to the Brazilian military before the military staged a coup that overthrew the popular liberal government. In 1973 the Nixon administration gave its support to the military junta in Chile that ousted the socialist government of President Allende and went on to kill, torture, and imprison thousands of Chileans.

In 1979, the Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza was removed from power by a popular revolt. In the 1980s, the Reagan administration funded the Contras—former Somoza soldiers—so they could fight a terrorist war against the socialist government in Nicaragua. A Contra leader, Horacio Arce, described their goal: “We attack a lot of schools, health centers, and that sort of thing. We have tried to make it so that the

Nicaraguan government cannot provide social services for the peasants.” President Reagan, in an insult to the American Revolution, told the American people that the Contras were “the moral equivalent to our Founding Fathers.”

At the same time that Reagan was supporting the Contras, he was spending billions of dollars financing military regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala. Right wing death squads, operating under the protection of the military, tortured, mutilated, and killed tens of thousands of civilians in those two nations.

On a December night in 1989, 27,000 American troops invaded the nation of Panama. The goal of the invasion was to capture General Manuel Noriega, a military dictator who had been on the CIA payroll since the 1970s and who had assisted the Reagan administration during the Contra war. But when Noriega became too independent, the Bush administration “discovered” that he was trafficking in narcotics. This fact was well-known to the CIA when he was useful to them.

The invasion went far beyond any effort to capture Noriega. Hundreds of homes were burned to the ground. Individuals stopped at military roadblocks were executed on the spot. Eyewitnesses said that American soldiers shot everything that moved; they reported that a U.S. tank destroyed a bus, killing twenty-six people. In his speech proclaiming victory, President Bush said, “Every human life is precious.” Later, hundreds of bodies were found in mass graves, including those of women, children, the old, and the disabled.

After Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, President Bush sent American troops to the Middle East to protect Saudi Arabia, the supplier of much of our imported oil. Bush rejected all offers to negotiate. Suddenly, the dictator Saddam Hussein, our ally against Iran, had become the new Hitler. A peaceful settlement could have resulted in an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait without the loss of tens of thousands of lives.

During the Gulf War, allied planes devastated the infrastructure of Iraq. After the war, a U.S.-sponsored U.N. embargo on trade with Iraq was begun. The consequence of the destruction of the infrastructure and the embargo on trade was the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, mostly children, from malnutrition, diseases related to unsanitary living conditions, and lack of medical care.

Today we are fighting another war in Iraq under another President Bush. Originally, the reason for this war was the threat from Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and because of Saddam Hussein’s links with Al Qaeda. But when no weapons of mass destruction could be found and no cooperation with Al Qaeda could be proven, a new excuse was needed. Now we are being told the war is for democracy and freedom in Iraq.

It is impossible for me to believe that a war for democracy and freedom could be so brutal and could be executed with so little care for the rights and safety of civilians. In Iraq, we have humiliated men by smashing down the doors to their homes in the middle

of the night, tying their hands behind their backs, and putting black sacks over their heads in full view of their families and neighbors. Then we have taken them to prisons where we have sexually abused and tortured them, only to decide later that the majority of them were innocent. We have dropped bombs, including cluster and napalm-like bombs, on civilian neighborhoods. As dictated by our rules of engagement, our soldiers have shot and killed women and children for approaching American positions. Our soldiers fired tank cannons on a van loaded with women and children when the driver failed to stop after he was told to. A woman in the van said she watched her daughters' heads get blown off.

Our disregard for human rights in our foreign interventions is mind-boggling. I understand that, together with our allies, we successfully fought for the freedom of Europe from the Nazi war machine and the freedom of Asia from Japanese militarism, and that without the U.S. presence in the world after the Second World War, the Soviet Union and China might have overrun Europe and Asia. But the defeat of Germany and Japan and the containment of the Soviet Union and China does not give us the right to slaughter the citizens of the Third World on the altars of anti-Communism, free markets, national interest, national security, and the war on terror.

