

Prelude To A Golden Age

The Philosophy Of Peace, Fulfillment, Personal Power And Responsibility

By Lawrence John Brown

Free Edition from OBOOKO

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For lovers of truth, justice, and peace

Cover: R. Williams (STScI), the Hubble Deep Field Team and NASA

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

Preface to the Ebook Edition

I am making this ebook, originally published as a paperback in 2004, available for free as my 60th birthday present to the world.

I would like to say something here about the environmental crisis we are facing today. Being a teacher and an optimist, I am confident we can learn from our mistakes before it is too late: (1) that we are part of nature and what we do to nature we do to ourselves, (2) that all things have rights, and (3) that we are responsible to past, present, and future generations and to the Earth herself for our actions.

Ultimately, to learn our lessons means that we have to realize that God is within Its creation and that we are all one. When that happens, we can truly begin a golden age on Earth.

A few years ago, I wrote the screenplay to *Prelude To A Golden Age*. Then, I thought, why not go ahead and write the novelization for the screenplay? Last fall I finished the novelization and published it under the title *The Education of a Messiah*.

If you read *The Education of a Messiah* before or after reading this book, prepare to be surprised. Writing the screenplay required that I simplify and shorten the story and that I make it more interesting. So, in *The Education of a Messiah* the characters Paul and Daniel have been combined into one character, Paul, and the story is told from Ato's point of view. There is also a lot less philosophy in *The Education of a Messiah*. I consider *The Education of a Messiah* to be more entertaining but less educational, a kind of *Prelude To A Golden Age Lite*.

This ebook has some spelling and grammar corrections and some changes in wording, but it is still 98% the same as the paperback edition published in 2004.

If you enjoy reading this book, you may want to read my first book, *My Country Is Called Earth*, which is also available for free as an ebook at obooko.com.

Lawrence Brown
Gwangju, South Korea
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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.

A humanoid from the 24 civilizations

Part One

1. Paul and John

Paul put down the pencil and looked out the window at the Pacific Ocean, where the golden rays of the sunset were reflecting off the water.

Since his fiftieth birthday a month earlier, he couldn't pretend anymore that he would live forever. And so, for the first time, he was forced to face the fact that he would grow old and die. Had he already reached his peak and life was now just a slow roll down to the grave? What was there to look forward to? Declining health, vitality, motor skills and memory? That he feared more than death.

Still, he felt his restlessness was due to more than just a realization of his mortality. There was something missing in his life, but he couldn't put his finger on it. He was a respected university professor and author of several important scientific papers on dolphins. He had a beautiful home and more money than he needed to live comfortably. He should be content with his achievements, but he wasn't.

He thought of his youth, when he'd been inspired by the mystery of life to ask questions about things others took for granted. Had that fire died in him or had it just been allowed to burn too low? Had his life become too routine, too cut and dried? Or had he lost the thrill of adventure in the demands of academia and the struggle to make a living?

It was getting late. John was coming to dinner soon and he would have to prepare something. Hopefully, the freezer and the microwave would bail him out.

Half an hour later, there was a knock on the front door. "Come in. It's unlocked," he shouted from the kitchen.

"I don't know what you're cooking, Paul, but it smells good," John said as let himself in.

"I'm microwaving some leftover lasagna."

Paul lived in a ranch style house that had been built in the decade after the Second World War. The central area had a living room, dining room, and kitchen that were undivided by walls. On the left and right of the central area were four bedrooms, three bathrooms, and a garage.

"How have you been?" John asked after he had walked the short distance to the kitchen.

"Good. How about you?"

John did not answer.

John and Paul were about the same age. John, who was black, was about ten centimeters taller than Paul. John had the build of an athlete, but Paul, like many men his age, was overweight.

Paul stopped cutting the lettuce and looked at John. "What's the matter? You don't look so good."

"I've been ordered to stop working with you."

"Who gave you this order?"

"Azir, the Secretary for Earth Affairs."

"Wasn't it Azir who suggested that you work with me in the first place?"

"Yes, but I think the order came from the androids."

"I don't like this. Something's fishy here. What are they afraid of?"

"I don't know."

"How did you get here? Did you drive from LA?"

"Yes."

"As soon as I finish the salad we can eat. Do you want to smoke some pot? It'll help you relax."

"Sure, but first I have to see a man about a wallaby," John said.

"You've seen *Finding Nemo*. Do you know that was originally a horse?"

"The wallaby came from a horse? Are you sure?"

Paul smiled and said, "No. I mean the expression was, 'I've got to see a man about a horse.'"

"You have many colorful ways of saying 'urinate.' There's also 'answer the call of nature,' isn't there?"

"And take a piss or leak. Wait, there are more..."

John was already closing the door to the toilet.

While John was in the bathroom, Paul's mind wandered back to their first meeting. Paul had been invited to a reception for aliens at the UN after John told a UN official he was interested in meeting a scientist who studied dolphins.

During their conversation, Paul had felt an immediate liking for John and he invited John to visit him. John came to San Diego a few days later. While showing John his research, he had asked, "What's your planet like?"

John said, "Honam is smaller than earth, but it has many similarities with earth. It has oceans and continents and mountains and lakes and rivers. Even our days and years and seasons are similar to 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. We have forests that extend for hundreds of kilometers without roads or cities or towns. Our forests contain many groves of giant old growth trees that have never been logged, including redwood, cedar, mahogany, and teak.

"We also have some magical forests. I used to play in one when I was a child and I talked to elves and fairies. I was even taken to see the elf king. The king told me I would visit a great planet one day and would take part in a wonderful adventure. He said I would help save a world and at the same time my soul would be healed."

"Really? That's amazing."

"I sometimes wonder if I really did meet the elf king."

"Why? Did you see him only once?"

"Yes. I stopped going to the forest when I was about twelve. I got too interested in school. And my classmates made fun of me for going there. But it could have been my imagination. I was known for having a vivid imagination when I was a child."

John had looked a little embarrassed when he added, "By the way, don't tell anyone about the prophecy. The androids would not be pleased if they heard about it."

When John came back from the bathroom, Paul said, "I was thinking about what the

king elf told you.”

“Yes.”

“I was wondering why you need to be healed.”

“I feel guilty. I think I should have fought the androids when they came to my planet instead of letting them enslave my people.”

“How did your people get enslaved by them?” Paul asked.

“We’re a peaceful people, without a standing army. The androids, with their military technology, easily overwhelmed us.”

“If you had fought them, you would be dead now.”

“Maybe that would be better.”

“No. You have a mission. The king elf told you so.”

“I feel so weak and helpless here. What can I do to save the earth?”

“That is what we will find out soon, I think. I am curious about life on your planet. Are there constant conflicts between nations like here on earth?”

“My people have learned to live more or less in harmony with each other and with nature.”

Just then the timer on the stove went off. Paul had forgotten he had some rolls in the oven. He took the rolls out of the oven and said, “Everything’s ready. Let’s eat.”

“Let me take a hit off that joint first.”

2. Pass the Philosophy, Please

During dinner their discussion turned to a book about Tolstoy that Paul had loaned John: *The Discovery of Peace* by R.V. Sampson.

“Sampson said Tolstoy believed the will to power was the cause of most of the evil in the world. Sampson also said Tolstoy believed large-scale organizations present many opportunities for abuses of power,” Paul said.

“What do you think about Tolstoy’s theory in *War and Peace* that leaders do not wield power but merely appear to do so? That the people under them make the decisions that affect historical events, and the leaders merely recognize the will of the people?”

“Hmm...that would imply a subconscious communication between minds. Wouldn’t it mean the universe is democratic? It would also mean the will to power is based on the illusion that there actually is power to be had from leadership.”

“I read that a lot of critics thought Tolstoy became unstable in middle age. They said he’d been a great novelist, but he began to believe wild anarchistic and primitive Christian ideas after he turned fifty. His supporters said he was a mystic.”

“I hope it’s not contagious,” Paul said.

“What?”

“Just kidding.”

“Do you know that Nietzsche said love is a concealed will to power? That the lover wants to possess the other? Even the search for truth, according to Nietzsche, is the result of a desire to possess it and be the first to have it—another example of the will to power.”

“That’s ridiculous. Nietzsche needed to get out more; he spent too much time alone in his room. His definition of love sounds like the bitter words of a man who’s lost at love. And the true seeker of truth doesn’t desire to possess it first, but only to find it so he

can learn from it. Like Jesus said, 'The truth shall set you free.' Did you read *Beyond Good and Evil*?"

"No," John answered.

"In that book, Nietzsche said philosophers pretend their opinions are based on logic or reason, but, in fact, represent their 'heart's desire abstracted and refined.' But that must include his theories, including his idea in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* of the superman—that the goal of the human race should be to produce superior men. His heart's desire, the superman, forced him to look down on concepts like democracy and Christianity because they supported the rights and dignity of the common man."

"He was strongly influenced by the theory of evolution," John said. He added, "I've heard the argument from the androids that every act we perform is selfish. Even charity is performed with the desire to feel moral or good."

"Bah! Humbug! There are some people who get pleasure from being negative. Look, if we are nice to each other because we feel we should be nice, where did that come from? What if man is born with an innate sense of right and wrong as Levin concludes in *Anna Karenina*, which goes against evolution and the teachings of Christianity, but points toward the existence of God?"

"Don't some of your scientists say altruism is a misguided survival instinct?"

"Yes, but they say that because they have to. Otherwise the theory of evolution would be in trouble. Even though I'm a scientist, I sometimes wonder if evolution isn't wrong. It makes life so meaningless. It says life is an accident in a universe that places no value on the individual."

John asked, "What do you think of this statement by Thoreau: 'Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.'"

"You're really in a somber mood today. I think you miss your family. What do you think they're doing now?"

"They're sleeping. But in another hour, they'll wake up. My daughter will get ready for school."

"You know exactly what time it is on your planet right now?"

"Yes."

"Let's stop talking for awhile. The food is getting cold."

A minute later, John asked, "What's the purpose of life, Paul?"

Paul swallowed the food in his mouth and answered, "The Dalai Lama said the purpose of life is to seek happiness. I think what he meant was fulfillment. To find the job or career that allows you to express yourself in the fullest way possible. That makes you happy."

"I'm not feeling fulfilled these days."

"I'm not either."

After eating the last bit of lasagna on his plate, Paul said, "Back to the subject of power, I find it interesting how power changes some people. It makes them think they're better and smarter than everyone else."

"That's what we call on Honam the arrogance of power. The arrogance of power is a mental blindness that leads men to believe they are above the law—that the rules don't apply to them. In its worst form, the arrogance of power causes men to believe they can do no wrong because they are on a divine mission."

"In the past, your emperors and kings were especially susceptible to this arrogance."

In the modern world, political leaders are often infected by it. But it also infects nations. The arrogance of power leads strong nations to believe that ‘might makes right’—that their power is a sign of their favor in God’s eyes and that they therefore have the right, even the duty, to conquer and rule weaker people and nations.”

“This takes us right back to what Tolstoy said about the will to power being the cause of most of the evil in the world. Well, there’s that famous quote from Lord Acton: ‘Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.’”

“Power brings out the worst in men. The key to eliminating the evils associated with power is to prevent people and nations from accumulating too much of it,” John said.

“And to take power from those people and nations that already have too much, then.”

“That’s not easy to do. Nobody likes to give up their power. Power is a very seductive mistress.”

“Now we’re starting to talk like anarchists. Let’s talk about something else. I really don’t like to talk about politics.”

“Kennedy said politics provides a great opportunity to do good.”

“And bad. Politics is an ugly business,” Paul said.

“That’s because of the power available through politics. People fight viciously for that power.”

“OK, but let’s not be so serious.”

“Captain, I’m having a wee bit a trouble with the warp drive,” John said, doing his Scotty from the original *Star Trek* impersonation. “I’m going to have to shut down power to the shields while I make the repairs.”

“Make it quick, Scotty. Spock says in 9.72 seconds the Klingon warships will be within firing range,” Paul responded in his best Captain Kirk. “And Scotty, could you get up here and look at my swivel chair after that? It’s been stopping suddenly and spilling my coffee.”

“Aye, sir,” John said and they both laughed. John continued, “I have a joke: What did the Buddhist monk say to the man selling hot dogs?”

“‘Make me one with everything.’”

“How did you know?”

“I heard that joke in the movie *Bicentennial Man*.”

“I haven’t seen that movie. I found the joke on the Internet. It has a second part: 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, ‘Thank you.’”

“The monk said, ‘Hey! Where’s my change?’”

“The man replied, ‘Change comes from within.’”

During a dessert of pineapple upside down cake and coffee, John said sadly, “This may be the last time I can see you.”

“I’m sure we can still be friends. Do you think it would help if I talked to Azir?”

“I think it would make things worse. I wasn’t supposed to become your friend.”

“Let’s walk over to the cove, then, if this is the last time we’ll work together. You should say goodbye to the dolphins.”

Paul’s home was just north of San Diego, California on cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean. He did his research from an old breakwater built on a cove near his home.

It was a warm, clear night. During the walk, John pointed out to Paul where his solar

system was. His star was visible with a telescope, but not with the naked eye, he said.

When they reached the breakwater, Paul summoned the dolphins using telepathy, as John had taught him. He formed an image in his mind of the three dolphins and then focused on it for a few seconds.

While they were waiting, John suggested that they look for listening devices that may have been planted by the androids' secret police. They looked, but they couldn't find any.

Ten minutes later, the graceful shapes of three dolphins could be seen swimming up to Paul and John. They were a family, an adult male, a female, and one young male pup. Paul and John greeted them each with a light pat on their heads.

They communicated telepathically with the dolphins, although Paul and John spoke out loud for the benefit of each other, for they couldn't communicate with each other telepathically yet.

The male dolphin, called Cetus, spoke—thought—first: "We've been worried about you both. We sense that you're in danger."

"Yes, it's true that I am in danger," John said. "My supervisor wants me to stop seeing you. I'm afraid this will be the last time we can meet for awhile."

The female, Lotus, said, "We're very sad then. We'll miss you. But you must think of yourself and your family first." The pup nuzzled up against its mother's flank, and she responded with a playful swat of her tail.

John said to Cetus, "I need to ask you a question. Do you know anything about the 24 civilizations?"

"No. We don't know about the 24 civilizations."

"OK. Thank you."

"Who are they?" Paul asked.

"I don't know, but Azir wanted me to ask about them."

Paul and John then proceeded with some experiments testing the dolphins' mental abilities. What they were learning was that the dolphins were quite sensitive to the moods and feelings of others, but their language, which they communicated by high-pitched sounds, lacked a large vocabulary. Paul and John were teaching the dolphins new concepts through visual images and sounds and they were developing a written language that would allow scientists to record their speech. Paul believed that if he could demonstrate to the world the intelligence and emotions of the dolphins, men would support dolphin rights, especially their right to safety from fishing practices. Thousands of dolphins and other cetaceans were killed each year by fishing nets.

On the walk back, Paul said, "Now tell me more about the danger you and I are in."

3. The Androids

Later that night, after pulling the power cord to his computer out of the wall socket, Paul sat down at the desk in his study to complete what he had been working on before dinner:

My name is Paul Heart II. I am writing this for future generations. I hope these notes will survive even if something happens to me. I suspect that my computer is being scanned

and my web cam is being watched, so I must write secretly and by hand.

There are aliens among us openly for the first time in recorded history. Aliens had come to earth in the past, and most recently in the last century, but that fact was concealed by the governments of the United States and the other Security Council members. Two months ago they came in a huge spaceship for the whole world to see. Their ship first appeared in the sky above Israel and then slowly moved over the Middle East to China, Korea, and Japan. It then reversed direction and flew over Russia and Europe before crossing the Atlantic Ocean and stopping above New York City.

The day after they arrived in New York, they came down in a shuttlecraft to the UN. To the dismay of some, these aliens looked human. There were no hideous creatures with flailing tentacles among them.

At a special session of the General Assembly the following week, they showed us some of their advanced technology and promised to help us solve our problems, but on one condition: We had to set up a world government. They said it would be easier for them to work with one government than with many different governments. Many people have been hostile to this idea, but the United Nations has been engaged in negotiations to try to work out an agreement, for the earth is in dire straits.

No respected scientist denies any longer that global warming is occurring or that man is at least partially responsible. The "Snows of Kilimanjaro" is now only a Hemingway short story, due to the higher temperatures around the world. The ice caps of Greenland and the Antarctic and the other glaciers around the world are melting and coastal areas are starting to go underwater. And weather patterns are becoming more and more unstable. Droughts and floods and storms are not only more common now, but also more devastating.

We have other problems besides global warming. Every year millions of people die from pollution-related diseases. And because the world's population continues to increase and the standard of living in developing nations like China and India continues to improve, the pressure on the environment is growing, which will lead to more pollution and destruction of forests and species.

So, even though we could use some help (and I and other scientists would love to get our hands on their technology), I must report that, unfortunately, the aliens' intentions are not altruistic, as they would like us to believe. I was the first human to learn this for a fact. How did I learn this before anyone else? I was befriended by one of them, who took me into his confidence at great personal risk. He not only revealed to me the true purpose of their coming, but gave me another startling piece of information: He and the other aliens seen by the people of earth are not the real invaders. The real invaders have stayed on their spaceship to avoid frightening us.

The real invaders are androids some two and a half meters tall. They once were men like us, but when their planet became too hot for life, they discarded their bodies, except for

their brains, and transferred their sensory, speech, and motor functions into robots. Eventually all of them will have to leave their planet. It is their intention to colonize the earth.

These androids come from a star on the opposite side of the galaxy. "Why couldn't they colonize a planet closer to their own solar system?" I asked my alien friend. He said, "The number of inhabitable planets in the galaxy is few. And among them, none can equal the earth in its beauty and diversity of species and varieties of climates and geography. The earth is unique."

Even more surprising was what he told me next. He said the androids' name for the earth is the same as their word for paradise. He said the androids had once lived on earth, but they left earth for the stars many years ago and are now returning.

I am a marine biologist. I met my alien friend, who calls himself John, because of my research on dolphins. On his planet, John studied a sea-dwelling mammal similar to our dolphins. John has helped me open a new chapter in dolphin research, for he has taught me to talk to them, and more importantly, to hear what they have to say.

John is a remarkable man. May I even call him a Renaissance man? Marine biology is simply a hobby of his. On his planet he was the foremost authority on human culture. And he is also a musician, an artist, and an athlete.

Yes, I said he was an authority on human culture. How could that be, you ask? Ever since television, man has been sending information about himself far out into space: sports, news, soap operas, movies, music videos, and documentaries. And for the last twenty years, our TV programs have been instantaneously transmitted to John's planet by satellites that were placed by the androids in solar orbits between Jupiter and Saturn.

But there is much John knows about the earth besides what he learned from our TV broadcasts. John said that on his planet he had access to a library of thousands of books and movies that had been secretly purchased by agents of the androids.

John told me aliens had visited the earth many times in the past because the earth has long held the attention of space civilizations. He said references could be found in our ancient literature. He cited the story of Elijah in the Bible. He said Elijah did not ride on a chariot of fire, but a spaceship. And when the Bible says the sons of God married daughters of men, it means aliens took our women as wives. John also said he thought the arrival of the androids had been foretold in the Book of Revelations.

John spent that night in Paul's house. In sleep he dreamed many dreams he did not remember. But one he did remember was of his home planet Honam.

In the dream he saw Leia, his wife, looking in a mirror. She was in her nightgown, brushing her hair. He could hear music in the background, the kind of music his daughter Cyndi listened to.

From another room he heard his daughter's voice: "Mom, where did you say dad

is?”

“He’s on that earth planet.”

“What’s so special about earth?”

“I don’t know. I think it has a lot of souls on it and it has the greatest variety of life in the galaxy.”

“When is dad coming back?”

“I told you he’s not coming back for three years.”

“Do you miss him?”

“Cyndi, I can’t have a conversation with you across two rooms with your music so loud.”

Cyndi turned down the music and repeated her question: “Do you miss him, mom?”

“Of course I do. But the trip is important for his research.”

“Aren’t you afraid something will happen to him?”

“He’s a big boy. He can take care of himself.”

Cyndi came into her mother’s bedroom. “Mom, do you hear something? Like singing, but from far away?”

“No, you must be imagining it.”

“No, mom, listen.” Cyndi went back to her room and turned off her stereo. Then she returned to her mother’s bedroom.

“I do hear something.”

“Some kids at school said that before the android army comes, you can hear them because they sing when they march. Do you think their army is coming?”

“I hope not. I’m afraid of what would happen. A lot of people said they would fight them if they came here.”

Cyndi and her mother went outside their home. Their home was made of three round rooms connected to a central, larger room like the petals of a sunflower. The walls were made of a stucco-like material and the roof was thatched with straw. Their home’s simple structure was sufficient for the warm, mild climate of the region.

They could see a column of about one hundred metal soldiers marching four abreast along the road that passed within thirty meters of their village. The soldiers were not frightening in appearance but were almost friendly looking, like C3PO. They were about two meters tall and with all the features of men: arms, legs, ears, eyes, nose, and hands. They even had four fingers and an opposable thumb on each hand. However, their toes were just lines drawn on their metal feet, which had no shoes or boots. They wore no clothing or uniforms of any kind, but were painted the camouflage colors of green and brown.

Other villagers were outside their homes too, watching. As the android soldiers marched by, the villagers could hear the words they were singing.

Cyndi’s mother exclaimed, “That’s the song your father used to sing to me before we were married!”

“What song?” Cyndi asked.

“I think it’s called ‘Good Day Sunshine.’ It’s by the Beatles.”

“Who are the Beatles?”

“They’re famous musicians on earth.”

The singing should have been disturbing to anyone who knew that the android soldiers were notorious throughout that quadrant of the galaxy for their ruthlessness. For

them to be singing like a group of wandering minstrels was an obvious effort at deception. Perhaps it was meant to inspire trust among the innocent and naive. But the citizens of that village were not fooled. Some of the citizens hurled insults at the android soldiers. That was useless, as these soldiers, unlike the androids on earth, were pure robots and had no emotions.

4. Betrayal

John returned to his apartment in Los Angeles early in the morning. He immediately sent a video email to his wife, who was in the habit of going to the city once a week to shop and see his emails. He said:

“Leia, last night I had a frightening dream. I hope it was only a nightmare. I dreamed android soldiers passed by our village. I don’t know why; they have never been to our village in the thirty years they have been on Honam. There are no freedom fighters in the area and no one has weapons in the village. I hope you will see this soon, so that I can find out if you and Cyndi are OK. I already miss you and Cyndi very much. I don’t know how I can last three years here. I love you.”

The reply came an hour later:

“Hi, hon. After we saw the android soldiers, I felt I should go to the city. I wasn’t surprised to see a message from you about them. I think we both have become more psychic since you left. The soldiers just marched by in the morning on their way to the Forbidden Forest and then returned to their base in the afternoon. Nobody attacked them, although Laszlo looked very angry and some men shouted insults at them. I think a few rocks were thrown, but the soldiers just marched on. Do you know these robots sing as they march? Maybe it’s more like a chant, as they repeat the same lyrics over and over, but it can be heard from far away and it is ‘enchanted’ in a way. I don’t know what I’m saying...I told Cyndi she didn’t have to go to school today after she said she was scared of the soldiers and didn’t want to go out...I’m really excited about the landscape I’m doing. You know, the one of your father’s farm before the planting. That’s all for now. Don’t worry about us and don’t work too hard. Say hello to Paul for me. I love you.”

John and the other aliens stationed in Los Angeles lived on the top floors of an office building in rooms that had been converted into apartments. They worked on the lower floors of the building. The roof had a helicopter pad that could be used by a shuttle from the android spaceship. For security reasons, the building had been made off limits to humans.

That afternoon, John was summoned to a meeting with Azir, a man from Honam and the head of the alien mission on earth.

“You saw Paul last night.”

“Yes, I wanted to say goodbye.”

“And did you see the dolphins too?”

“I wanted to say goodbye to them too.”

“What have you and Paul learned from the dolphins?”

“Well, we’ve been mostly studying their culture, their family structure and group interactions.”

“John, you’re hiding something from me. You know your instructions were to learn the state of dolphin research, not to add to it. Those orders came directly from the top. Now the androids want you to stop your dolphin work. You know what they’re capable of. Don’t you fear for your family’s safety?”

John felt uneasy. Still, he didn’t want to endanger Paul anymore than he already had. So he said, “OK, their state of dolphin research isn’t very advanced. And the dolphins don’t know anything about the 24 civilizations.” And then he added, “You never explained to me why I wasn’t to teach Paul what I know about dolphins.”

Azir had a look of exasperation on his face when he said, “The androids think that if humans learn of the dolphins’ intelligence, a conspiracy could be formed against them.”

The phone rang and Azir picked it up.

“Put John on,” a voice demanded impatiently. It was Newton, the director of the androids’ secret police.

“Yes, sir,” Azir replied. Covering the phone, he whispered, “Newton wants to speak to you. Don’t make it more difficult for yourself than it already is.”

“I’m going to put you on speaker phone, sir,” Azir said into the receiver.

Azir pushed a button and a steely, inhuman voice came through: “Talk or your family will die. Did you teach Paul to speak to the dolphins?”

John was taken by surprise. With tears in his eyes, he admitted he had taught Paul to communicate telepathically with the dolphins.

Newton then said to John, “You have disobeyed your orders. Humans were never to be taught to speak to dolphins. You will be reassigned and Paul will be arrested. Return to your apartment until we send for you.”

John walked slowly back to his apartment. He felt terrible. He had betrayed his friend under the threat of harm to his family. He hoped Paul would understand. He knew it would not be safe to call Paul on the phone to tell him of the danger he was in. He would communicate with the dolphins, who could then warn Paul.

John went to his bedroom and lay on his bed. He relaxed and imagined the dolphins swimming in the ocean. Then he focused on the image of Cetus. He expressed the thought, “Cetus, tell Paul he is in danger.”

When Cetus received the message, he raced to activate the electronic alarm that Paul had set up for the dolphins to call him when they needed him. When Paul heard the alarm, he ran to the cove.

“What’s the matter, Cetus?” Paul asked.

“John sent me to warn you. He said you are in danger.”

Paul knew what this meant, for he and John had discussed the possibilities the night before. They had not expected it to happen so soon, though.

“Cetus, I must stop seeing you for a while. Please explain to Lotus that I am safe, but it would be dangerous to continue seeing you for now. I love you and will see you again soon.”

Cetus responded, “I love you too, Paul. Please be careful.”

Paul raced back to his home to begin destroying files. When he arrived, the androids’ secret police, who were men from John’s planet, were already there. Paul tried to run, but

a policeman caught him from behind. In the struggle, he fell and hit his head on a stone.

They took him to the local hospital, where it was found that he had gone into a coma. In his coma, Paul dreamed of an American English teacher living in China whose name was Daniel.

Part Two

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.

So the Wise Man cherishes the One,
As a standard to the world:
Not displaying himself,
He is famous;
Not asserting himself,
He is distinguished;
Not boasting his powers,
He is effective;
Taking no pride in himself,
He is chief.

Because he is no competitor,
No one in all the world
Can compete with him.

Poem 22 of the *Tao Te Ching (The Way of Life)*

Attributed to Lao Tzu

Translated by R.B. Blakney

1. Escape from the Police

Daniel and Ani ran until they were exhausted and then walked the remaining few hundred meters. They entered their apartment and packed as quickly as they could. They left by the back door just as the police were smashing down the front. There was an alley nearby, and Daniel and Ani ran into it.

As they were running down the alley past a pile of boxes, they saw that it was a dead end. But then a door opened to their right and a short, gray-haired man beckoned to them. They followed him into a small, dark room with a window, saying not a word to each

other. Through the window Daniel and Ani saw the policemen run by and then return. A few seconds later, the man pushed them back out into the street and, with a twinkle in his eyes, said, "See you later." Daniel turned to thank him and the man, the door, and the window were gone. All he saw was the wall of a building. Having no time to ponder this event, Daniel and Ani simply looked at each other and then ran back to the main street where they hailed a taxi. Ani told the driver to take them to the Haihutun bus station.

At the bus station, Ani went to check the departure schedules while Daniel watched their things. While he was waiting, he opened the book he had placed in his backpack, *Taoism: The Road to Immortality* by John Blofeld. 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.

Daniel thought, "Do any of these immortals 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, Daniel saw a remote mountaintop shrouded in clouds. Peeking through the clouds was a quaint, old monastery with moss growing on its tile roofs.

While Daniel was lost in thought, Ani walked up behind him carrying two bus tickets. When she got to him, she put the tickets in her pocket. Then she reached over his shoulders and covered his eyes with her hands and said, "Guess who?"

"The Easter Bunny," Daniel answered.

Ani took her hands off his eyes and Daniel turned his head and looked at her. "You have beautiful eyes," she said, and she kissed him on the forehead.

Daniel said, "Let's go south. I want to meet a Taoist master."

Ani said, "I'm one step ahead of you," and she waved the bus tickets in his face.

Everything was going well as they journeyed south until the police stopped their bus one afternoon in Guizhou province. Daniel, who was sitting in the back with Ani, saw two policemen talk to the driver and show him a photo. He heard the words "Meiguo ren"—"American"—and saw the driver point toward the back of the bus. Daniel saw the policemen push their way through the crowded bus, looking at the men as they moved past each row. He was afraid he was about to be discovered, so he pulled his baseball cap down over his eyes and pretended he was sleeping. When the policemen reached the row of seats in front of Daniel, an old man whispered something to them and they walked off the bus. Then the old man turned around and winked at Daniel and Ani.

Soon afterwards the bus stopped in a small city and the old man said to them, "Let's get off here."

Daniel now recognized the old man as the man who had helped them escape the police in Beijing. He said, "We saw you before. Who are you?"

The old man said, "I am Ato. That's A-t-o. And you are Daniel and Ani. I've been expecting you." He pronounced the first syllable of Ani's name the same way he pronounced the first syllable in his name, like the sound "ah."

Daniel's surprise now turned to suspicion, as he wondered if this man who knew their names was working with the police. He said, pronouncing the first syllable of Ato's

name like the “a” in able, “Listen Ato, I don’t know what you want from us...”

Ato did not let Daniel finish the sentence. He said calmly, “I don’t work for the police. I am your teacher. And my name is pronounced like the car: auto.”

Ani said pleasantly, holding out her hand, “It’s nice to meet you, Ato. My name is pronounced like the name that is spelled A-n-n-i-e.”

Ato shook her hand and said, “It’s dangerous to talk here. You two should come with me.”

After the bus driver had taken Daniel’s and Ani’s backpacks off the bus, they walked around a corner and found a brown Volkswagen bug waiting for them. A young man probably in his late teens was in the driver’s seat. Ato explained almost apologetically that his legs were not strong enough anymore for the ten kilometer walk to his monastery.

They got into the car and, after leaving the city, proceeded up a winding dirt road sometimes hardly wide enough for one vehicle. They were heading into the mountains above the city where the bus had stopped.

2. A Taoist Paradise

It was evening when they arrived at the entrance to the monastery. On the gate was a small wooden sign with the Chinese character for stillness. There was a stone wall around the property that seemed more ornamental than practical, as it was only a meter high. It reminded you of a snake or a dragon because of its undulations as it followed the contours of the mountain.

The driver opened the gate and then drove up to a collection of wood and brick structures with sweeping, earth-colored tile roofs. Pine and cedar trees surrounded the buildings on all sides except the back, which was nestled up against large rocks. The trees and rocks not only provided protection from the wind, but also made it hard for the monastery to be seen from a distance.

There were two main structures and several smaller ones, each unique, perhaps an indication of their construction at different times. Although quite old, the buildings were in good condition and even had glass windows. They were arranged around a courtyard about twenty by fifteen meters that had plum, peach, pear, and cherry trees. Along the walkways between the buildings were many different kinds of plants and flowers in pots.

Ato led Daniel and Ani to one of the smaller buildings, which might be called a hut. It had a wooden floor that looked like it had just been swept and washed. The furnishings were sparse: a bed, a large chest for clothes, a small table with three chairs, and a bookcase filled with books. There was a stove that could be used for making tea and that also could serve as a heater in the winter.

After Daniel and Ani put down their backpacks, Ato said, “Welcome to our humble monastery. Please make yourselves at home. I will see about dinner, which should be ready soon.”

While they ate a meal of rice and fresh vegetables in the dining room, Daniel asked Ato many questions. Ato said he was a modern Taoist philosopher, as were his two companions, Abel and Sam. The driver, Max, was their apprentice. Ato, Abel, and Sam were some of the last Taoists left in China. Ato said that at one time Taoist monasteries had numbered in the hundreds and Taoists had advised emperors, but the Confucians put

an end to that. And when the Communists came to power, many Taoists were forced out of their monasteries and temples and into communes. The remaining monasteries, except those far out in the country like this one, were not allowed to recruit new members. And with the wave of materialism sweeping over China nowadays, it was hard to find anyone who wanted to live a simple, spiritual life. So as the old Taoists died, no one took their places.

Ato explained why they called themselves modern Taoist philosophers: “Any philosophy or religion that clings to its past is dead. That is the problem with Christianity. It is stuck in the past, worshipping ideas two thousand years old. Man has learned a lot about himself and the universe in two thousand years. Because of our open-mindedness, our philosophy is able to include the wisdom of other cultures and other times. We have books in our library by Joseph Campbell, Jane Roberts, Tolstoy, Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer, and many other writers. We have been able, due to this infusion of outside knowledge, to go beyond what the ancient Taoists taught. We now accept that consciousness survives death and is reborn. Ancient Taoist philosophy was hampered by the belief that we only live once.”

Looking at Daniel, Ato added: “We are all students. There are only students here on earth, unless you are a Christ or a Buddha.”

Daniel said, “Ato, what I want to know is, does evil exist?”

“I believe much of what Western religions call evil is the misguided attempt to do good. Your Steinbeck wrote, ‘The belly of every black and evil thing is as white as snow.’”

“Then do evil spirits exist?” Daniel asked.

“They exist only if you create them by believing in them. If you don’t believe in them, you have nothing to worry about. If you meet a frightening spirit, wish it peace and turn your attention from it. Your attention gives it energy.”

The next day Max drove back to the city to buy some supplies. He returned with a poster that contained a large photo of Daniel. Below the photo were these words: “Foreign spy wanted for revolutionary activities. Has murdered two police officers in Beijing.”

When Ato showed Daniel the poster at dinner, Daniel said, “I’m not a spy! And I haven’t hurt anyone!”

Ato joked that Daniel was now “infamous.” So infamous that he wouldn’t want to leave their humble monastery. His only choice was to stay and learn to be a Taoist philosopher.

Ani said, “At least it’s a good picture.”

After breakfast the next morning, Ato went back with Daniel and Ani to their hut. He sat down at the table and Daniel sat down too. Ani began preparing tea.

Ato was wearing slightly baggy blue jeans, tennis shoes, and a red long-sleeve shirt with a white, black, brown, and blue plaid pattern. Ani and Daniel would come to know this as Ato’s usual attire, although the shirt sometimes changed.

After sitting for a few minutes, Ato stretched and yawned and looked at Daniel. And Daniel looked back at Ato. Ato finally said, “At the beginning of his training, the apprentice is supposed to ask the teacher a perceptive question.”

“What is the key to inner peace and tranquility?” Daniel asked after a moment’s reflection.

“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 that state of mind ‘stillness.’ To know stillness is to be a stranger to anger, hatred, envy, worry, longing, and regret. To be unaffected by passion or desire for pleasures, wealth or power. I am not saying to suppress your emotions. That is like building up water before a dam and is not healthy. I am saying, don’t have strong emotions. That is done by an act of will over time. Anyone can do it if they set their mind to it. And I am not saying it is easy to do. But the great thing about stillness is that once it’s achieved, your life is not empty as you might think, but filled with joy. You have, for the first time in your life, the energy to really appreciate the marvels 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.”

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

“Then express your anger verbally, but try not to hurt anyone. If you make a habit of suppressing your anger, you will have outbursts where you will overreact to minor incidents. When anger is expressed naturally, 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. When you learn humility, compassion, and patience, you’ll find few reasons to be angry with another person. Of course, sometimes it’s necessary for a teacher to pretend he is angry,” Ato said with a smile.

“There’s a fine line between not getting angry and suppressing your anger.”

“That’s why it is best to eliminate anger indirectly, by cultivating humility and compassion and patience.”

Ato paused and looked at Daniel before continuing, “Another important principle is called *wu wei*. *Wu wei* literally means ‘no action.’ It means being spontaneous and only doing what needs to be done, like a skillful driver or a plant that naturally bends toward the sunlight. It is 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 what Chung Tzu said. I can sit in front of the TV and watch baseball and the grass will get mowed and the garbage will be taken out.”

Ani, who was sitting next to Daniel, said, “You’re being silly. Ato is serious here,” and she punched him on the arm.

“Ouch!” Daniel exclaimed in mock pain.

Ato looked at them with a slightly bemused expression and said, “*Wu wei* means avoiding strain and not going to extremes. 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, serene. It is also very good for your health.”

Ani joked, “Daniel will have to work on *wu wei*. Spontaneous he is not. He even plans when he will go to the bathroom.”

Daniel, seeking to change the topic, asked, “Ato, why is there so much cruelty and violence in the world? Why do men hurt each other so much?”

“Those men do not understand. They do not know that the great Tao is in everything—in you, in me, in their enemies, in the mountains, the streams, the animals and plants. If they knew the whole world was sacred, surely they would treat more things with respect.”

Ato smiled. "Now I have a question for you, Western Man. Where did life come from? Evolution? Or was the world created by God in six days?"

"Evolution doesn't make sense. I find it impossible to believe that I'm here now because of some chance combination of chemicals. And there are no facts that support evolution. The facts simply are that the fossil records show different species existed in the past. The fossil records do not show any species changing into another. What the fossil records point to, however, is a sudden appearance and disappearance of species, which is inconsistent with evolution."

"Well, my friend, you must be a creationist!" Ato exclaimed.

"No. I believe the universe was created, but I don't know how or by whom. To say the world was created in six days is silly. There were no days before the earth and the sun were created. The Bible, by its many errors, is itself proof it is not the Word of God."

"Six days can be meant symbolically."

Ato got up from the chair and walked across the room with his right thumb under his chin and his arm supported by the back of his left hand, before turning and adding: "But what if the Christians are right? Should you be taking chances with your future? Maybe you'd better get down on your knees right now and beg the forgiveness of the God of the Bible for your blasphemy. It can't hurt. If there's no biblical God, then you've only wasted a few moments. But if the Christians are right, then you've saved yourself from everlasting fire."

Ato sat down and looked at Daniel. While struggling to conceal a grin, he continued to press his point: "We Chinese are a practical people. If you go into a temple here, you'll see us praying to many different gods. We think of this as insurance."

Ato got up to go. "I'll come back tomorrow," he said. "I hope you'll consider my suggestion."

After Ato had left, Daniel threw a book across the room and said angrily to Ani, "I didn't come here to study Christianity! I would leave now if I had somewhere to go."

"Honey," Ani said, "can't you stop acting like an American? You take yourself so seriously. Don't you see Ato is pushing your buttons? Why don't we go for a walk? You'll feel better if you go outside."

Ani's calm, down-to-earth manner had a soothing effect on Daniel's volatile personality. He said, "You're right. I get upset too easily. I should take Ato's advice and learn not to get angry."

They found a path that began behind the monastery. It led them along the ridge of the mountain, slowly winding upward for about a kilometer. After going around a sharp bend, they came across a scene that took their breath away: a waterfall and below it a small, pristine green valley. They walked down into the valley and spent the afternoon exploring a wonderland filled with natural beauty and animals unafraid of man.

The next morning Ato was not in the dining room when Ani and Daniel ate their breakfast, but he knocked on their door several hours later. When Daniel opened the door, Ato asked, "So what's your answer? Will you take the easy way out, the way of so many people, and accept what you're told to believe without question? Or do you treasure your mind and refuse to surrender it to anyone?"

Daniel smiled and said, "Except in my childhood, I have never surrendered my mind to anyone."

Ato nodded. "Good. So you're a maverick. Let's continue the lesson from yesterday."

They sat down at the table and Ato asked, "Do you believe in God?"

"I believe that this universe did not create itself. I believe a benign energy designed the universe and everything in it. I don't choose to call that God; I would rather call it 'The Force.'"

Ato laughed. "Oh, you've watched too many *Star Wars* movies! We call it the Tao, but let's not get hung up on names. Then we are agreed the universe did not create itself. Now how big is the universe?"