The history I have related here, of American foreign interventions from the Indians to Iraq, has been a tale of arrogance—the arrogance of power. The abuses of the rights of people of other lands by the United States, a nation based upon the highest of ideals, proves that no nation can be trusted with great power.

I believe our actions have been no worse than what other nations have done or would have done with great power. (Read about the Roman or Mongol empires.) The problem is not so much us as it is the concentration of power. No country should have the power we have.

Despite our crimes, there is the possibility of redemption. If we would apply the principles of the Declaration of Independence to all people, if we would allow America to be what she was born to be—a beacon of light for all the world to see—we could lead the world to a new age of truth, justice, and peace.

No other nation is so well-prepared for this mission. First, there are our wonderful basic principles of decency and human rights for all. Second, there is our magnanimous nature in accepting and assimilating immigrants from every country in the world. And finally, there is our influence—the world looks to us for guidance and inspiration.

A glorious opportunity awaits us. All we need to do to take advantage of this opportunity is to acknowledge that we have violated our principles and then be true to them.

The Solution to Terrorism

In one word, the solution is justice. Justice for the Palestinian people, who have been robbed of their land and are treated by the U.S. and Israel as if their lives are not important. Justice for the people of Iran who lived during the time of the Shah, a brutal ruler installed in a US-British sponsored military coup in 1953. Justice for the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children who died as a result of U.S. sponsored UN sanctions after the Persian Gulf War. Justice for the Iraqi people, who had nothing to do with 9/11, but have suffered hundreds of thousands of casualties in our Iraq War.

Many Americans see the United States as a shining light of democracy and freedom and do not understand why we are so hated. These people live in a fantasy world where America's sins are excused or ignored. The truth is that since Spanish-American War, the United States has been directly or indirectly responsible for the repression, imprisonment, torture, injury, and death of many innocent people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Until we acknowledge this truth, there can be no hope for a just and lasting peace on earth.

The Last Temptation of President George W. Bush

January 19, 2009

Washington (FWP)—The First Lady entered the White House's master bedroom and found the President sitting in his favorite chair, the Kennedy rocker. There were boxes all around him filled with items to be shipped to their new home in Dallas.

"George, why don't you check your desk again," she said.

The President looked at the First Lady and said, "Laura, I want your opinion. Will I be remembered most for cutting taxes? Or will my legacy be bringing democracy to Iraq and Afghanistan?"

"You've left out expanding community health centers, getting antiretroviral drugs to the poor, and No Child Left Behind," she said as she walked over to the President's dresser and opened the top drawer.

"Here they are!" she said. "I told you to look in your sock drawer."

"What?"

"Your wings."

"I looked in that drawer. Do you think I'm getting senile?"

“No. You’ve just got male disease.”

“What’s that?”

“You don’t see what’s right in front of your face.”

The President carefully took from the First Lady the Naval Aviator wings given to him by the fighter pilots on the USS Lincoln six long years before. He kissed his wife and said, “I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

He pinned the wings on his lapel and sat down and began rocking. After a few moments he stopped and said, “Do you think I can have an aircraft carrier named after me? It’s not fair that Dad gets one and I don’t. He never got reelected.”

“You’re still the President,” she said while putting on her earrings.

“I’ve been thinking. There might be someone else I can pardon. Can I pardon myself?”

“You haven’t been convicted of anything yet.”

“I know. But sort of like a preemptive strike. The way I took Saddam out.”

“I don’t understand what you’re worried about.”

“You know how General Pinochet couldn’t travel to Europe because they wanted to put him in jail? What if they want to get me?”

“We never left the United States before you decided to run for President. Why don’t we just stay home?”

“I kinda got the travel bug in me now. I may want to fly around and collect some honararies. Do you know Bill averages \$200,000 per speech?”

“You’re not Bill Clinton.”

As the First Lady walked out of the bedroom, she turned and added, “You’ll have to eat alone tonight. I’ll be back late.”