Ani, who had a degree in science education from the university in Beijing where Daniel had worked, answered, "Men used to think they lived in the center of the universe. Now we know that we live on a spiral arm of a galaxy of billions of stars among billions of other galaxies in a universe that is expanding like a balloon."

Ato went over to a corner of the room and picked up a small pebble. He said, "Maybe the universe of the scientists is like this pebble: a small object in the corner of a room. What does that idea do to the theories of the scientists who say the universe is self-contained, that it needs no outside influence to explain it?"

Ani answered, "If the physical universe is just a pebble in a corner of a room, then all the established scientific theories are just child's play."

Ato, who was now standing before them with his hands behind his back like a professor giving a lecture, said, "Exactly. What did Isaac Newton say? Something about feeling like a child gathering seashells on the seashore while the great ocean of truth lay before him."

Ato looked at Daniel and said, "Drum roll, please."

Daniel tapped his fingers on the tabletop.

Ato continued, "This is my theory: The physical universe is only part of reality. The nonphysical universe cannot be discovered by the methods of the scientists because they refuse to accept any nonphysical evidence. I call the universe beyond the reach of science the spiritual realm, which can only be discovered by going within."

Daniel said, "Christians used to think that God looked like a old man with a beard. But is there any reason to believe God looks like a man at all? Maybe God isn't physical."

"Or maybe God is a she, a Goddess," Ani said.

"That would be an improvement," Ato said.

Ato looked at Daniel and Ani for a moment. He then continued, "The idea of the Christians, that God is some kind of old man who created the universe in six days, may have been pretty good when men thought the earth was in the center of a small universe and man its ultimate achievement. And the ideas of the scientists sound pretty good if you're willing to ignore the fact that our minds influence matter and events and if you're willing to believe that the universe in all its wondrous complexity was created purely by accident and the physical universe is all there is. But I am a reasonable man; I don't ignore the truth simply because it doesn't agree with my theories.

"I am a reasonable man," he repeated after pausing to catch his breath. "The scientists think they have cornered the market on reason. Well, they are just fooling themselves. They are as hooked on superstition as the Christians."

"How do you define superstition?" Ani asked.

Ato turned a chair around so that the back of the chair was facing the table and sat down. “Superstition is belief handed down through time with no basis in fact or reason.”

“What is the superstition of the scientists?”

“Well, traditional science says the universe can be explained mechanically, as if it were a machine—that there’s no need for explanations that involve nonphysical or spiritual influences. That’s a belief that works fine to explain the motion of the planets and things like that, but it doesn’t explain life very well or the origin of the universe. When you realize science is built on a belief, you see science is like a religion.”

“A teacher at my university said science is the only field of study that deals with facts,” Ani said.

“That is what scientists want you to believe, but science is not an unbiased observer. Science has an agenda—to deny or ignore any evidence of a spiritual reality. Science only wants to recognize things that can be observed with the physical senses or measured with their instruments and forces and energies that can be reduced to mathematical formulas, but science can’t make reality conform to its demands. The agenda of science requires scientists to construct awkward theories like evolution and to ignore important data, like instantaneous healing, precognitive dreams, 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.”

“Science is like an ostrich then, sticking its head in a hole to avoid facing reality,” Ani said.

Ato turned the chair so that he could sit on it in the normal manner. “When you really look at what science has done,” he said, “you have to laugh. Science has essentially said, ‘OK, we admit that there are events at the beginning of time that we can’t explain—the creations of matter and the laws of physics and chemistry. 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 are the experts on this matter,’ pun intended—reminds me of Christianity. Christianity says, ‘Two thousand years ago God spoke to the men who wrote the Bible. But now 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,” Daniel said.

“What?”

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

“No! Really?” Ato laughed so hard that he fell off the chair.

While Ato was on his hands and knees, he looked at his left wrist as if he had a watch on and said, “It’s twelve o’clock. Aren’t you guys hungry? Let’s see if Abel and Sam have lunch ready.”

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

“So you don’t think God sent his Only Son down to earth to die for our sins?” Daniel asked.

“What about all the other planets in the universe? 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, Ani asked, “Do you know that some scientists now are talking about

the possibility of alternative or parallel universes?”

“Well, if they are, they don’t need to use math and physics to find other universes. And they won’t get anywhere with their equations unless they factor consciousness in. All they really have to do is to examine their thoughts and dreams to see that there is an uncharted universe within us. They will also discover that science is asking the wrong questions.”

“What are the right questions?” Daniel asked.

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

During a stroll around the grounds after lunch, Ato asked, “So, where did we leave off? Ah, yes. We Taoist philosophers seek reasonable explanations. Isn’t it logical to assume that the creator of this vast universe is, as you said Daniel, not like a man or anything 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?”

Ato looked at Ani and Daniel and then said, “That’s enough for now. Have a question for me tomorrow.”

After they had returned to their hut, Daniel asked Ani, “What question should we ask tomorrow?”

“Who or what is God?” Ani said.

The next day Daniel asked Ato when he came to the hut, “Who or what is God?”

“Good question. The best answer I’ve found to that question comes from Jane Roberts’ Seth books.” Ato took a worn copy of The Seth Material from the bookcase, opened it to a bookmarked page, and read:

He 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.

Ato put down the book and said, “It seems that 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. These thoughts were universes and men, etc. with all their creative potentials. This was a great agony for God, to have this urge to create, but to not be able to do so. Finally, God understood that It must release Its thoughts, give freedom to the portion of Itself that yearned for expression. God released Its thoughts and universes were born.

“All consciousnesses,” he said, “retain a memory of that state of agony when creativity was not possible.” Ato picked up the book again 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.

Ato looked up from the book and said, “I find this very interesting. Seth said All That Is may have had a predecessor.” He continued reading:

All That Is knows no other. This does not mean that there may not be more to know. It does not know whether or not other psychic gestalts like It may exist. It is not aware of them if they do exist. It is constantly searching. It knows that something else existed before Its own primary dilemma when It could not express Itself.

It is conceivable, then, that It has evolved, in your terms, so long ago that It has forgotten Its origin, that It has developed from still another Primary which has—in your terms—long since gone Its way.

When Ato finished speaking, he put down the book and slipped out the door. Daniel noticed that he felt lightheaded, almost giddy. He had never before heard such a rational, beautiful explanation for what God is and was. If he could dance, he would have danced around the room. He looked into Ani's eyes and saw a look of astonishment and joy. Sensing that she felt like him, he embraced her. They fell on the bed and made love, god-to-god(ess).

The next day, Daniel asked Ato, "Do you really believe we are made from God? Do we have supernatural powers then?"

Ato replied, "Ah, you anticipate the last part of the lesson. Yes, All That Is has built itself into the physical universe. How else could I do this?"

Like a magician, Ato pulled a rabbit out of his hat, a hat that appeared on his head just a moment before. In fact, Ato's clothing changed to typical magician attire in that instant: black tuxedo, top hat, and dress shoes. Next, Ato found flowers in Ani's hair and then made a vase appear on the table right before their eyes into which he placed the flowers. "Like a god," he said, "I have created these things. Now watch."

Ato began to rise from the floor. In an instant, he was in the corner of the room. In another flash, he disappeared. They went outside and found him perched high up in a tree like a bird.

Ato jumped from the branch and floated down to the ground next to Daniel and Ani. He said, "I know how to do these things, but I am a man just like you. You can learn to do these things too, but you must tune your spirit and discipline your mind. It is my belief that God wants all of us to learn to do these things. How do I create flowers? How do I fly? I will it. I willed my body to be in the air, to be in the tree. That is the key: will, a tuned will.

"So does life have a purpose? For me, a philosopher, the purpose is to learn and grow. 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, as your Shakespeare wrote, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'

"One of the first things to learn, something that science does not understand, is that we create our experiences through our beliefs and expectations. We draw to ourselves what we concentrate on. The production is so natural, however, that we don't even know we are doing it. Collectively, man and nature create the world in the same fashion that an individual does. That is real magic in the sense of the word as it is known today, for we are doing what science says is impossible. In that sense then, there is magic around us all the time. That's all for today. Now go out and play."

Daniel and Ani spent the afternoon in the paradise they had discovered on their third

day at the monastery. When they saw Ato the next day, Daniel had two questions for him: “How is it that nobody lives in the valley behind the monastery? What will we do if the police follow us here?”

Ato replied, “Fear nothing, my friend. Let me put it this way. We have put a lock on the door to this place, and the police do not have a key for the lock. In other words, we are safe here because we are not on the earth that has the police that are looking for you. We have slipped through a door into another world.

“Your question reminds me of a poem in the book by John Blofeld that you brought with you.” Ato picked up Daniel’s copy of *Taoism: The Road to Immortality* from the table and continued talking as he thumbed through the book: “The poet Li T’ai-po, who lived in the court of a T’ang dynasty ruler until he fell out of favor, received a messenger one day who told him the emperor wanted him to return to the court. His answer was,” and now Ato read from the book:

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.

Ani said, “That’s beautiful. I wish I could be so relaxed.”

Daniel said, “I think something Thoreau wrote is appropriate here: ‘Sometimes, as I drift idly on Walden Pond, I cease to live and begin to be.’”

“I think Thoreau could be a good Taoist,” Ani said.

“The real achievement is to know such peace in a city—that is very hard to do,” Ato said. “That’s why we Taoists prefer the mountains. It is much easier to reduce life to what is essential here. But this life is not for Daniel. Daniel has a job to do beyond these mountains. Do you know who you are?” Ato asked.

“No. Who am I?”

“You’re the man who has been offered and who has accepted a role in the forthcoming drama to be enacted by the Chinese people. This decision has already been made in the dream world. The Chinese people have chosen you to spark the fire because old karmic debts are now to be paid. You were Chinese before, as you have suspected, and played a not-so-pretty role in Chinese history. Your job now is to shine a light and then to get out of the way so the Chinese people can do what must be done by themselves.”

Daniel, not at all surprised, said, “I have always felt that I was different. When I was young, I had few friends. I used to compensate for my loneliness by telling myself that someday I’d be an important person.”

“Well, you know what they say, ‘Beware of your dreams, for you may get what you asked for.’”

About a week later, after they had finished lunch, Daniel asked, “What is the Way, the Way to Truth and Enlightenment, Ato?”

“I have been waiting for you to ask that question. Since time is short for you and you have now studied stillness and *wu wei*, I think I should present you with the final piece to the Taoist puzzle.

“I will tell you a story. Many years ago during the reign of Emperor Hwang, there was a government official in the province of Hunan whose name was Liu. After a long period of faithful and honest service, the Emperor called his loyal servant to the capital and asked him if there was anything he would like to request of His Majesty. Liu replied, ‘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 contemplation of the Way.’ The Emperor said, ‘I cannot deny such a modest request. However, I would like you to promise to return to me after you have found the Way and to teach me the Way.’ To this Liu gladly agreed.

“Liu returned to the province of Hunan. In the mountains south of the city where he had worked there were rumored to be many recluses searching for the Way and a few elusive immortals who had found the Way. Hoping to meet the latter, he wandered in the mountains during the spring, summer, and early fall of that year, meeting no immortals, but many recluses searching 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 winter approached, he had no choice but to find shelter. Near a small stream in a beautiful valley far from any other recluse, he built a hut. He lived there through the winter, rejoicing with the dawning of each day, no matter the weather. When spring came, he planted a garden. In the summer and fall, he found joy in the heat and the rain and the harvest. The winter came again, and again he saw beauty in the wind and the cold and the nature 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 the Way 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. He said he had come to remind Liu of his promise to the Emperor. 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 immediately realized 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 sit down and drink some tea with him. Han insisted that he was on a mission from the Moon Goddess and he could only stay for a short time.

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

“‘When your mind is free of passions and desires and you accept the world as it is and when you have achieved the spontaneity of *wu wei*, then you are close to the Way. But there is still one more step. The next step is for you to realize that you are part of everything and the whole universe is holy. That knowledge is all you need, Liu, to cross

the threshold.'

"With that the Immortal got up to go, but Liu asked him if he would play a few notes on his flute. He obliged Liu with a short, charming melody he said the Moon Goddess often asked him to play. Then the Immortal patted Liu warm-heartedly on the 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 into the woods and disappeared.

"After the Immortal had gone, Liu looked at the spot on the floor where he had spent countless hours meditating. He now understood the Way was not to be found only there, but also in the singing of the birds in the morning, the afternoon tea, the setting of the sun against the pine-covered hills, the washing of his only garment, the cooking of the evening rice, and all the pains and sorrows of life, and he was satisfied.

"Laughing and dancing with joy, he now 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 Emperor was awakened by a cool breeze in his chamber. Looking up, he saw the figure of Liu floating above the floor. Liu said, 'Your Highness, I have come to fulfill my promise to you. I have come to tell you I have found the Way.'

"The 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 everyone. Enjoy the simple things of life. Be content. Respect others. Laugh a lot. And recognize you are part of everything and that the whole world is holy.'

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

"Liu slowly faded from the Emperor's sight, leaving his sandals, as was the custom, to show that he was not of this world any longer. The Emperor that very night left the palace, entrusting the kingdom to his 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 skin ended and the world began. The next day he climbed atop a mountain peak and disappeared into the clouds, leaving behind only his sandals."

On a beautiful, warm morning in early fall, Ato came to Ani's and Daniel's hut carrying a basket. He was wearing a charcoal gray suit with purple pinstripes, a rose-colored shirt, and a red silk tie.

Daniel said, while brushing a piece of lint off the coat with his hand, "Nice suit, Ato."

Ato said, "Thank you. For today's lesson, let's go to the valley you and Ani have visited. We can have a picnic. I brought our lunch."

When they arrived in the valley, they found three large stones arranged in a small

triangle near the waterfall, almost as if they had been placed there on purpose. After they sat down, Ato said, "Welcome to the temple of Nature. This is a magical place. Everything is beautiful and vibrant. Everything is alive. Even these stones we are sitting on."

"I hope they don't mind that we are sitting on them," Ani joked.

"I hope this stone won't get angry at me and tear my pants," Ato responded.

In the area around Daniel and Ani, colors were brighter than normal. The sound of the gentle wind moving through the pine trees was music to their ears. The large clouds idling above seemed like supernatural beings untouched by concerns of any kind. Ani felt that there was nowhere else she wanted to be at that moment. Daniel felt that the trees and rocks were listening to their words.

"Daniel you're a man of the world. Have you seen any churches more beautiful or more marvelous than this place?" Ato asked.

Daniel thought for a second and said, "I've seen some cathedrals in Europe that took my breath away. But the cathedrals were cold and intimidating. They made me feel small. I've seen nothing that matches the beauty and warmth of these trees and mountains and sky."

They were silent for several moments. A dragonfly came by in no hurry whatsoever, first flying toward Daniel, then Ani, and then Ato. It hovered in front of Ato, who put his hand out. The dragonfly landed on his index finger for a few seconds and then took off, soaring into the air and disappearing over the water of the stream.

Ato cleared his throat and began: "I told you scientists have failed to understand the effects of our beliefs. I want to tell you more about that today. First, I want to define 'belief' for this discussion. Jane Roberts wrote in *The Nature of Personal Reality*, 'Beliefs are thoughts reinforced by imagination and emotion concerning the nature of your reality.'"

"Can you give us an example of a belief?" Daniel asked.

"Just wait. You'll have plenty of examples."

Again Ato cleared his throat. "There are three major effects of our beliefs. The first is the health of our bodies. A belief that many people in the West have is that their bodies are under constant attack by germs and diseases and that without doctors they would be unable to stay healthy. This belief actually causes illness and dependence on doctors. Another common belief in the West is that our bodies are like machines that start to wear out as we age. This belief will cause unnecessary physical problems. For example, if you believe that in old age you will lose your hearing, that belief will actually cause your hearing to deteriorate as you get older.

"Most health problems are signs that something is out of balance. Jane Roberts said, 'The body and the mind work so well together that one will attempt to cure the other and will often succeed if left alone.' If you have an undesirable physical condition that isn't improving, you've got to find the belief that caused it and change the belief."

"I think you need to explain that a little more," Ani said.

"Our bodies are the mirrors of our minds, except for conditions we were born with, which were chosen before birth. If you believe in doctors, then go to them. But remember that if your mind is not cured, you will substitute one set of symptoms for another. Good health is your right and your responsibility."

"Give us some examples," Daniel said.

“For example, mental stress is a major cause of illness, from colds to cancer to heart attacks to many other things. Pay attention to the thoughts that go through your mind during the day. Are you putting yourself down, denying your worth or comparing yourself to impossible standards? Are you relaxed, at peace with the world or do you feel threatened constantly by other people and events? Do you feel that you’re a victim? Do you feel you’re stuck in a job or a life that isn’t allowing you to fulfill your potential? Maybe you believe you’re guilty of some sin for which you must now be punished. Any of these beliefs can wear you down physically.”

Ani, who had been listening attentively, said, “Many women worry about being fat. Can you talk about that?”

“A belief that many people have is ‘I am fat.’ That belief will make you gain weight. If you want to lose weight, first make sure you’re not eating too much. Then play this game with yourself: Tell yourself you have a nice figure and, using your imagination, see yourself at your ideal weight. See yourself interacting with your family and friends at that weight. Imaginatively experience that condition in as many ways as you can. You must practice this game often and believe it will work. I am not asking you to lie, for in another reality you are slim.

“If this technique doesn’t work after you have given it some time, you have to consider that there might be another belief that makes you overweight. Listen to your thoughts, which generally follow from your beliefs, for clues. You may find that you have a belief that ‘I am unattractive’ that causes you to gain weight. Then you will have to deal with that belief.”

Daniel said, “When I’m stressed or in a hurry, things always seem to go wrong.”

“Thank you. You bring me to my next point. The second effect of our beliefs is on the events of our lives. We draw to ourselves events that correspond with our beliefs. If you feel stressed, you will seem to have bad luck. If you are relaxed, confident, and happy, you will attract what is called good luck, although it is not a matter of luck at all, but the natural result of your mental actions. If you tell yourself in the morning, ‘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 is a good idea to check your attitude several times during the day.”

“Daniel said, “When I’m in a bad mood, I don’t make good decisions, simple things become difficult, I meet rude people and bad drivers, and generally life becomes a pain in the ass. On the really bad days, I’m overwhelmed by one unlucky event after another and I get to the point where I can’t believe this is happening to me, but I know I’m causing it. Then I just want to go and hide from the world until my luck changes.”

“You’d better stay away from power tools and avoid walking near buildings under construction when you feel that way,” Ato said, laughing. He laughed so hard that tears started running down his cheeks.

After he had wiped his face and eyes, he said, struggling to be serious, “Your little story is another reason to strive for stillness in your life. But until you achieve it, you should understand that your bad moods and stress attract the negative stuff and a vicious cycle is formed. When you find yourself in one of those cycles, it is best to ‘nip it in the bud,’ as you say in the West. Find the attitude that triggered it and change the attitude. One of the best things Jane Roberts wrote was, ‘You get what you concentrate on.’ If you concentrate on disharmony, you get it.”

Ani said, "Daniel can get into bad moods that last all day long."

"I didn't know you noticed," Daniel said.

"I do, honey, because I care about you," she replied.

Ato cleared his throat a third time more loudly than before and said, "Your beliefs act as filters, forcing you to see and experience what you believe. For example, a common belief in the West is that man is naturally evil. If you have that belief, you will attract experiences into your personal life that will confirm it. The belief will cause you to distrust the people you meet and will telepathically invite them to behave badly. It will cause you to ignore or not to notice examples of kindness and cooperation in the world, but will bring to your attention examples of cruelty and selfishness and other negative events.

"Now I want to talk about fears. Fears, if you dwell on them, become expectations. They can attract experiences, like beliefs. A very beneficial belief that is a good defense against fears is a belief in your own health, worth, and safety. This belief should lead you away from dangerous situations."

Daniel said, "I used to drive only old cars because I was always poor, but once, when I had saved up some money, I bought a nice, almost new car. Then I constantly worried about someone scratching it, so I parked it far away from other cars whenever I could. But the car still got a lot of scratches on it. It was like the car had a giant bull's eye on it. And then one day I came out to the car and found that someone had smashed into it and driven away. That hurt, but after that I stopped worrying about people scratching it."

"That's an excellent example of how fears can attract events. You also gave us a good example of one of the biggest mistakes people make: They worry about things that in the big picture don't mean anything. Think about all the stuff you worried about when you were young. A lot of it sounds silly now, doesn't it?"

"Yes," Ani agreed. "In school I used to be so worried about my hair and my clothes and what other girls thought of me."

Daniel added, "All during my school years, I worried about tests, even though I was an A student. In high school, I worried about my pimples, but they just went away in college."

Ato said, "I once read a book called *Be Here Now*. The title has an important message: Live in the moment. It's OK to plan for the future and think about the past, but don't dwell on past and future events. You waste a lot of energy doing that.

"Now, let's talk about emotions. Your emotions flow from your beliefs, not the other way around. If you have an unpleasant or undesirable emotion, don't be afraid of it or suppress it, but listen to it. Pay attention to the thoughts that come with it. If you do this, you can learn what the belief is that is behind it. Once you know what the belief is, then you can change the belief."

Daniel asked, "Give us an example of an emotion that comes from a belief."

"Some people get upset over losing a game or they take a little rebuff as an insult. These people probably have a low level of self-confidence or they believe that are inferior to others. The point I am trying to make is that it is very important to know what your beliefs are. Jane Roberts said you should find out what you think about your life, yourself, your body, and your relationship with others. The answers to these questions can go a long way toward explaining your experiences in the world."

"There was a teacher at my school, a friend of mine," Daniel said, "who got really

mad at another teacher who would not erase the blackboard after his classes. Even after the other teacher was asked politely several times, he refused to do it. My friend nearly got into a fight with the other teacher over a little thing like that.”

“He probably felt the other teacher was ‘dissing’ him. He didn’t have enough self-esteem to ignore the situation.”

Daniel exclaimed, “I didn’t know you knew American slang!”

Ato said, moving his feet and pointing as he spoke, “When I was a white boy, my life it had no joy. So I became a brother. Watch me now, mother—”

Daniel responded, “A rapper you are not, but as a teacher you are hot!”

Ani asked, “What are you guys doing?”

“Just a little hip-hop, sister,” Daniel said as he high-fived Ato.

“Ani asked, “Ato, how do my beliefs make things happen?”

“Your inner self selects from the bank of possibilities the events that correspond with your beliefs.”

“What if the event affects other people?” she asked.

“Then those people have also selected the event through their beliefs. We live in a democratic universe. There are no accidents.”

Ani asked, “Ato, can you talk about personal growth?”

“If you believe in yourself, if you tell yourself you can do something you’ve set out to do, then you will attract abilities and events that will aid you in accomplishing your goal, whatever it may be. Joseph Campbell said that if you follow your bliss—your bliss is doing what you really love to do—doors will open for you where you didn’t know there were doors and where there weren’t doors for anyone else.”

Ani interrupted Ato. “Sometimes I feel like my life is out of my control,” she said. “Like now. I don’t want to be hiding. I miss my family.”

Ato looked at her and said, “Many people go through life blaming other people or bad luck or fate for their problems. ‘I am a victim’ is a belief that can lead to unnecessary stress and feelings of powerlessness. And it will attract events that confirm the belief. First let me say that when your life is illuminated by the Way, you accept your circumstances. A Taoist doesn’t feel sorry for himself or blame his life on others. But because of the work of Jane Roberts, we can go beyond that. We now know we are responsible for the events of our lives because we create them by our beliefs. One of the most important things for people to learn is that the power over their lives is within them.

“Ani, you chose to fall in love with Daniel. You chose to follow him here. If you can remember your thoughts and dreams from when you were a child, you’ll see that you wanted to travel away from your village and experience the world. Don’t say you’re a victim. That’s like saying, ‘I’m weak.’ Be strong by saying to yourself, ‘I chose this adventure with Daniel. I’m here because this is where I need to be to learn what I need to learn.’

“Also thanks to Jane Roberts, we now know that we determine the circumstances of our birth. There is an expression in the West, ‘You can choose your friends, but you can’t choose your family.’ That’s not true. You chose your family and your family chose you in the spiritual world before you were born. That is why accepting responsibility for your life must begin at birth. You chose to be born who and what you are. That doesn’t mean you can’t change yourself, but don’t expect to be able to see if you were born blind.”

“The obvious question is,” Daniel said, “why would anyone choose a body that isn’t

healthy and good-looking?”

“A body that is less than ideal may serve the purpose of giving your life a focus that will encourage you to grow in a certain area. For example, a soul that wants to concentrate on emotional development may choose a body that is below average intellectually. A soul that wants to concentrate on intellectual, creative or spiritual development may choose a body that is not physically strong or beautiful or well-endowed.

“Now I want to talk about the third effect of our beliefs: the creation of the world. Jane Roberts said that together the consciousnesses of the earth form the world’s reality: its weather, seasons and storms; its social, political, and economic events; its wars and disasters. And on a deeper level, all the consciousnesses of the earth have formed the physical reality of the earth itself. For example, all three of us are taking part in the creation of this little paradise here just as the rocks and trees and water are.

“Some have said that the world is an illusion. In a sense it is, because the world doesn’t exist in this form without us. A consciousness from another dimension would not see the earth we see. But saying the world is an illusion doesn’t mean it’s not for all practical purposes real. If you try to walk through a wall you’re going to smash your nose, Daniel. But for those with the proper training and self-control, it is possible to walk through walls and fly in the air. That demonstration I performed for you was based on my knowledge of the fact that the world we live in is only one possible world. There is more I could say about this, but I think I should wait for another time.

“Now just as you cannot violate the laws of physical reality easily without training and self-control, you cannot create a mass event—an event experienced by others—by just believing in it. The beliefs of the other consciousnesses involved in the event must be taken into account too.”

Ato paused and then said, “Seventh inning stretch,” and stood up. Ani and Daniel stood up too and stretched their arms.

Our happy trio had been talking for some time. They had been so focused on what they were doing that they hadn’t noticed that birds and animals had gathered around them. When Ato, Ani, and Daniel sat down again, the birds began singing, as if on cue. Their singing was beautiful and enchanting. The three human participants in the event just listened, not saying a word.

After a minute, the birds stopped singing as suddenly as they had begun and Ato continued, “I want to say something about dreams. The dream world has been largely unexplored by modern man. The dream world is a rich world full of opportunities for learning and exploration. It is also highly practical. When you sleep, a lot of the planning for your daytime activities takes place.

“You can use the dream world to find a solution to any problem you have. You should place the idea in your mind before you go to sleep that you need an answer. Then state the problem. The answer may come to you in a dream or it may appear as a hunch or an urge to do something during the day.”

Daniel added, “I have found that just before I get up in the morning, when I am half asleep, is a good time to ask myself questions. I can get some quick answers that way.”

“Good point,” Ato said. “You can even use the dream world to heal yourself. Again, place the thought in your mind before you sleep that you want to be healed.”

Ani asked, “Ato, can you prove that God exists?”

“That’s so obvious it doesn’t need discussion. Just look around you. Where did this marvelous world come from? Evolution is such a silly answer. If you believe in evolution, there’s a bridge in Arizona I’d like to sell you.”

Ani asked, “But isn’t it possible the universe had no beginning and evolved by itself like scientists say?”

“All the diversity and complexity in the world had no creator? That’s impossible. There has to be an intelligent designer to the universe that exists outside of it.”

“I have a question on another topic,” Daniel said. “How do you explain the fact that Buddhists say that there is no permanent self, no soul, no atman, that survives death?”

“I have never been able to understand how they can believe in reincarnation and at the same time say there is no part of us that survives death. At any rate, you’ll know the answer to that question soon enough.”

Daniel and Ani looked at each other and then Daniel asked, “What would you say to people who say reincarnation is nonsense?”

Ato answered, “Some people are born with memories of past lives. I’ve read of children born in India who told their parents about a past life in another city. The information was checked out and verified. There are also some children born with incredible talent, like Beethoven. That cannot be explained any better way than by reincarnation. And some people have communicated with the dead and found out information they could not have known otherwise. How can these things happen if our consciousness is snuffed out like a candle flame when we die?”

“What about Seth?” Daniel asked.

“Jane Roberts’ Seth is not proof, but pretty powerful evidence of life after death. It is inconceivable to me that Seth could be a product of her subconscious as some people believe.”

Daniel asked, “What are ghosts?”

“For the most part, ghosts that haunt places and buildings are the fragment personalities of people who have died but have had trouble accepting their deaths. If you see one, wish it peace and go on your way. But it probably doesn’t even know you are there.”

All three were quiet for several minutes, waiting for a sign or impulse to do or say something.

Finally Ato said, “Hey, why don’t we all go for a swim?”

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

Ani said, “That’s the point, silly.”

“Last one in’s a rotten egg,” Ato said as he ran toward the water, shedding his clothes as he ran.

3. In the Spring

A year passed while Daniel and Ani studied with Ato. The time went by quickly because Daniel was busy learning the Taoist way of stillness and spontaneity and also about the nature of reality and the power we all have to create our lives.

One day in April, Ato came to Daniel and said it was time for him to face the police. Daniel’s main concern when he heard this was for the safety of Ani. He talked with Ato

about this and they decided that she must go back to her hometown. After she had returned home, Daniel would make his appearance in the city where he and Ani had met Ato.

Daniel was also concerned about the safety of Ato and his friends, but Ato told him, "When you go down to the city, Max will return to his village. Abel and Sam and I will lift the veil that protects the monastery, for you will want it to be known that you spent the last year right under the noses of the police. The police will of course come here and try to arrest us, but we will vanish before their eyes. Our time has come to ride the dragon."

Ato asked Daniel a few days later, "When's your birthday?"

"July fourth."

"How appropriate."

"Why?"

"You will need to write a short speech in Chinese. Ani can help you."

"You must be kidding. Do you expect me to give a speech in Chinese?"

"Yes. You don't expect the poor peasants around here to know English, do you?"

"What should I write about?"

"Your birthday."

While he was working on the speech, Daniel remembered a conversation with his brother Michael just before he left for China. He had said to Michael: "Man 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 enslaved lands aware of their power."

Ani left on a beautiful spring day. "When will I see you again? I love you," she said through her tears as she was about to get into the car driven by Max.

"I don't know. I hope it's not too long. I love you too," Daniel said.

After Ani had left, Daniel and Ato waited. Ato said they were waiting for a sign.

About two weeks later, Daniel had an exhilarating dream. He told Ato about it when Ato came to visit him in the morning: "The dream involved my brother. I don't remember all the details now, but I was about to be arrested as an accomplice in the kidnapping of a young boy. The police knew the boy had been with my brother, but they also believed I took part in kidnapping him. Actually, the boy had chosen to be with my brother. Anyway, I'm outside in a field with a lot of people. I think they're my friends. All of a sudden my brother appears flying through the air with the boy at his side. He and the boy are in a sitting position, as if they're on a magic carpet. They fly over the crowd and come to a landing on a small hill. I run over to him and he takes my hand. We fly over the people again, only this time we are standing."

When Daniel stopped speaking, he looked up and realized Ato was not sitting down next to him. He was packing Daniel's things into his backpack.

"What are you doing?" Daniel asked.

"It's time. The dream has obviously put you in a good mood. You feel strong. That's as good a sign as we need."

Daniel asked, "But who was the young boy in the dream?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it was you as a child. Do you remember the magic in your life then?"

Daniel looked puzzled.

“You told me that books were your best friends when you were young. With books you escaped the ordinary world. It was books that led you, over a period of many years, to where you are now. But it’s time to put aside books. What the world needs now is a man of action. That’s you. So get dressed. It’s time to go.”

Daniel took off his pajamas and put on pants, a shirt, and shoes. He brushed his teeth, washed his face, and combed his hair. Then he packed the rest of his things and loaded them into the car. He got in the car and started the engine.

Ato came 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. Most people take the world for granted. We don’t. Even as children we wanted to know, ‘Who am I? What is the meaning of life?’ We were both dissatisfied with the explanations that other men had come up with.

“What an adventure! What an adventure you and I have undertaken—to try to understand this amazing world. That was my quest and it is now your quest. I have taught you what I know, what I have learned from my teachers and on my own. Take my knowledge and expand on it. But don’t forget what Isaac Newton wrote, ‘If I see farther than others, it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants.’”

“I won’t forget.”

Just then Abel, Sam, and Max came up to the car. Daniel got out of the car and thanked them for their hospitality. They bowed to him and he bowed in return. Daniel hugged Ato and said, “Thank you for all you’ve done for me. I know I haven’t always been the best student.”

Ato patted him on the back and said, “I’ll hear none of that.”

Daniel got back in the car. As he started to drive away, everyone waved except Ato, who walked up to the car and asked, “Do you remember your favorite song when you were young?”

Daniel stopped the car, but he couldn’t remember. His mind was not focusing well.

Ato began singing: “To dream the impossible dream, to fight the unbeatable foe...”

For Daniel, the words brought back memories of the loneliness of his childhood. He was snapped out of his mood by Ato’s command, “Stop indulging in feeling sorry for yourself. Concentrate on the power and the promise of great deeds you felt when you heard that song.”

Daniel did as he was told and he was at peace. Maybe this was planned long ago, he thought. Maybe he had been preparing all his life for this.

Daniel looked at Ato and Ato said, “What are you waiting for? Drive.”

As Daniel motored toward the city, he repeated out loud these three words several times: “Drive, he said.” The words seemed to give him courage.

Daniel arrived at about noon. Since posters with his picture were all over the city, Daniel was recognized when he arrived. He was soon surrounded by farmers and city folk looking for some excitement. A person in the crowd asked him in Chinese, “Why did you come to China?”

Daniel did not understand the question, so he said in English, “My name is Daniel. I am from America.”

Several people said, “We know that.”

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

Daniel then read to them in Chinese the words he had rehearsed with Ani’s help in

the monastery:

I want to talk to you about democracy. Some people say the values of America are not suitable for Asia. I disagree. The great lesson from the West is that the individual is important and that he has rights the state cannot take away. This truth is universal, for all times and places.

I was born on July fourth. In America, July fourth is the day we celebrate the Declaration of Independence. I believe it is the most important political document in the world. It was written in the year 1776 during the American war with Great Britain. It was a message to the King and the British people informing them that we were independent of them and wished to be left alone. There are five words in the Declaration of Independence that have made it the most well-known political document in the world. Those words are: "All men are created equal." I want to quote the most important passage of this document 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."

This means that all human beings are born with rights. This means that no emperor, no general, no Party leader, is more important than the poorest worker, student, farmer or housewife. It means no one has the right to rule others without their consent. If the people have not bestowed that right on a ruler, or if they withdraw it, the ruler is illegitimate, and can properly be overthrown.

I think the world needs a marriage of the wisdom from the West and the East. The West tells us that the individual is important, that a man has rights that cannot be taken away by the state, and that the state's purpose is to serve men, not the other way around. The foundation or proof of this truth comes from the East. The East teaches that God is everywhere and in everything. If God is within us, then we all are important and the state should be our servant, not our master.

The police had been watching and, when Daniel ended his speech, they arrested him. As Ato had instructed him to do, during the interrogation he told the police where he had been staying, and even gave them directions to the monastery.

Several days later one of his prison mates, a university student, 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 men sitting around a stove in a hut drinking tea. Not wishing to be disrespectful of the old monks, the police captain asked them politely if Daniel had been living there. The monks laughed and replied, "Oh yes, but he has gone now. Please sit down and have some tea with us." The captain asked, "Did you know he was a wanted man, and to shelter him was a crime?" Again the monks

laughed, and they replied, “Yes, yes. But come, sit and have some tea.” The captain felt sympathy for the old men, for one reminded him of his grandfather, and he wanted to arrest them gently, so he agreed. As there was no room for all the policemen in the hut, the three old men went outside under the trees, where there were tables and benches, to serve them tea.

When the policemen finished drinking the tea and were thinking they had better arrest these men soon or it wouldn’t look good for them, 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 a minute the wind stopped blowing and a great green and gold dragon, roaring and belching flames and smoke, appeared from behind the clouds and landed in the nearby clearing. Petrified, the policemen did not move. But the three old men 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 old men could be seen waving to the policemen as they disappeared from sight.

The official police report said there was no one 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 speculation that Daniel was an alien. An exaggerated story of Daniel’s escape from the police in Beijing was also being spread in the city.

[4. A Year in Prison](#)

In prison, Daniel sculpted and polished a political philosophy that he planned to present to the country upon his release. It was based upon the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States. But Daniel believed he must go beyond those two documents, which were, after all, written by men who owned slaves and guns and who did not think women had the same rights as men. He built his philosophy around two very important concepts: the rights of nature and the rights of man. Nature’s rights include the survival of species and the health of forests, wilderness areas, waterways, wetlands, rivers, lakes, and oceans. Daniel included in nature’s rights the rights of future generations of men, plants, and animals to inherit a healthy, clean, and diverse earth. The protection of nature’s rights should be one of the primary functions of government. Human rights include opportunities for a decent life: a fulfilling job, a home, an education, and basic medical care. Of course, human rights also consist of freedom of speech and religion, of assembly, press, the right to participate in government, and freedom from government interference in one’s life. The protection of human rights should be the other primary function of government.

Daniel was allowed a small collection of books in his prison cell. A few of the books he had brought from the monastery; the rest were sent to him by his brother Michael. He had in his library *The Story of Philosophy*, *Tales of Power*, *Taoism: The Road To Immortality*, *Tao Te Ching*, *The Collected Works of Emerson*, *Seth Speaks*, *The Aquarian Gospel*, and *China Wakes*. To get the last book past the prison censors, his brother had torn off the cover and replaced it with the cover to a book entitled *The Secret Life of*

Plants.

Daniel loved to read about the great philosophers in *The Story of Philosophy*, especially Voltaire, a man who challenged the authority of the Catholic Church and opposed the tyranny of governments in the eighteenth century. Voltaire attacked stupidity, cruelty, and injustice with a simple eloquence, wit and humor never equaled in human history, although Jonathan Swift and Mark Twain came close. One of Voltaire's best books was a satire of war, religion, and philosophy called *Candide*. He wrote this about war:

War is the greatest of all crimes; and yet there is no aggressor who does not color his crime with the pretext of justice....It is forbidden to kill; therefore all murderers are punished unless they kill in large numbers and to the sound of trumpets.

A champion of the weak and oppressed, Voltaire preached tolerance for all. Perhaps his most famous statement was, "I do not agree with a word that you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

When he was near death, Voltaire asked for a priest to hear his confession. The priest demanded that Voltaire first sign a profession of full faith in Catholic doctrine. Voltaire sent him away and drew up this statement that he signed: "I die adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition."

One night after he had been in prison for over a year, Daniel dreamed Ato's hand was on his shoulder, shaking him.

Then he heard Ato say, "It's time to hit the road, Jack. It's time to make like a leaf and leave. Do you catch my drift?"

Daniel opened his eyes and sprang to his feet when he saw Ato really was shaking him. He hugged Ato and said, "I'm so happy to see you again. I didn't know if I ever would."

"I told you that you would find out soon enough if consciousness survives death."

"So the Buddhists are wrong."

"Well, some Buddhists believe in an afterlife."

"What's with the outfit, Ato? I've never seen you dressed like this."

Ato was not wearing his customary jeans, but the traditional clothing of a Taoist monk. He had on a long, thin, colorful robe over loose white pants. His shoes were made of cloth with felt soles.

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

Daniel laughed and asked, "How did you get in here?"

"I just walked in." He added, "I'm hot," and he removed his robe. Underneath was a thin jacket that barely reached his waist.

"Are you ready to go for a stroll?"

"Are you crazy? Do you think I'm going to just walk out of here?"

"Exactamente. Take my hand and follow me."

By Daniel's count they walked through twenty-seven walls and nine sets of bars before they were out in the open.

"That was easy," Daniel said. "Why didn't we do this before?"

“Because you weren’t ready. Now that you are free, what will you do?”

“Get arrested again. Look, two police officers are coming. Let’s walk through some more walls, Ato.”

“Relax. Let them arrest you.”

Daniel had no choice, for Ato, who was invisible to the policemen, would not help him. What was the sense of escaping from prison if you’re going to let yourself be arrested so quickly, he thought.

Daniel was placed in a different cell this time. It had thicker walls and no bars or windows. Four guards were posted outside the door at all times.

Ato appeared to Daniel the next night before he had gone to sleep.

“Look what you’ve gotten me into this time. Now I don’t even have a window to look out of,” Daniel said with a smile.