“After I talk to Bob, I’m gonna see if there’s time for one more tax cut.”

“You’re getting delusional, dear. You need to finish your packing.”

There was no response from the first President to cut taxes for the rich during wartime. With a smile on his face, he returned to rocking the chair made famous by the President

who had said, “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country.”

The Last Will and Testament of President George W. Bush

I, President George W. Bush, being of sound and disposing mind and memory, give and bequeath unto the persons named below the property described below:

Name: The citizens of Iraq

Property: A million dead and millions injured; millions of widows, orphans, and grieving parents; hundreds of thousands of displaced families; widespread unemployment and economic hardship; a breakdown in law and order including bombings and kidnappings; a shattered medical system; and hopes for democracy

Name: The citizens of earth

Property: Eight precious years with zero progress in slowing global warming, a nuclear-armed North Korea, a more volatile Middle East and South Asia, an excuse—“fighting terrorism”—for Russia and China to suppress human rights, and success in getting AIDS drugs to the world’s poor

Name: The citizens of the United States

Property: A war in Iraq that has made the United States less safe, has taken the lives of thousands of American soldiers, and may cost trillions of dollars; a battered and weakened Constitution; a national debt that has more than doubled in eight years; and the second largest economic crisis in American history made worse by “the market knows best” attitude in the White House

Name: The Republican Party

Property: Trillions of dollars of tax breaks for the rich; control of the Supreme Court for the foreseeable future; and the blueprint for an Orwellian one party state based on deceit, spying, torture, the vaporization of enemies, and continuous war

Open Letter to the Christian Right

This is an open letter to Christians who support the war in Iraq:

Could you tell me where Jesus said you should attack people when you think they’re a threat to you? I looked in the Gospels, but I couldn’t find that passage anywhere.

However, I did find that Jesus said in Matthew 7:12, “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you.”

So would it be OK if a foreign nation invaded the United States when its people were afraid the U.S. would attack them? Would it be OK if their planes bombed your wedding? Would it be OK if their soldiers fired their weapons in all directions when they thought they were under attack? If the driver of a van loaded with people did not stop when he was told to stop, would it be OK if the van was attacked with tank cannons? Imagine you were in that van with your family. Would it be OK if you saw your daughters’ heads get blown off?

I’m sure your answers to all these questions would be “No,” but you have been the main supporters of a war where these things have been done to the Iraqi people.

In Matthew 25:40, Jesus said, “As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.” What Jesus meant by this was that we should act toward other people as if they were him.

So would you drop cluster bombs on a neighborhood if you knew Jesus lived there? Would you break down a man’s door in the middle of the night, handcuff him, and put a black hood over his head if you knew the man was Jesus? Would you sexually humiliate a man if you knew the man was Jesus?

Again, despite your “No” answers to these questions, you have supported a war where these things have been done to the Iraqi people in violation of Christ’s teachings.

There is nothing in the teachings of Christ about war being a moral act. In fact, from what he said, it could only be concluded that he was a pacifist: “Resist not evil.” “Love your enemies.” “Do good to those who hate you.”

It is clear that Christ would never condone pre-emptive war. True followers of Christ, therefore, do not support wars against real or imagined threats.

Many of you who support the war in Iraq refuse to see the world as it really is. For you, people are good or evil, friend or foe. But the world is more complex than that. There are men with a lot of good qualities who do some terrible things. There are also men with a lot of bad qualities who do good things: Maybe they are good fathers or husbands or are excellent artists or craftsmen. No man is all good or all bad.

If you see the world as it really is, as a mixture of good and bad, then you don’t have to kill or defeat your enemies. You can find ways to get along with them because you can see the good in them and you also know that you are not perfect.

When the United States assumes its destined role as a just, humble, and moral nation

among equals, mankind will finally be able to imagine peace on earth and a new age will begin.

The world hopefully awaits that day, when the American people open their hearts to the message of Christ.