“No sweat. Let’s go. Take my hand.”

Again Daniel and Ato walked out of the prison, passing through walls at will. Apparently Daniel was as invisible as Ato as long as he held his hand.

Once outside, Daniel asked Ato, “What would have happened if I had let go of your hand while we were going through a wall?”

“They would have had to cut you out of the wall,” Ato answered, laughing. “Let’s go find a police officer,” he added when he had stopped laughing.

Again Daniel was quickly arrested. This time he was not placed in a cell but in a large room with half a dozen prison guards. One of the prison guards was curious enough to risk talking to Daniel. He asked him why he had come to China.

Daniel responded: “I’ve come to China because I’ve always felt a closeness to the Chinese people. Here the people thousands of years ago accepted Buddhism and Taoism, the two religions of all the world’s religions which best described the nature of God. Like all religions, Buddhism and Taoism have been corrupted by rituals and superstitions, but, if you look behind the ceremonies and the priests, you will find two great truths: ‘We are one with the universe. When you understand that, you are free and can never be harmed.’” The guard marveled that Daniel knew so much about his own spiritual tradition, of which he was ignorant.

Stories were being spread in China about Daniel. Some of them were true; others were not. In the stories that were not true, Daniel was either called a Taoist immortal, a messiah who would lead the Chinese people to freedom, a devil, a magician, an alien, or a spy from the United States. All of these stories served Daniel’s purpose, for they aroused a great curiosity among the Chinese people.

Several days after his second escape, Ato appeared to Daniel just before sunrise in a dream. Ato said, “Stand up and you will see me. Grab my hand quickly and follow me.”

Daniel awoke and stood up. The guards saw him stand up, but after he grabbed Ato’s hand, he faded from their view. The guards ran over to his cot yelling, “Call the captain. He’s gone! He’s gone!”

Ato told Daniel to continue holding his hand once they had passed through the prison walls. They walked until they reached the market in the center of the city.

Daniel and Ato climbed atop a monument honoring Lao Tzu, the popular Taoist philosopher. Then Ato released Daniel’s hand and he became visible to the people shopping in the market.

Now, news of Daniel’s two previous escapes had reached the people in the city. Men

at that very market were even wagering on whether Daniel would be able to escape from the latest security measures.

When he became visible to the people, they rushed around him, anxious to see him and hear him speak. Daniel and Ato waited an hour until a crowd of about three hundred had assembled. Then Ato touched Daniel on his left shoulder and Daniel remembered the dream he had on the airplane coming to China. In the dream, he was giving a speech. The words came to him in Chinese as he spoke:

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. I am optimistic that we will succeed, and not suffer the fate of the dinosaurs.

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 only can 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, all men create the consciousness which leads every individual to his fulfillment.

He paused and looked out to the people, who had become very quiet.

Your 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.

The world is at a turning point. Old, tired institutions will be replaced by ones that have meaning for our time. Men and women with love and understanding for all life will lead nations. We are at the gate to a higher level of being; in our hands is the power to make this step a smooth crossing or an abrupt one.

When he finished speaking, Daniel noticed that Ato was no longer with him. 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 was the beginning of a new experience for Daniel. He would never be alone again while in China; people would always be around or near him, whether he was speaking or eating or sleeping in someone's home.

What to do next, Daniel wondered. Then he remembered the words of a poem from the *Tao Te Ching*, and he knew he should relax and let the people guide him, for they were the water:

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

Part Three

1. Prison Thoughts: Science and Christianity

Several months after Paul hit his head on a stone and went into a coma, he awoke. When he had recovered his strength, the androids took him from the hospital and put him into prison. In prison he had a lot of time to think about his life. He had long considered himself to be a seeker of truth and science to be the only field that genuinely sought truth, but now he wasn't so sure. He knew that religions were built upon beliefs and faith. Could science be built upon beliefs and faith too?

He began to wonder about the value of his scientific career. How could he get excited about scientific pursuits when the questions he had asked himself when he was young still had no satisfactory answers: Is there a God? What is reality? Is there a right or moral way to live? What is the purpose of life? What happens to us after we die?

He thought, "How did men become so involved in making money and the other things that people do that they did not bother to ask themselves these important questions?" After thinking about this for some time, Paul came to the conclusion that most people accepted answers that others gave them. Some people accepted their answers from Christianity or another religion. And some people took their answers from science, as he had done.

Christianity's answers had not been credible to him ever since his high school days. Christianity's answers came from the area of the Mediterranean Sea two thousand years ago, from a time when men believed the earth was the center of the universe and man the pinnacle of creation. He remembered something Joseph Campbell had said in his conversations with Bill Moyers about the writers of the Old Testament that seemed to apply to early Christianity too, although they probably had heard of the Chinese by then:

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.

The Christian mythology claimed that God created the heavens and the earth in six days. God then made a beautiful garden called Eden for the first man, Adam, and later made him a helper, the first woman, Eve. God told them to eat any fruit in the garden except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But a serpent tempted Adam and Eve to eat the fruit, saying they would be like God if they did. After they ate the fruit,

God banished them from Eden and told them that from that time on mankind would know pain and suffering. Many years later, God sent His Only Son, Jesus, down from heaven to die a painful death in order to reopen the gates of heaven to us. Only by worshipping this Son of God and His Father, the Christians said, could we be saved from our evil nature and the hell we deserved and allowed to live happily ever after in heaven.

What a fantastic mythology! Surely, he thought, we could come up with a better mythology today, a better answer to the important questions of life. Man has learned a lot about himself and the universe in two thousand years.

When Paul thought about the birth of modern science in Europe in the 16th century, he couldn't help thinking that it reminded him of a teenage boy rebelling against the authority of his parents. Modern science was a reaction against the repression of thought by Christianity during the Middle Ages. But he could see now that 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. Paul concluded that science had also invented an outrageous mythology. Its mythology said the physical universe created itself in all of its complexity purely by accident after a "Big Bang" billions of years ago scattered hydrogen atoms throughout space.

To condemn the world as inherently evil, as Christianity did, was a childish 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 existed; the ever changing seasons; the wonderful creativity and artistry of men and nature.

Science, on the other hand, discounted all the marvels of the world as simply the products of blind chance, a roll of the dice. Scientists, he now realized, were willing to believe crazy things in their efforts to rule out a spiritual force behind the universe. It would have been far simpler for them just to say, "There is a God and God has had a hand in the creation of the world," instead of constructing a flawed and unlikely theory like the theory of evolution. Scientists could not explain how the first life came into being, and scientists have been unable to find the missing links between men and apes and other species. Paul believed scientists accepted evolution on faith, just as Christians accepted the Bible on faith.

Science's mythology must first be rejected because it was unbelievable, but also for its failure to account for non-physical reality and the spiritual side of life. Christianity, which was invented when men were unaware of the size of the universe, must first be rejected because it chained man to a limited view of his potential. Christianity was like a pleasant fairy tale, like the story of the stork that brought babies into the world. 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 did not divide men into good and evil, saved and damned, but that taught men how to get along with each other.

The Christian holy book, The Bible, was a chronicle of the Jewish people, some of whom became the founders of Christianity. It was supposed to be 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 breathed during their conquest of the Promised Land? Just what kind of a God is 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.

To the Christians, the most important stories in the Bible were about the life of Jesus as told in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Paul believed these Gospels were not completely accurate records of his life. How else could you explain the fact that these Gospels disagree about the events in Jesus' life and depict a Christ who contradicts himself?

The great value of Christianity two thousand years ago was that it taught compassion and man's duty to others. It also offered men hope in a cold, uncaring world. Another positive aspect of Christianity was that it taught men they could have a personal relationship with a loving God. Paul thought that the movements in the world for democracy and human rights probably arose out of the teachings of Christ too.

Still, the Bible's cruelties, inconsistencies, and contradictions were disturbing, such as those already mentioned in the Book of Joshua and the Gospels. It probably would have been better, Paul thought, if Christianity had severed all ties to the Old Testament. The weaknesses of Christianity were its narrow, limiting views of reality and the soul and its focus on sin and evil. Also, Christianity taught that God would condemn man to an eternity of suffering for as little as one sin. How could a loving God do that?

Moreover, Paul felt that Christianity had been corrupted long ago. Christianity was made up of large, wealthy institutions with churches, rules, rituals, priests, and holy books. These institutions 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 non-violent 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." He 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.

Through his reading and research, Paul found that there were gospels left out of the Bible, perhaps because they had Jesus saying things the early Christian church found threatening. One example was *The Gospel According To Thomas*, which contains a passage in which Jesus responds to a question from one of the apostles about when the Kingdom of God shall come. Jesus says, "The Kingdom shall not come by expectation. The Kingdom is spread across the face of the earth, and men do not see it." A profession of priests would find such ideas dangerous because if God were already in their midst, there would be no need for the services of priests.

Paul's main problem with science was over its religious, philosophical, psychological, and economic implications. Science said that man was the product of a mindless, mechanical evolutionary process that began billions of years earlier. In this view, there was no place or need for a force outside the physical universe—a spiritual reality or God. In effect, scientists were saying that the universe created and propelled itself. This belief in a universe formed entirely by chance negatively affected the psyche of ordinary men, for they saw themselves living in a universe without meaning, in a universe that placed no value on the individual. Moreover, the theory of evolution, which says man is the product of a vicious, selfish process called natural selection or survival of the fittest, was used by capitalists to justify a brutal, every-man-for-himself economic

system.

What a wild imagination scientists had, he thought, to claim the universe was solely the result of chance, time, and elementary physical forces! Scientists criticized the beliefs of men of religion, but can any belief be more incredible than one that says the wondrously complex universe was formed without intent or design? No number of years could have produced by accident the beautiful and intricate creatures of earth. How could chance create the marvelous cooperation between species? How could chance create men of symmetry, with bodies that repaired themselves, with mental processes capable of activity far in excess of what was needed for survival? The scientists' belief in blind chance forced them to make silly statements, such as that altruism—kindness to strangers—was a misguided survival instinct.

Paul didn't believe he had the answers to his questions yet, but he felt he was on the right track. He felt in his heart that life had purposes and meanings that offered challenges and opportunities for fulfillment far more exciting than what either a belief in science or Christianity had to offer. He was beginning to see the afterlife and reincarnation as rational extensions to life: Consciousness survives death and returns to physical reality again and again until the necessary lessons are learned.

In moments of peace and quiet it was possible to experience a feeling of oneness with the world. Experiences such as these convinced Paul that something was behind the world, a universal Source. It was a puzzle, though, why this Source chose not to reveal itself openly. You would think God would have left some sort of manual, he thought. For Paul, God was the ultimate trickster: God created the universe and then left man alone to try to understand the nature of reality. Nothing could be more exciting than to attempt to unravel that mystery.

Ever since Paul had met John, he began to understand things that were not clear to him before. But more importantly, he started to ask questions he had not asked since he entered college. The process accelerated after he awoke from his coma and spent time in jail. There was no doubt that he had greatly changed. Was he a different person or had he merely become what he was always meant to be, what he had been preparing all his life to be—a soldier for truth?

2. Androids Unplugged

Two years after arresting Paul, the androids released him. A few days later he made this diary entry:

I did not feel comfortable writing about the androids while I was in prison because of their surveillance, so now I want to get these notes up to date.

Soon after my arrest, it became unsafe for the androids' alien workers to venture out on earth alone, so they stayed on the spaceship or in secure buildings most of the time. Any traveling on earth was done with armed guards.

The androids have intensified their attempts to control and monitor communication on earth. Tens of thousands of small, unmanned black blimps have been placed in the air

above populated areas. The blimps have sophisticated listening devices and cameras. Now, except in the countryside, there is virtually nowhere you can go where you cannot see one of their blimps.

Resistance fighters have tried to attack the blimps and the android spaceship itself, which was no longer suspended above New York, but was in an earth orbit. Unfortunately, the androids have some kind of a shield that no bullets or missiles can penetrate.

On the day of my release, the aliens asked the nations of the world to send representatives to a special session of the UN. They said a very important event would occur there. That was an understatement. At the meeting four days later, an android appeared before the world for the first time. It should be understood that up until that point, I was the only human to know of the androids' existence; everyone else thought the aliens from Honam were the invaders. I will quote a newspaper columnist's account here:

At nine o'clock, a robot came awkwardly, almost stumbling, out from the door behind the podium accompanied by a large black Doberman pinscher. It was a shock, for we had expected to see one of the aliens. The robot's features were pleasing to the eye, even beautiful, though. First of all, it must be understood that the robot was about two and a half meters tall and was made of some kind of blue-black metal. I don't know how to describe it any other way. I have been told that it is an alloy unknown on earth. The metal was covered by a thin glass shell, except for the head, which was apparently all glass and slightly opaque. Despite the fact that the robot's features were physically appealing, there was something disturbing about it. Perhaps it was because the robot wore a floor-length black cape and a baseball cap with the letters SF on it. Or was it because the robot's Doberman was baring its teeth, as if it wanted to bite someone? After the audience had quieted down, the robot gave the leash of the dog to an alien assistant and walked stiffly to the podium.

The audience, as you can imagine, was a bit tense at this point. But all their attention was drawn to the robot, who said:

"Take...me...to...your...leader."

Then the robot waited, as if it was expecting a response. After a long pause, the robot began talking in a clear, pleasant voice:

"That was supposed to be a joke. I will fire my speechwriter just as soon as I'm finished here."

The audience laughed more out of relief than due to the android's humor. Then the android spoke with animation and many facial expressions:

"I am the leader of the aliens you have been seeing for two years. You may call me a robot or an android, but I prefer to be called Terrak. There are nineteen others like me on the spaceship, although they are not as good-looking as I am. I am one of a kind."

“We are from the distant planet Valkar. When our planet became too hot for life in our physical bodies, we placed our brains in special glass cases. Our brains communicate with our robot bodies by something similar to radio waves. We hope to be free of these robots soon.

“You need to understand that the earth is our legendary home. Our people lived here thousands of years ago. We have come back and wish to be accepted as citizens of earth. Just as the Jews returned to Palestine to claim their ancestral home, we will do so too.”

When he stopped speaking, two other androids came out from the door behind the podium. The appearance of the other androids was not beautiful, but rather plain. Their features were not as well formed and they seemed incapable of making facial expressions. Their appearance was not menacing or frightening, but perhaps it could be said they looked a bit fierce due to their jet-black color.

Terrak said, “Music is a hobby of mine, so now I want to play a few tunes for you with my friends Newton and Kepler. We have formed a band we call The Tres Bananas Electrico.”

With Terrak on lead guitar, Newton on bass, and Kepler on vocals, they performed two songs that Terrak said were among his favorites: “Johnny B. Goode” and “Tears In Heaven.” Then, with Newton and Kepler on acoustic guitars and Terrak singing in their own language, they played a haunting melody that reminded me of Sanskrit chants. When they finished, Newton and Kepler left the stage and Terrak said:

“That last number is a well-known song on my planet about our longing for our home on earth.

“Now, let’s get back to the reason I came here: The earth is a gem, but it has many problems. If you will cooperate with us, the scientific and technological advances of our civilization will be made available to you. Under our guidance, you will be able to save the forests, oceans, lakes, rivers, and endangered species. We can reverse global warming, reduce pollution, make seawater safe for irrigation, and increase food production. Together, we can make earth a paradise again.

“We understand that your government processes are slow and that it takes time to change public opinion, so we will give you two years to accept our terms, which are that you set up a world government under our control. Two years from today, July third, we expect to have your consent.

“In order to make you understand the seriousness of our intentions, a demonstration is necessary, just as it was necessary for the United States to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But I think only one demonstration will be necessary. The demonstration will take place in Jerusalem, where a small iron 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.”

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.

It took several weeks for the authorities to evacuate the people in Jerusalem. The androids put the asteroid into an earth orbit until all the people had gotten out. But after the evacuation was completed, the asteroid, guided by two rockets, fell to earth and hit the Old City of Jerusalem. 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 force field.

The next day, aliens erected an electrified fence around the area of destruction. The following week, alien construction workers began building a city inside the fence. The androids said that the city will be called New Atlantis and will be the capital of their world government.

From the time of Paul’s arrest, John had been reassigned to work strictly from the spaceship. The androids felt he could not be trusted to interact with humans, but his knowledge and skills were too valuable to lock him up in a prison. They placed a tracking device in his teeth so that they could follow his movements.

One day, after he had been confined on the spaceship for nearly two years, John received this video email from his wife:

“Cyndi is graduating from high school next week. I sent you a picture of her in her graduation gown. She has really grown since you last saw her. She is ten centimeters taller than she was two years ago. She is now a young woman. I know you wouldn’t approve of him, but she has a boyfriend. She’s with me now because we’re shopping together. She has a message for you.”

A few moments later Cyndi’s face appeared on the screen.

“Hi, dad. I miss you. What was mom telling you about me? I bet she told you I have a boyfriend. That’s not true. We’re just friends. Dad, when are you coming home? All the kids at school ask about you. They say you must send us pictures from earth. They also want to know if humans make children like we do. Do babies come out of their mothers the same way? Did mom tell you I’m graduating next week? What are you going to get me for graduation? I love you.”

John’s sent two responses. The first was for Cyndi:

“Hi, sweetheart! It’s great to hear from you. Mom says you’ve grown up a lot in two years. I wish I could be there with you. When I get back, I want to spend a lot of time with you to make up for what I’ve missed. About your questions: The humans have the same biological systems that we do. So, yes, babies are made the same way and come out of their mothers the same. I am surprised to be answering questions like this from you. It seems like it was only yesterday that I was reading you the elf riddles and telling you the

story of the fairy princess who was born without wings. Did you think I had forgotten about your graduation? I will speak to your mother about a present for you. I love you.”

The second response was for Leia:

“Hi, love. It seems like it was only yesterday that I was reading children’s stories to her while she sat on my lap. She has grown up so fast. I’m really sorry that I have been away and missed this part of her life. But I will make it up. When I get back I won’t go anywhere. I’ll just stay home and annoy the heck out of both of you. Oh, can you find a nice necklace for her or something else she wants as a graduation gift from me?”

When John heard of Paul’s release, he decided to try to escape from the spaceship. He knew that on Mondays the daily shuttle flight to the UN was usually crowded with fifteen to twenty aliens. He thought he could probably sneak aboard unnoticed if he wore a disguise.

On the next Monday morning, he removed his tracking device with a knife. He put on a wig, a moustache, and dark glasses and walked onto the shuttle just before it took off. It was surprisingly easy for John to get on the shuttle that way. The androids were advanced technologically, but rather clumsy and haphazard with security.

John arrived in San Diego on a hot September evening. His meeting with Paul was emotional and, on John’s part, filled with guilt.

“I’m sorry I got you into this mess,” John said.

Paul replied, “I know you didn’t volunteer the information easily. Besides, I know this has all happened for a reason.”

“Thank you for forgiving me.”

“Now tell me about the androids. What have you learned about their plans since I last saw you?” Paul asked.

“The news is not good,” John replied.

“Well, let’s have dinner and afterwards you can frighten me. I can warm up some of my famous lasagna,” Paul joked.

“I hope it’s not leftover from the lasagna we ate two years ago.”

“I threw that out last week and made a new casserole.”

While they were eating, Paul said, “I’ve been wondering what Valkar is like and why they have to leave it.”

John replied, “Their sun is a red giant. Every day their sun grows larger. As it grows, their planet’s surface temperature rises. But even before this, their planet, which is about the size of Mars, was hot and dry and with very little plant life.

“I have to tell you this story. After their spaceship arrived on earth and traveled over Asia and Europe and was crossing the Atlantic Ocean, Terrak said to me: ‘Now I know why our ancestors called this planet paradise. It is so green and has so much water. No one needs to be hungry here.’ When I told him that millions of people starve to death each year, he said, ‘I know. Humans need us to show them how to organize things.’ Terrak next told me about his plans for the earth.”

“What plans?”

“Terrak believes that with a world government, the proper laws and enforcement, poverty, hunger, disease, war, injustice, and discrimination can be eliminated. He said

factories could be automated to produce all the goods people needed. Then there would be no more reason for fighting and wars. I told him it isn't that easy; you can't make people act reasonably."

"Why didn't they just go to another planet to live, instead of placing their minds inside robots?"

"At the time they began to replace their bodies with robots, they didn't have their interstellar drive and there were no inhabitable planets within the range of their conventional rockets. Besides, how do you move five hundred million people through space?"

"John, you never told me about the government on your planet."

"We have no government. Our society is anarchist."

"No! Really? How does it work?"

"First of all, we had to go through a phase like you have on earth now with governments and laws and power concentrated in the hands of a few. We learned from that experience that government officials can't help but be corrupted by their power. Remember when we talked about the arrogance of power a couple of years ago?"

Paul said, "Yes. I've come to some conclusions since then. Even though I don't like to talk about politics, politics is a fact of life. I think it would be good if we could minimize politics in government. Politicians often line their pockets and the pockets of their families and friends with money from government contracts and sweetheart deals. They accept campaign contributions from corporations and the wealthy and then say they are not influenced by the money, although I think that's impossible. Only a saint would not be influenced by thousands of dollars handed to him. I think there is little difference between a campaign contribution and a bribe, unless the contribution is a very small amount. And when they retire from politics, corporations pay them huge sums of money to use their connections to lobby congressmen and government officials. Probably the worst thing about politicians is that they manufacture enemies and start wars to keep themselves in power, for they know if they can scare enough people, they can get reelected."

John responded, "Most people with power are constantly thinking of two things: how to maintain their power and how to expand their power. You cannot trust them to be honest when their power is at stake. On Honam, we've learned that the best way to prevent politicians from abusing power is to decentralize government. Through a series of experiments, we have reduced government to its present form—no government. We don't hand our leaders a lot of power like humans do and then hope for the best. Everything that needs to be done on Honam is accomplished by voluntary associations. What doesn't get done doesn't need to be done. And our leaders are leaders because of their wisdom and skill in working with people, not because of their wealth, popularity or family ties."

"So when the androids came, you had no army to protect yourselves."

"Yes, that may be a flaw in our system. It is something our best minds are working on right now."

"Explain to me how the androids were once men."

"The androids told me that they once had bodies like you or me. But when Valkar started getting hotter due to the expansion of their sun about a century ago, they began removing their brains from their bodies and letting the bodies die. The brains were placed in specially sealed and protected glass containers and were fed a nutrient solution to keep

them alive. Later, they developed the technology that allowed them to see and feel and talk and move through robots.”

“That reminds me of a *Star Trek* episode,” Paul said. “I understand that their brains communicate with the robots using radio waves, but what about when they are far away from the spaceship, like when Terrak spoke at the UN?”

“They use satellites to relay the signals between the robots and the brains if they are out of range of their own transmitters.”

“They would be susceptible to interference then.”

“Yes, but the androids’ signal is hard to jam.”

“Well, it’s something the resistance should look into.”

“Is it better to have these androids under control of their brains or out of communication with them? It may mean we will have androids running amuck.”

“I see what you mean.”

John said, “I heard a funny story from the androids. I don’t know if it’s true: When Neil Armstrong first walked on the moon he made that famous statement...Paul, help me out here.”

“‘One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.’ Armstrong meant to say, ‘One small step for *a* man, one giant leap for mankind.’”

“That little ‘a’ makes a big difference. Anyway, Neil Armstrong also said something that nobody understood. As he was getting back in the lunar lander before taking off, he said, ‘Good luck, Mrs. Gorky.’”

“I never heard about that.”

“Anyway, it was not until many years later that Armstrong explained who Mrs. Gorky was. One day when Armstrong was a boy, he was playing baseball in his backyard and the ball went over the fence into the Gorky’s yard. Armstrong went after the ball and when he was in the Gorky’s yard, he heard a voice say, ‘Dishwasher! So now you want a dishwasher! You’ll get a dishwasher when that boy next door walks on the moon!’”

“John, the androids were pulling your leg! Neil Armstrong never said that.”

After dinner they retired to the living room. John sat near the fireplace in an armchair and Paul sat on the sofa.

“I’m very worried,” John said. “I’ve learned the androids not only want to colonize the earth, they have plans to use genetic engineering to alter the human species to be more fit to serve them.”

“You must be kidding.”

“I wish I were. There will be laborers, big and strong and not too smart. There will be office workers, with long fingers and good eyesight for sitting at computers all day. There will be cooks and police and farmers and soldiers, all genetically 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 1984. Do you know the aliens probably put a tracking device on you? Did you have any dental work done in prison?”

“I had a cavity filled.”

“Open your mouth.”

Paul stood up and opened his mouth. John took the flashlight from the fireplace and looked at his fillings. He said, “Yes, you have a tracking device. They know exactly

where you are at all times.”

Paul’s reaction was one of disgust and then anger. He went to the kitchen and got a knife and took it to the bathroom. Then he removed the filling from the tooth the dentist had worked on when he was in prison. On the bottom side of the filling was a hard plastic-like device not much larger than a grain of sand. Paul placed it on the counter above the sink.

He was overwhelmed with a feeling of freedom, as if he had just escaped the sight of some malicious person. No longer was he under the watchful eye of the androids’ secret police, he thought, who could have followed him wherever he went.

When Paul came back to the living room, John said, “There is something else I need to tell you. Just before I escaped the spaceship, I heard some androids talking about something very frightening. They’ve begun working on a way to implant their minds into human children so they can have a physical body again. Since I’m a persona non grata to the androids now, I’m not in the loop of information anymore, but I think this is in the very early stages.”

“That’s horrible. Let’s hope it doesn’t get beyond the early stages.”

Paul’s sense of freedom was very short-lived. The next morning the secret police came to Paul’s house in their black vests, slacks and shoes and white shirts and socks. Paul was arrested and taken to a special prison and John was placed aboard a shuttle flight that took him back to the android spaceship.

3. Terrak’s Dream

A few days later, Terrak lay in bed after he had awakened. Unlike the unpleasant, recurring dreams of himself as a dolphin, this dream of being human had been too real and too pleasant to want to forget it quickly. Again he saw her in his mind’s eye: A tall, slender, dark-haired woman. In the dream, her every move was graceful and delightful to him. He knew that feeling must be love. But how could he love a woman in a dream? Anyway, love was unproductive. It only led to distractions and laziness and children.

Then he remembered more: He was making love to her! How decadent, how human, but how pleasurable! Afterwards they had a conversation. About plans for a family and children. At the end of the conversation she said, “I love you, Osiris.” And he said, “I will always love you, Isis.” And still he felt fascinated with her. That must really be love, he thought. Well, no need to be ridiculed. He wouldn’t tell anyone the details of this dream.

Terrak fell asleep and dreamed of Isis again. He awoke this time with a terrifying memory. He saw himself being separated from her in an earthquake and then drowning, alone. Oh, horrid water! Must happy dreams involve water too!

He got up and called his chief aide, Avon, a blond-haired worker from Honam.

When Avon arrived, Terrak said, “I had a dream last night.”

“About the dolphins again? And you hate water. How strange, sir.”

“No, it was about a woman. Have you ever been in love?”

“Yes. Many times.”

“It is irrational, isn’t it?”

“No. It is beautiful.”

“Well, it was pleasant.”

“What was pleasant, sir?”

“Oh, nothing. What’s on the agenda for today?”

“You’re going to visit the research facility this morning and have lunch with the staff.”

“So they can watch me eat?”

“It was your idea, sir.”

“So it was. When you are as old as I am, you forget some things. Tell them we will meet after lunch. Don’t they have a staff meeting this afternoon?”

“Yes.”

“Then we will attend the staff meeting. Before we go down to earth, I want to visit the Brain Room.”

“OK. By the way, how old are you sir?”

“Old enough to know better than to answer that question.”

“Sir, I think you should read this article, “UN General Assembly Rejects Resolution On Cooperation With Androids,” Avon said as he clicked on *The New York Times* bookmark on Terrak’s computer.

“They’re still resisting us, aren’t they?”

“I think so, sir.”

“Humans are so stubborn. Would they rather have peace and prosperity or continue doing the same things to each other?”

“It looks like they prefer war and chaos, sir.”

“And poverty and hunger and environmental destruction. Oh, well. If we have to use force with them, we will.”

Terrak looked at the very thin, square cardboard boxes in Avon’s hand and asked, “What are those?”

“I bought three old blues albums on my trip down to earth yesterday. I even found a Robert Johnson album with ‘Crossroads.’”

“Excellent. Did you also get me a, what do they call it?”

“A record player. Yes, I did.”

“Then I’ll listen to the albums tonight. Humans are such good musicians.”

“There’s something else.”

Avon went outside the door to the room and came back a few seconds later. He held something behind his back.

“You’re full of surprises. It isn’t my birthday, is it?”

“I also bought you a Fender Stratocaster,” Avon said as he presented Terrak with a shiny, red electric guitar.

Terrak took the guitar from Avon and held it in his hands and admired it.

“Fantastic. I’ve wanted one ever since I saw the documentary of Jimi Hendrix setting his on fire.”

In the Brain Room were twenty bulletproof glass cases with the brains of the androids. There were several alien attendants in the room at all times to watch the environmental gauges and the nutrient feeding mechanisms. Terrak’s brain was in the center of the room and was under the constant care of one attendant. The room itself was continuously monitored by cameras.

When Terrak entered the Brain Room, he asked one of the attendants, “Have you

practiced the relocation procedure recently? I don't want anything to go wrong when we start moving our brains down to earth."

"Yes, sir. We practiced the procedure yesterday morning. When will you be trying an implant, sir?"

"That is what I am going to find out today."

The attendant said, "Implanting an adult's mind into a child's body has never been done anywhere else in the galaxy as far as we can tell, sir. It will be a monumental achievement. You will go down in history."

"It will be nice to have a real body again. It has been a long time since I tasted food or felt a cool breeze on a hot day or knew the exhilaration of physical activity."

At 10 a.m., Terrak, his dog, Avon, and several android scientists left on a shuttle for the flight to the research facility in the Southern California desert. The shuttle landed in a fenced in clearing among scrub brush, the typical vegetation of the area.

At the staff meeting, one of the androids, Dr. Darwin, along with a human scientist named Lear, were set to present the results of the research on genetically engineering humans.

Dr. Darwin spoke first: "First of all, I would like to welcome Terrak to our staff meeting. I hope he will enjoy the presentations."

"I hope you can tell me you have made progress, Dr. Darwin."

"Yes, we have. I would like to introduce you to Dr. Lear, the leader of the human team. His people have identified all the genes that will be replaced in the first batch."

"I am pleased to meet you, Terrak. Let me say that it has been extremely interesting for me to work with..."

"I'm not interested in the human genome research," Terrak said impatiently. "I want to know how the research on the mind implants is going."

"Well, we've had a minor setback," Dr. Darwin said.

"How minor?"

"The host dog died."

"Then use more dogs. I want this to be ready soon for a test on one of us."

"That would be very dangerous."

"Then I expect you to make it less dangerous very quickly, gentlemen."

Terrak got up to go. "Show me the implant project," he said.

Dr. Darwin said to Dr. Lear, "Take Terrak to see the implant technology and also the nurseries."

Dr. Lear left the room and escorted Terrak, who was followed by his Doberman pinscher and Avon, to where the implant experimentation was taking place. On the way, they passed through the area where the dogs for the tests were kept. It was rather dirty and smelly.

Terrak felt sympathy for the dogs in the cages and he said to Dr. Lear, "This is unacceptable. Clean this place up and be sure the dogs get plenty of exercise. In fact, build an area for them to exercise on the roof."

In the room where the actual implants were to take place, there were two chairs, each connected by a multitude of wires and cables to a supercomputer. Two technicians were at work on the devices as they entered the room.

Terrak said, "These chairs are not very appealing. They remind me of the electric chairs humans use to kill people."

Dr. Lear said, "I assure you, the subjects will feel no pain."

"They'd better not," Terrak said.

As Terrak spoke, there was an explosion and smoke and a small fire on one of the chairs.

"Of course," Dr. Lear said, "there is still a lot of work to be done."

"I will look at the nurseries now," Terrak said, shaking his head.

The nurseries were where the children would be kept before and after they received the implants. There were four nurseries in all. There was one for infant boys, one for older boys, one for infant girls, and one for older girls. All the nurseries were built around a central area that was meant to be a dream play world for children. There were machines with video games: fighting and adventure for the boys, family dramas and adventure for the girls. There were areas for intellectual games like chess, go and other board games. There were playgrounds for basketball, tennis, gymnastics and many other sports. There was a room with the most advanced computers for the children to use for learning and research. Another room had virtual reality machines for older children.

After showing Terrak the nurseries, Dr. Lear said, "Our budget has run short of funds. We're hoping you'll give us the money to build a swimming pool on the roof."

Terrak asked, "Why would they want to learn to swim?"

Dr. Lear looked at Avon and Avon covered his mouth with his hands like the speak-no-evil-monkey.

"Let's go back to the ship," Terrak said.

Terrak called a meeting of the androids the day after he returned from earth. It was held in the large hall in the hold of the ship. At the back of the hall were twenty desks, one for each of the androids. Also attending the meeting was Azir.

Terrak spoke first: "It has come to my attention that some of you are not happy with the way I'm doing things. I want to get this out in the open; I don't want any conspiracies behind my back. After we finish the discussion, I want to have a vote. You can replace me if you want. That is your right."

Newton said, "Terrak, this is not meant as an insult, but I think you are too kind to the humans. I think we need to put the fear of God into them."

Many of the androids burst into laughter at that remark. Terrak said, "I didn't know you had studied the Christian Bible, Newton."

"I've read parts of the Old Testament. Humans have got to learn we are here for their own good. Without us, they would be stuck with the 'holier than thou' 24 civilizations. That would not be fun. There would be no more armies marching to conquer new worlds and no more heroes and adventure. Just a lot of that 'God is within you' nonsense, yin over yang, and women making important decisions. I think I would die of boredom."

"Or envy," another android said, drawing laughter from the others.

Terrak turned to Azir: "What do you recommend?"

"I think Terrak is pushing them at the right pace. The men of earth are stubborn, independent people," he said.

An android who was larger than the others and who appeared to be wearing a military uniform spoke: "I am getting too old to wait much longer. My brain's functions are not what they used to be. I need a real body soon. We should get more earthling scientists involved in the implant experimentation to speed things up."

Terrak said, "I understand your concern. I am tired of this shell of a body too. But we must make sure we don't cause a full-scale rebellion by moving too fast. In case you've forgotten, let me remind you of our experience ten years ago on that planet not far from Honam. Putting down that uprising was very messy. I don't want that to happen again."

Dr. Darwin said, "We can't always be so lucky as to find planets as easy to rule as Honam. Let's make an example out of a few more of their cities. And then we should stage some gladiator shows like their ancient Romans did. It will be survival of the fittest in its purest form."

Terrak said impatiently, "I just said we already had a bad experience with raw force. What we did in Jerusalem was enough to let them know we mean business. And we don't need any TV spectacles. We're not entertainers."

Another android whose nameplate said he was Kepler, Secretary for Planetary Affairs, spoke: "I know that I speak for many of us when I say the mind implants are crucial. We are all nearing the end of the useful lives of our brains. Death is an unspeakable horror and we must not allow it to happen. I recommend that we give Terrak two more years, like he gave the humans. If he has not succeeded in that time, then I will personally lead a revolt against him."

Terrak said, "That is fair enough. Anyone disagree?"

No one answered.

"Then this meeting is adjourned," Terrak said.

[4. A New Mythology](#)

Ato appeared to Paul soon after he was returned to prison. Paul said, "I remember you from my dreams. I saw you with a man named Daniel and a woman named Ani."

"Did you figure out who Daniel is?" Ato asked.

"I think he is me, in another lifetime."

"Right you are. You he is," Ato replied with a chuckle.

Then he said, "Seriously, this is not going to be like China is for Daniel. Prepare to be despised. But don't give up, for you will be laying the foundation for a new age."

"What are you talking about?"

"The old mythologies don't work anymore. Your job is to clear the way for a new mythology. Greater men and women will follow. So first, out with the old."

Paul said, "Did I choose this mission?"

Ato answered, "You know you did."

"I don't even have things figured out in my head. I have a list of questions I need answered." He showed Ato the questions from his first prison experience.

"You are close to the answers already. I suggest you begin reading the books of Jane Roberts."

"Can you at least tell me what the purpose of life is?"

"The purpose of life," Ato said, "is life. No one needs to justify their existence to anyone. You are alive because God wants to experience life in as many ways as possible."

"One more question." Pointing to the camera, Paul asked, "Can they see you?"

"No, and they can't hear me either. The androids probably think you're going crazy, talking to yourself like this," Ato said.

After Ato left, Paul sat down and wrote, “The answer to the first question—‘Is there a God?’—is fairly straightforward: Yes. How else could you explain the marvelous beauty and complexity of the universe? There had to be a plan and a Planner and a source of the great energy behind the universe. It was ridiculous to imagine that the universe came about by chance.

“One could ask, ‘If God is the creator of the universe, then where did God come from?’ Or if, as Seth said, God may have had a predecessor, the question could be asked, ‘Where did the predecessor come from?’ If I say God or the predecessor had no beginning, we have reached an impasse because our reason tells us that everything must have a beginning.

“The answer to this dilemma is that when we ask questions about the nature of God, these questions will have no satisfactory answers because the complete answers lie beyond our comprehension. We, these tiny creatures on a small planet in the corner of an obscure galaxy in a universe of billions of galaxies, are incapable of understanding the ultimate mysteries of God and the universe. Our minds, designed to know time as linear—as proceeding from the past to the future—and events as having prior causes and to know space as three-dimensional, are not at a level yet to conceptualize the answer to the question of where God came from. The ultimate answer must violate what our rational minds ‘know’ are facts.”

On his next visit, Ato said to Paul, returning to a topic he had mentioned to Daniel and Ani in China: “The world that you know, the world that man knows, is not the only world. I’m not talking about life on other planets at all. Maybe I should start over: The universe that man knows is not the only universe.

“There are other universes, other realities, which exist all around you right now. The reason you don’t perceive them is that you have tuned them out. While you could see and respond to other realities as a child, your parents did not any longer tune into them. You then learned to ignore the other data and to see the world as your parents saw it.

“Carlos Castaneda, in his books about Don Juan, explored this truth more than anyone else. Don Juan said that man, to someone who sees, is a luminous cocoon made up of filaments of light. By placing our awareness on certain filaments of light we align with filaments outside the cocoon and perceive this reality. He called the position of alignment the assemblage point. We have all learned to place our awareness on the same filaments of light to perceive the same reality. Don Juan taught Carlos to shift his awareness to other filaments so that he could experience other realities. That was how he was able to take Carlos on adventures—by shifting awareness. And that is how I was able to walk through walls with Daniel. I shifted my awareness to a reality where the walls did not exist.”

Paul said, “I read in Castaneda’s *The Fire From Within* that we can move the assemblage point by stopping the internal dialogue or even through hunger or fatigue or illness.”

“And power plants. Don’t forget that natural products of the earth can also do it. But the main way humans experience other realities is through dreams.”

“Isn’t death a door to other realities?”

“Yes, but for ordinary humans, death is a one-way door.”

“Do you know that some people think Castaneda made Don Juan up?”

“Don’t say that!” Ato exclaimed. “Don Juan is one of my heroes.”

Paul said, “I read Castaneda’s books when I was in prison the first time. I loved the books because they helped me think about the mystery of life. The books reminded me that we are concentrating on only a tiny portion of reality.”

Ato looked at Paul for a moment and then said, “I have an idea. Let’s make this lesson more practical. Lie down on your bed and then take my hand.”

Paul did as he was told and in an instant he found himself flying through space alongside Ato. He looked at Ato, wondering if he could speak, and he heard in his head Ato’s voice say, “We can hear each other’s thoughts.”

“Then this is like when I talked to dolphins. But is this real?”

“Yes, it is. Look at the moon, how big it is. I’ve always wanted to play on the moon.”

“Me too,” Paul said.

They flew towards the moon, which was nearly in its first quarter, and landed a few meters from the terminator, the edge between night and day, on the light side.

“Watch this,” Ato said, and he ran toward the terminator. As he crossed it, he disappeared from Paul’s view.

“That’s great. But where are you?” Paul asked.

“I’m right here.”

“I can hear you, but I can’t see you...”

The terminator was moving so fast that in a few seconds Ato was in view again.

“There you are.”

“Watch me,” Ato said, and he ran toward Paul and jumped at least five meters into the air. As he was slowly falling, he turned upside down and a basketball appeared in his hands. A backboard and basket appeared at the same time and Ato made a slam dunk upside down.

Together, they played with the basketball for a few minutes, making moves that would be unbelievable on earth. After they had joked with each other for a few moments about their basketball skills, they held hands and danced around in a circle until they started laughing and fell to the ground and rested. Then Paul saw that Ato had a football in his hands. Ato said, “I’m going to kick a two hundred yard field goal. Will you be my holder?”

Paul asked, “Where are the goalposts?”

Ato pointed behind Paul and said, “Over there.”

Paul turned in the direction Ato had pointed and saw goalposts far away. He said to Ato, “First, we must set the scene. The radio announcer says, ‘There are three seconds left on the clock. A look at the scoreboard reveals that the home team is down by two points. The ageless Ato has just trotted onto the field. Ato has never tried a kick from this distance in a game. If he makes this, the fans will go nuts. If he misses, well, I don’t want to think about that right now.’”

Paul changed his voice back to normal and said, “There is a commercial break now while a beer company pushes its new light beer that has no calories. Then a razor company attempts to sell its new razor that never wears out. When the commercials are over, the announcer says, ‘We’re baaack. After the timeout by the visitors to give Ato a minute to think about his plunging stock portfolio, I mean the fact that the whole season rests on this kick, we are ready. The fans are all standing. Their rally caps are on and their

fingers are crossed. Here's the snap. I can't bear to look. You talk Fred.'"

Paul placed the ball on the soft soil and held it upright with his index finger. Ato backed up a couple of steps and then ran forward and kicked the ball. They both stood and watched its flight as it soared into the distance. The ball looked like it was going to go right between the goalposts until the last moment, when it veered to the left and hit the upright.

Paul continued, "Fred says, 'Oh, no! It hit the upright! I can feel the fans' pain all the way up here in the press box.'"

Ato said, "I don't understand. I make that kick ninety-nine times out of a hundred in practice. There must have been a gust of wind at the last second." He hung his head and started to walk away. Then he laughed and grabbed Paul's hand and they took off again. This time they flew faster, past the planet Mars, through the asteroid belt and past Jupiter, which was massive and breathtakingly beautiful. They stopped at the rings of Saturn for a moment to take pictures with an imaginary camera. Then they made a turn around the planet and accelerated again and flew past stars and clusters. Finally, they slowed down and came to a planet similar to earth.

Ato said, "This is John's planet. Let's visit his family. They zoomed down to a village and came to a stop on the ground in front of a home with a thatched roof. Ato knocked on the door.

John's wife Leia opened the door. Ato said to her, "Hello. I'm Ato and with me is Paul, a friend of your husband."

Leia said, "Hi, Paul! Where is John?"

"He's back on earth," Ato answered. "You see, we didn't come here in a spaceship. To you, this is a dream, but for us, this is an out-of-body experience. Now we'll be on our way. It was nice to meet you."

"I hope we'll meet again," she said.

Paul said, "Bye," and waved as he and Ato flew into the air. They hovered above the planet while they had this conversation:

"Who is your favorite artist?" Ato asked.

"Van Gogh."

"Why?"

"Because when I look at his landscapes, I feel like I am right there, like I could step into the canvas. Plus, I have always felt that I could have lived his life."

"As a Taoist," Ato said, "I love his paintings of the outdoors, especially from the Arles period. He really brings out the beauty of nature and the peace you feel when you're in it."

In the next instant, Ato and Paul were standing near a wheat field. A few meters away was a man sitting in front of a canvas, painting. Ato whispered to Paul, "We are in Auvers-sur-Oise, France. The year is 1890."

"Excusez-moi," Ato said as he walked up to the man.

The man answered, "Oh! You startled me. I was concentrating on my painting and I didn't hear you coming. You can speak English if you like. I lived in England for a few years when I was young."

"I'm sorry to bother you. Do you mind if we look at your painting?"

"No. It's OK."

Ato said, "My friend and I are lovers of art."

Ato and Paul looked over the canvas, which showed a wheat field with several paths leading nowhere and crows flying away from or toward the viewer—it was hard to tell.

Ato said, “I love the intensity of your colors. I feel power and loneliness when I look at this painting.”

Paul added, “And extreme sadness.”

Ato said, “We won’t bother you anymore, sir. I hope your recovery from your illness continues.”

“How did you know? You must have talked to Dr. Gachet.”

“Someday you will be famous, Mr. Van Gogh.”

“I hope so.”

As they were walking away, Paul whispered, “That was one of his last paintings before he died.”

Ato said, “You can say it.”

“OK, before his suicide.”

Ato said, “I can see that you two share the same passion for excellence and the same honesty of expression. Before you get a big head, let’s look at your lifetime before this one.”

They were instantly transported to the entrance to a coal mine in Belgium in the first half of the nineteenth century. A whistle blew, and dirty, tired-looking men began coming out of the mine.

Ato said, “That’s your father. The man with the torn tweed jacket. You’re over there.”

Paul looked where Ato was pointing and saw a small mountain of slag. Boys and girls were on the mountain, picking through it for pieces of coal that could be used for cooking and heating. A boy came down from the mountain and ran to the man Ato had pointed out. They walked together, hand in hand, to a shack a hundred meters from the coal mine. A woman and a little girl greeted them warmly at the door.

Ato said, “This family will be visited by a tragedy in another year when a smallpox epidemic sweeps through the village. You, the boy, will die followed by the mother. Now let’s return to Van Gogh.”

They again found themselves near shacks outside a coal mine.

Paul said, “This looks like the same village.”

“It is. But now it’s the future, and Van Gogh is preaching to the villagers. He is a Protestant minister. This is before he turned to painting.” In the distance they could see a man talking to a small group of miners and their families.

Paul said, “I know about this. A few months later he was 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. He took Christ’s words literally.”

“OK, that’s enough for now. Let’s go back.”

In the next instant, Paul felt someone shaking him. He opened his eyes and found himself lying on his bed in the prison cell. Ato was standing next to him. Ato said, “In the new age, men will be able to see their past lives as we saw yours.”

Ato’s image slowly faded from view, but not before he said jokingly, “For your homework, write an essay on the nature of reality, due at my next visit.”

Paul’s time in prison went rather quickly because he kept himself busy by reading

and writing. He also received many visits from Ato. Ato helped him organize his ideas and beliefs into a philosophy that he could present to the world.

One day, Paul was thinking about man's cruelty and selfishness and wondering if there was hope for the human race. Then he remembered a story Joseph Campbell had told Bill Moyers in *The Power Of Myth* PBS series: In Hawaii there is a mountain peak where people go to commit suicide. One day, two police officers were driving by the peak when they saw a young man 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 young man were about to go over the cliff when the second officer arrived to pull them both to safety. Later, when asked why he had not let go of the young man in order to save his own life, the 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 that a metaphysical realization had broken through for the police officer in that moment. Quoting the philosopher Schopenhauer, he said the police officer had realized that he and the other man were one.

Paul also thought of how helpful people can be to strangers during disasters. He wondered if they had made the same realization. This realization, Paul thought, was one that we all needed to make in order to end the cruelty and selfishness in the world.

In a moment of inspiration, Paul came to the conclusion that mankind was in need of a spiritual transformation. The political and economic power in the world was currently in the hands of men who believed the world was given to them to use as they pleased. Such a belief meant that it was not a crime to slaughter other species, to use the resources of the world without regard for the future needs of men, to hoard mountains of wealth while others starved, and, in general, to treat the rest of the world as a thing without feelings and rights of its own. What was needed was a movement that recognized the sacredness of all life on earth and the holiness of the planet herself. This movement would have to recognize that man is only one of the many important creatures on earth. Killing of any life in this philosophy would only be moral when necessary to sustain life.

One night Ato came to Paul and said, "It is time for your final lesson. It is time to teach you about guarding the One."

Paul responded, "Teach."

"The One is the Tao, the essence of God that lies within us all. Some have said that the One can only be truly realized when a man clears his mind of passions and desires. Indeed, that was what I believed when I left the world riding on a dragon. My time in the other world has been a learning experience for me. We never stop learning, unless we choose to.

"I have learned in the other world that clearing your mind of passions and desires is not necessary to realize the One. What is necessary is only that you understand that the One is within the world and then act out of that knowledge. If you guard the One, you are safe from all dangers, for nothing bad can happen to a man who knows he has no boundaries. The understanding that the One is within the world will change the way you relate to it. With such knowledge, all things are holy objects. You cannot mindlessly even crush a spider once you have that realization."

Paul said, "That's big stuff."

Ato said, "That's right."

"Joseph Campbell said the American Indians saw all life as a 'thou,' an object of reverence. He said in wartime the problem for the newspapers was to turn the enemy into

an ‘it.’”

Ato repeated, “That’s right.”

Paul looked at Ato for a moment, his eyes widened and then he said, “We’re going to win, aren’t we?”

Ato looked to his right and to his left and then put his index finger to his lips and whispered, “Shh! It’s a secret.” He laughed and then said, “I’m kidding. I think you’re right, but only if you respect your opponents. And it will take time, patience, and dedication.”

Paul asked, “What is heaven like?”

“I’ve visited seven heavens, including the Christian one. For me, the Christian heaven is a boring place. I can’t sit around playing a harp and singing and smiling for very long before I want to do something. The heaven I spend my time in is far more interesting because it is challenging. In the dimension or heaven where I spend most of my time, my thoughts are immediately translated into environments and events. I am free to explore my thoughts in all of their ramifications, or at least to the level of my understanding. And I can construct any environment I want to live in or visit. But anyone in the afterlife can do this. If you have always wanted to know what it is like to walk the streets of ancient Athens, you can. Or if you would like to live in a city from the future, you can. Of course, whatever you create is your hallucination. Others can join you in your hallucination. There are mass hallucinations too—the Christian heaven is one of the best-known examples. I am not running down hallucinations; everything is a kind of hallucination to those outside of it, including your life on earth now.

“People who have died suddenly are met by guides who help them make the transition to the afterlife. If you expected to go to hell after you died, you may find yourself in a self-created hell for a while. It usually doesn’t take very long to figure out that you are in a hell of your own making. Teachers are always available to help you.

“In the afterlife, you can imagine a scene from your past and it will appear. You can change it if you choose. But you can do this now too. While you are in the dimension between lives, you will meet people you’ve known in past lives and plan your next life. And if you’re ready for this knowledge, you can view your future lives, for all time is really simultaneous.”

“Some people say there is a special punishment for suicide. Is that true?” Paul asked.

“No. All deaths are in a way suicides because we plan our deaths.”

Ato paused and then said, “We all have much to learn about the power of our thoughts and beliefs and about the nature of reality, which is far more complex than you or I can understand or even imagine now. Now back to your situation: Some men will hurl insults. You must be able to see the One in them too; otherwise you will become involved in their anger. Above all, don’t demonize those who disagree with you. They have good intent, misguided though it may be. You should be above anger and hatred, riding on a cloud of love and peace, seeing harmony in discord, hope in despair, and the One in All.”

“That’s not easy to do,” Paul said.

Part Two, Final Act

5. Ani Returns

A few weeks after the speech in the marketplace, Daniel sent for Ani. He had not seen her or talked to her in over a year. He told her before they parted that he would contact her when it was safe for her to be with him. Until then, he said, they should not communicate.

Ani arrived on the train one rainy afternoon in August. She had cut her hair. She was more mature and self-confident, but she could not hide her nervousness. She was worried that Daniel did not love her anymore or that he had found another girlfriend.

When she saw Daniel she ran to him, but stopped short of falling into his arms. Then she burst into tears. Daniel took her into his arms, hugged her, and began to cry too.

"I missed you so much. I didn't know how much I loved you until you were gone," he said.

Ani could not talk; she was overwhelmed with emotion. After a long embrace she finally said, "I never want to be away from you again."

"I'll take you with me wherever I go from now on," Daniel promised. "I want to give you this," he said, and he slipped a ring onto her finger. "Will you marry me?"

"Yes," she said. "I was afraid you would never ask."

In a simple ceremony the following week, Daniel and Ani were married.

For their honeymoon, they took a short trip to Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, a city Daniel had always wanted to visit. They were just typical couples in love there, holding hands in public and spending a lot of time in their hotel room. One night just before the honeymoon ended, Daniel surprised Ani by saying, "Let's have a baby. I want a girl. What do you want?"

"I just want a healthy baby that doesn't have your big nose," she joked.

After their trip to Lhasa, they went to Ani's hometown and visited her family. Ato appeared to them one day when they were alone and said, "I'm sorry I missed your wedding. Where did you go on your honeymoon?"

Ani said, "We went to Tibet. I wanted to go to Egypt, but I don't have a passport and we were afraid the Chinese government would not let Daniel back in."

Ato said, "You don't need a passport. I can bring you there. Take my hands."

They did as they were told and instantly found themselves standing in front of the Great Pyramid. Three camels and a guide were waiting for them. They got on the camels and spent several hours exploring the site. They had a lot of fun, although it was very hot in the desert. Their only problem was paying the guide: They only had a little Chinese money with them. But Ato found a twenty dollar bill on the ground just before the guide took Daniel's tennis shoes for payment.

Ato had them back in Ani's parents' house in time for dinner. Before disappearing, he said to Ani, "You need to get a passport and visa for your next foreign trip."

After he had gone, Ani asked Daniel, "Visa for what country?"

"America, of course. You married me for the green card, didn't you?" Daniel ducked just in time to avoid being hit by the book thrown at his head.

These were not quiet times in China. Despite the Communist Party's progress in

raising the standard of living and attacking corruption, the people were not satisfied. The mood of the people could be gauged by the many petitioners in Beijing who were sometimes beaten by the police, but still persisted in trying to present their grievances: Factory workers who had been disabled on the job wanted compensation and punishment for the owners and local officials who had been responsible for the unsafe conditions. Some workers complained they had not been paid or had been cheated by their bosses. Some villagers claimed they had not been fairly compensated for homes flooded in dam projects. Other people said their land had been seized by local authorities and sold to developers. The relatives of some peasants who had died under suspicious circumstances wanted investigations, but local officials had refused to cooperate. And there was an old woman whose son had been killed at Tiananmen Square in 1989 who demanded justice. This was just a sampling of the grievances; never before in Chinese history were there so many petitioners in Beijing determined to be heard.

Daniel set up headquarters in Guangzhou, a center of discontent throughout Chinese history. The people of this city, formerly known as Canton, were far away from the center of power in Beijing and were the most independent of the Chinese. Here is where Sun Yat-Sen, the first great Chinese democrat, began his struggle to overthrow the Ching dynasty. Now the ruler of China was the Communist Party. The Communists had become like a dynasty, and like every other dynasty in Chinese history, they had become corrupted by their power.

Daniel spoke at a protest rally in Yuexiu Park between the Sun Yat-Sen Monument and Memorial Hall. This is part of Daniel's speech, which was translated into Mandarin Chinese by Ani:

Two thousand five hundred years ago a man named Confucius lived in China. He taught that a good society was based on good relations between parent and child and between ruler and subject. But the duty to obey was not absolute. He said:

"In serving his parents (a son) may argue with them, but gently; when he sees that they are not inclined to follow (his advice), he shows an increased degree of reverence, but does not abandon (his purpose)...When the command is wrong, a son should resist his father, and a minister should resist his August Master."

One of Confucius' followers, a man named Mencius, expanded on Confucius' ideas. He said a ruler only has the right to rule as long as he is good and just. When the ruler is cruel and does not care about the welfare of his people, he loses the support of Heaven. It is then the right of the people to overthrow him. Mencius wrote, "Heaven sees with the eyes of its people. Heaven hears with the ears of its people."

What do the eyes and ears of the Chinese people know? They know that peasants suffer under the heavy taxes and arbitrary justice of local officials. They know that many people are without good jobs and many people cannot afford health care. They know that Party officials have gotten rich from bribes and kickbacks and from sponsoring or tolerating other forms of corruption. They know that once Party leaders lived like the people; when the people were poor, they were poor too.

The Chinese government today believes only it can grant rights to the people, as if rights were the property of the state. China needs a system of government that understands people are born with rights that no one can take away. China needs a system of government where officials can be held accountable for their actions. Only in a democracy is it understood that rights are not gifts from the government. Only in a democracy can the people remove government officials who have used their power selfishly or cruelly. Only through democracy can China take her rightful place as a leader among the family of nations.

We are meeting in the shadow of the monument to Sun Yat-Sen. He never lived to see his dreams realized. Let us begin today to bring his dreams into reality.

Daniel's message was simple: Only a democratic system of government could root out the corruption, injustice, and violence in every level of Chinese society. Only through democracy could ordinary men and women create fulfilling lives for themselves and their children.

Daniel knew that the official line of the Communist Party was that democracy would bring chaos. Russia, which had seen a breakdown of law and order and widespread poverty after the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the twentieth century, was used as an example. Daniel believed that Russia had tried to change too quickly. Change should be gradual, not all at once. Daniel believed that democratic change should begin with elections at the local and county level and then in a few years with an election of delegates to a constitutional convention.

6. And Now It Begins

After the speech, Daniel was pleasantly surprised to find his brother Michael, who had just arrived from the United States, waiting for him behind the stage. After a long embrace, they sat down to talk.

Michael said, "I watched you give the speech and I had the impression that you have become calmer and more relaxed. Now that I'm near you, I can see that that is true. You have changed since I last saw you."

Daniel said, "Ani has helped me a lot, but studying with Ato has really made a difference in my life. He has taught me stillness and spontaneity and many other things. I am sorry that you cannot meet him."

That night they spent many hours talking about what had happened in their lives since Daniel had gone to China.

For a foreigner like Daniel to be so closely involved with a democratic revolution in China would not have been possible a few years earlier. For that matter, a democratic 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 androids was known. The arrival of the androids had shocked men out of their normal pattern of thinking. Things were possible now that would have been inconceivable before.

There were demonstrations in all of the big cities. They were sporadic and short with

little violence, except in Xinjiang and Tibet, where the police tear-gassed, beat, and arrested protestors. In the other provinces the police mainly did not interfere. In some cities the demonstrators marched through the streets carrying signs demanding better working conditions and an end to the corruption and special treatment of Party bosses and government and military officials. In some cities there were rallies with speakers calling for free elections.

Former President Jiang Zemin's redefinition of the Party to include capitalists and his three "represents" were offered as an answer to the unrest. He had said the Party must represent "the most advanced forces of production, the most advanced forces of culture and the fundamental interests of the broadest number of people." A Party member from a town in Hubei Province said in response, "They should add a fourth represent to Jiang's theory: 'The Party represents official wining and dining at the people's expense.'" The AIDS crisis that was ignored for more than a decade and the SARS epidemic could give rise to a fifth represent: "The Party represents officials covering up bad news at the expense of the people's health."

In September, Daniel decided to organize a one-day strike throughout China. Using emails, cell phone calls and text messages, he contacted protest leaders in every province. They all agreed to support the strike.

One week before the strike, Daniel received reports that the police had infiltrated some protest groups and were planning to incite violence, so he decided to postpone the strike. He also felt that the message had not reached the peasants and a truly nationwide strike could not occur. He said, "We must show the Communists that they don't control the countryside anymore. The Communists rode to power on the backs of the peasants. Only when the peasants show they don't support the Communists will the Party leaders finally consent to real reform."

The protest leaders agreed reluctantly and spread the word that the strike was to be postponed for one year. In that year, they would work to bring the message to the peasants.

For the next year, Daniel, Michael, and Ani traveled throughout China. Wherever they went, they were met by people eager to talk. The stories they heard were heartbreaking—of cruelty and murder, forced abortions and sterilizations, thefts of peasant food supplies and destruction of peasant homes as a penalty for having too many children, and unjust tax assessments. They heard of young women who had been kidnapped and sold into brothels or into forced marriages while the police did nothing, but often, in fact, received kickbacks for looking the other way. When they traveled to the cities, they heard of police torture and beatings of prisoners.

Even though Daniel had been living in China for several years and had spent a year in prison, he heard of the C-&-R (custody-and-repatriation) centers for the first time through his interviews with peasants. The government claimed the C-&-R centers had been closed down, but peasants said they were still in operation in some provinces.

The stories Daniel heard horrified him. Peasants found in cities were sometimes rounded up and taken to prisons where they had to live under awful conditions of crowding and lack of food. In these prisons, the peasants were occasionally beaten to death. They were sometimes kept in the prisons until their families could ransom them for outrageous sums. Some government officials ran kidnap and ransom rings and had gotten rich from extorting money from peasant families.

The things Daniel heard in his interviews with peasants reminded him of two stories he had read in the book *China Wakes*, which was written near the end of the twentieth century. In the first story, a woman told what had happened to her daughter-in-law: One December, because China then had a quota system for births, the county officials wanted a certain number of babies born before the new year. So at the end of December, family planning officials formed an early birth shock brigade. The goal was to find nine women who could be forced into labor before the end of the year. They found the old woman's daughter-in-law, who was seven months pregnant. Despite a doctor's warning that she was too frail to undergo forced labor, the family planning officials insisted, and the baby died while the daughter-in-law was crippled. The only government response was to tell local officials not to do it again.

In the second story, an old lady said this: In 1993, when China was attempting to gain the Olympic Committee's approval to host the 2000 summer Olympics, the government went all out to makeover Beijing. Before the visit and inspection by the Olympic Committee, factories were shut down to clean the air, power was turned off in some neighborhoods to insure an adequate supply to the stadium, and the homeless were shipped out of town.

The old lady had a forty-one year old retarded son. Two days before the delegation was to arrive, the deputy head of the neighborhood committee came to her door with a policeman and took her son away. After the Olympic Committee left a few days later, a policeman told her and her husband that they could get their son now. They went with the policeman to a morgue. Their son was dead, and his body was covered with bruises and blood from the beatings inflicted on him.

It was during this time that Daniel began to realize the immensity of the problem of governing China. China was so vast that ruling her fairly and efficiently from one center was impossible. It was too easy for corruption and abuses of power to occur. Daniel concluded that it was necessary to allow portions of China to break off if a truly just society was to emerge. Since Tibet was only part of China due to an invasion, Tibet must be allowed its freedom. And the people of Xinjiang, many of whom were Muslims, should be given the choice of forming an independent state.

A week before the strike, Daniel and Michael took a room in a Beijing hotel and Ani went to visit her family. Michael and Daniel spent the time catching up on correspondence.

One morning, Daniel awoke with these words in his head, "Drive it home. Finish the job." At first he thought the words were from a dream about his short career as a house framer, when he was constantly smashing his thumb with a hammer. Then he slipped into sleep again and dreamed about playing softball. In the dream there were two outs in the bottom of the last inning and the score was tied. There was a runner on second base and he was up. All he had to do to win the game was to get a single. As he slowly walked to the plate, he surveyed the field and decided to look for a pitch he could hit into the hole between the third baseman and the shortstop.

When he stepped into the batter's box, he noticed that his third base coach looked like Ato. The coach gave him the swing away sign and then framed his mouth with his hands and shouted, "Wait for your pitch." The first two pitches were balls but the third pitch was high and over the inside half of the plate. He swung and lined the ball into left field. As he was running toward first, he looked back and saw Ato waving the runner

home and his teammates rushing out from the dugout to celebrate. He looked where he was going too late to see that the first base bag was right at his feet and he tripped over it. As he picked himself up from the ground, he heard Ato say, "No problem. Long row to hoe." Then he awoke again.

The day for the strike, the autumnal equinox, was a pleasant first day of fall. A good omen. All across the country, students and teachers stayed home from school, workers stayed home from their factories and offices, and peasants took a holiday. It was a great day to enjoy the weather, to visit parks or family or neighbors. There was no violence despite the fact that millions rallied in the cities in support of the democracy and anti-corruption movement. The strike had become an event, like a national celebration.

On the evening of the strike day there was to be a rally in Beijing. Daniel had planned to attend the rally, but not to speak. At the last moment, he decided to say a few words. In his short speech, he presented his ideas for democracy for China, independence for Tibet, and a plebiscite for Xinjiang. He ended his speech with these words from Lao Tzu's *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.

At the rally were two policemen who had been following Daniel for over a year. They became very angry when Daniel proposed that Tibet be separated from China. As security was not tight, they were able to get near Daniel after he had finished speaking. One of them drew a gun from underneath his coat and shot Daniel three times in the chest. In the confusion and panic that followed, both policemen were able to escape.

Many people from all walks of life attended the ceremony for Daniel. Ani came in a black maternity dress; she was pregnant with Daniel's child. The ceremony was held on the tarmac of the airport in Beijing. Waiting for the casket was a plane that would take Daniel's body back to the United States. Ani would travel with the body, but Michael would stay behind to put Daniel's affairs in order. In Michael's eulogy for Daniel he said:

It is my hope that Daniel did not die in vain. But I know that whatever follows, Daniel will rest in peace because he has achieved his dream to fight for truth and justice and peace. One of Daniel's favorite authors was Ralph Waldo Emerson, and this is Daniel's favorite quotation from Emerson:

"What is man born for but to be a Re-former, a Re-maker of what man has made; a renouncer of lies; a restorer of truth and good, imitating that great Nature which embosoms us all, and which sleeps no moment on an old past, but every hour repairs herself, yielding to us every morning a new day, and with every pulsation a new life?"

During the flight to the United States, Daniel appeared to Ani in a dream. He said, “I will see you soon with the eyes of a child. You should go live with your sister. There is someone you should meet.”

After the assassination, many influential people who had formerly refused to support the movement 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 and county elections, including elections for mayors and police chiefs.

7. Beyond the Door

In religious mythology, heaven—the place where souls go after they die—is above the earth. So the citizens of heaven are often portrayed as looking down on earth. In truth, heaven is all around us; it is another dimension, not another physical location.

In heaven, Daniel reviewed his life and saw where he had made mistakes. He recalled his successes too, and he made plans to return to earth quickly, for the work he had begun was not finished. He would return with much of the wisdom he had attained while living as Daniel and more. For in this time of examination he was able to understand things he had not understood while in the flesh.

One of Daniel’s failures on earth was not to recognize that almost all men are of good intent. He had long cherished the romantic notion that the common man was at heart kind, generous, and caring, despite the brutality of mob and group actions. But even after studying with Ato, he had found it hard to accept that the rich and powerful—the men he felt were responsible for much of the cruelty, injustice, selfishness, and greed in the world—were of good intent.

From his position in heaven, he could see into the minds of men or at least perceive their thought patterns. He saw that the rich and powerful, even in their acts of cruelty and selfishness, were either of the belief they were justified in their actions or blind to the results of their actions or blindly of the belief that what they were doing to others was for the overall good of society. Daniel realized then that no leader in the new age could succeed unless he understood there was good in all men.

Daniel achieved another important realization while in this state between earth lives. When he looked at incidents involving love and courage in both the human and the animal worlds, he was constantly surprised by what he saw. For example, he studied the cases of two people who were badly burned in the terrorist attack on the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. He was touched by the love shown by their spouses and by the doctors and nurses who cared for them. He was touched by their courage in dealing with the physical pain and the emotional distress. He observed the lives of many other people who were severely handicapped, and he was amazed at their courage in going on with life. Daniel next studied horses and dogs that had been trained to perform for TV and movies. He saw horse trainers working with the horses and he was amazed at the love and selflessness displayed by the horses. The horses, once trained, would literally go through walls, or attempt to, for their trainers. With dogs working with humans, the same thing was true. The dogs would work themselves to death and take incredible risks for their masters. Perhaps in both cases the horses and dogs did not understand the risks, but

then they showed astonishing faith and loyalty.

Daniel wondered how men and animals can show such love in relationships with those they care about, and courage to face great obstacles, yet show such selfishness, hatred, and fear in relations with strangers and other nations, religions, and races. He next observed the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals and 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, he realized that man is now poised to make the necessary next step in human spiritual evolution. 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 is within us and within every part of creation.

Then, in a second flash of inspiration, he saw that this was the task or goal of the coming new age—to bring about the next step in human spiritual evolution, the recognition of our unity with all things. When we reach this realization, we will no longer bomb villages and civilian neighborhoods, killing and injuring innocent people, because there might be enemy soldiers there. When we recognize this, we will no longer shoot unarmed women and children because they might be suicide bombers. When we truly realize this, we will not kill our enemy because we will know killing him is the same as killing ourselves. In fact, we will see no enemy and no evil.

This was to be the theme for his work in his next life: That it is time for mankind to make the next step in spiritual evolution—the recognition that God is in the world, within us and among us.

Daniel had lingered in heaven for several months of earth time. Now he was ready to enter the fetus growing in Ani’s womb.

Part Three, Redux

Quite simply, a belief in the good without a belief in evil, may seem highly unrealistic to you. This belief, however, is the best kind of insurance that you can have, both during physical life and afterward.

Jane Roberts in *Seth Speaks*

5. The New Mythology

Paul’s prison cell was luxurious compared to the cells of the other prisoners at the facility on the outskirts of Tijuana, Mexico, a city just across the border from California. Paul’s cell, in a building that was air conditioned, had a window and a door. The other prisoners were in wire cages about two meters by two meters with only a roof for shelter from the weather. 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 and beards

were shaved and they were required to put on hideous orange jump suits. They were kept in isolation from each other and they had no access to lawyers and they were not allowed to see or write to their families. It was believed that the purpose of these procedures was to create psychological distress and disorientation, so as to weaken them for their interrogations.

Most of the prisoners were members of the resistance or were suspected of plotting attacks against the androids. But some of the prisoners had done nothing worse than make disparaging remarks about the androids that had been detected by the androids' security system of spies, computer scans, and listening devices. And a few of the prisoners just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time when the roundup occurred.

After Paul had spent about a year in prison, Ato appeared to him and said, "Vaminos, amigo. Kaja. Let's go. It's been three years since the androids came to earth and it's time for you to begin your work."

Paul said, "Ato, I have one last question. If God is in the world, then how should we respond to war or cruelty or injustice?"

"You must try to stop it if your heart tells you it is the right thing to do, but don't forget to show respect for your opponents. Remember, just because All That Is is in all men, that doesn't mean men are perfect. All That Is gives us the freedom to make mistakes."

"Sometimes I feel like I'm making a big one."

"Relax. Now do what you came to earth for. Remember, you're the man!"

Just as Ato finished speaking, there was a knock on the door.

"Were you expecting anyone?"

"No."

Paul walked over to the door and opened it. Standing outside were an android, a dog, a tall, blond-haired man probably in his late twenties, and two alien security guards.

The man said, "My name is Avon. This is Terrak, the android leader."

Terrak offered Paul his hand to shake, which Paul accepted like a woman, only grasping the fingers, because he felt uncomfortable shaking the hand of a tyrant.

Paul said, "Come in."

Terrak took the only chair available and Paul sat on his bed. Avon and the two security guards stood. The cell was so crowded that Ato had to sit on the filing cabinet in the corner. Only Paul could see or hear Ato.

Terrak said, "I've come to bring you good news. We're going to release you."

Paul said, with a look toward Ato, "Thank you. I was hoping I could go home soon."

Ato said to Paul, "What a coincidence. I was going to free you." And then addressing Terrak, he said, "You can't release him. He's going to escape with me."

Terrak continued, "Before we release you, maybe you can help me. I've been having dreams about dolphins. I think your research on dolphins could shine some light on a question I have. Are dolphins as intelligent as humans?"

Ato folded his arms and said, "I think they can be. They haven't been able to develop a physical culture because they have no hands."

Paul folded his arms and repeated, "I think they can be. They haven't been able to develop a physical culture because they have no hands."

Terrak asked, "Do you think they could be in communication with space

civilizations?”

Ato covered his mouth with his right hand, so Paul said, “I don’t know. John and I never met any dolphins that seemed to be that advanced.”

Terrak asked, “Have you heard of the 24 civilizations?”

“No, except that John asked the dolphins about them once. I want to ask you, Terrak, why do you treat the other prisoners here so inhumanely?”

“The end justifies the means. We have extracted valuable information with our methods.”

“The end does not justify the means. Have you read *The Story of Philosophy* by Will Durant?”

“No.”

Paul put on his glasses and picked up a book from his desk. He opened it to a bookmarked page and said, “The philosopher Kant wrote, ‘Every man is to be respected as an absolute end in himself, and it is a crime against the dignity that belongs to him as a human being to use him as a mere means for some external purpose.’”

“The other prisoners here are terrorists. They don’t have rights.”

“All men have rights. And the prisoners here are not terrorists. Terrorists attack civilians.”

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

“That is more than dishonest,” Paul said. “That is purposely using language to deceive. It reminds 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,” Paul responded. “Gandhi said, ‘In the long run, no force can prevail against love and truth.’”

“You fail to see the value of this, Paul. The ruler’s manipulation of the meaning of words helps him maintain popular support without having to resort to, shall we say, less desirable methods. In the right hands, language is an important political tool.”

“Have you read Machiavelli’s *The Prince*?”

“Yes. Chapter Eighteen is marvelous. How did you know?” Terrak said with enthusiasm.

“Just a guess.”

Ato jumped down from the filing cabinet and walked over to Paul, going right through Avon in the process. He sat on Paul’s lap and then seemed to disappear into Paul. Paul felt something was happening, but he didn’t know exactly what because his mind went into a dreamlike state. The others in the room saw Paul’s facial features change.

Paul now began speaking with Ato’s voice, but very dramatically: “I am the voice that speaks with a borrowed tongue. I am here to tell you that you will be defeated by the greatest force in the universe.”

“Who are you?” Avon asked.

Ato now projected his voice so that it was not coming from Paul but from the filing cabinet. He said, “I am the ghost of Christmases’ past and I want to remind you of the universal moral code: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Terrak asked angrily, “Who is going to defeat us?”

“This is our secret, Terrak: I believe you will be overcome by love.”

Terrak became visibly shaken by Ato's words and he said in a loud voice, "Let's get out of here!" He got up from the chair and ran out of the cell with his guards and his dog following behind him.

Avon did not go out with them, but whispered, after he had made sure his back was to the surveillance camera, "This is my secret: I hope it happens soon. I want to go home."

Avon ran out of the cell to catch up with Terrak.

Ato's image faded from Paul's face and he appeared standing about a meter away from Paul.

"What did you do?" Paul asked. "I felt like you were inside me."

"I was just having a little fun. Now where were we? Oh, you were about to escape with me."

Paul said with a twinkle in his eyes, "Should I escape with you or wait for the androids to release me?"

"After my little trick, you've got to wonder if they'll change their minds."

"OK, let's go. But what about my books and files? I can't carry them all."

"Let's send them on ahead. What about the computer?"

"That's not mine."

In a flash, all the books on the bookshelf disappeared and all the papers and files and computer disks on the desk did too. They reappeared in Paul's study in his home north of San Diego.

"Now we're ready," Ato said.

And just as he had done with Daniel, Ato led Paul by the hand through the prison walls to the outside. Only this time, there were no policemen there to arrest Paul.

As they were standing outside the prison with street traffic flowing past them, Ato said, "You're not here to argue with Christians or believers in science. You're here to reach those people already questioning the standard beliefs of society. You're here for the men and women ready to take the next step in human spiritual evolution."

"Why me? I don't want to end up like Daniel."

"The future is not predetermined."

"Sometimes I feel like an idiot. There must be someone else who can do this."

"Do you see anyone else who is prepared to do this?"

"No."

"You're no genius or saint, but you have an important role to play in this drama. You're the ringer of the bell. Now I'll tell you a secret I learned in one of my past lives as a politician: He who captures the middle—the voter sitting on the fence—usually wins. You can't convince Christians or believers in science of your ideas; they will not listen. But the great middle of humanity is fertile ground waiting to be seeded, for the world is crying out for answers that will work today."

"Do you really think men and women are ready to join with one another in creating their lives and the world consciously and positively?"

"Yes, you're right. Maybe just the women."

"What?"

"Just kidding! Maybe I'm being too optimistic. Maybe your job is to help prepare the ground for the seeding, which will come later."

A car horn blared. Ato and Paul looked at each other for a moment and then Ato said,

“So this is the land of Don Juan. Look! Over there is his house.”

Suddenly, Paul found himself in the desert at twilight. He and Ato were standing in front of a small house with a thatched roof and walls made of mud and straw.

Ato said, “Let’s see if he’s inside.”

Ato walked over to the door and knocked and then took a step back. Paul, who was a little nervous and not sure if this was really happening, followed and stood about a meter behind him. Immediately an elderly, husky Indian man opened the door and stepped out into the ramada, the covered area in front of the house. The man and Ato talked so quietly that Paul could not hear what they were saying.

But then, Paul, who was wearing a baseball cap and was looking down, heard the man say loudly, “He is shy, isn’t he?”

Ato moved to the side so that the man could see Paul. The man looked into Paul’s eyes and Paul felt a shiver go down his spine.

“This is my apprentice Paulito. He’s a big fan of yours,” Ato said.

Ato turned toward Paul and said, “Paulito, this is Don Juan.”

Don Juan said, “I’ve been looking for another apprentice ever since Carlos was eaten by the Eagle.”

Paul felt something scary was about to happen and he said, “I belong to Ato.”

Don Juan said, “But Ato just told me he’s finished with you.”

Paul looked at Ato imploringly and Ato, barely able to conceal a grin, said, “That’s right. Paulito would love to have an adventure like one of Carlos’ adventures.”

Just at that moment Paul’s attention was drawn to Don Juan’s eyes. They had become fierce and menacing. Then Paul noticed that Don Juan’s head was now bumping up against the roof of the ramada. His biceps were the size of watermelons and his bare feet were easily half a meter long.

Ato looked at Paul with terror in his eyes and said, “We’ve obviously fallen into a trap. This is not Don Juan, but one of his allies. Run for it!”

Ato turned and in an instant was running at full speed down the dirt road. Paul had no choice but to follow him. As he ran, he could feel the ally breathing down his neck.

Paul heard Ato yell to him from the distance: “You’ve got to run faster. He’s going to catch you. Run, Forrest! Run!”

Now Paul was really terrified and he put on a burst of speed and caught up with Ato. They ran alongside each other through the Mexican desert for what seemed to Paul like a good five minutes. Finally, Ato said, “I think we’ve lost him. Good thing he had 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?”

“Yes, I think it’s safe.”

Paul stopped and leaned over, placing his hands on his thighs while he caught his breath. He closed his eyes for a few seconds and when he opened them, he and Ato were again standing outside the Mexican prison.

A laughing Ato said while holding his sides, “Let that be a lesson to you. Be careful what you wish for.”

Ato pushed Paul into the taxi that had just stopped on the street alongside them. They waved to each other as the taxi drove off.

When he was back in his home, Paul thought about the long road to the present. He thought of his childhood and the strong moral sense he had even then. When he was four, he took some foreign coins that had come in a box of breakfast cereal and gave them to the man who drove the ice cream truck in his neighborhood. To his surprise, the man gave him two Popsicles for the worthless coins. Knowing that he had cheated the ice cream man, he could not eat the Popsicles. His parents, who looked on the incident humorously, gave the Popsicles to his two brothers and his sister.

He remembered his dilemma at the age of five and how he'd made a crippled boy cry. Before recess one day, his kindergarten teacher said that all the students should sit in the same chairs after recess. To his surprise, the crippled boy with crutches was sitting in his chair when he returned from recess. He told the boy it was his chair and, when the boy did not move, he became frantic and grabbed the chair and started to shake it. The boy became frightened and started to cry. The boy's older sister had to come from her class to calm him down. At the time he felt badly about what he had done, but what else could he have done? His teacher had told him to sit in that chair. The 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 enrolled him in the parish school run by nuns. He thought about the daily religious instruction he had received from them. When he graduated from eighth grade, he was given an award for being the best male student in religion. He next thought of his public high school days, when he began to drift away from Catholicism. The introduction to the theory of evolution in freshman biology was the start. Then he read *The Story of Philosophy* in the winter of his sophomore year, and he fell in love with the beauty of reason and the search for truth. He felt then that if the Only Son of God were really in the communion host as the nuns had taught him, the communicants should crawl on their hands and knees to get the host, instead of walking up to the communion rail to get it. His naturally questioning mind kicked into high gear at that time so that by his junior year he wasn't even sure God existed or that the world wasn't an illusion.

He thought of his decision then to pursue a career in science, instead of religion, as his parents had wanted him to do. In his melancholy state at the time, he imagined a career in science reluctantly, because he felt it promised a future without meaning. The sonnet he wrote as an assignment for his English class in his senior year—he believed Copernicus had been a monk—expressed his despair:

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.

By the time he graduated from high school with an award for being the best student in history, his melancholia had passed. In college he majored in astronomy because he believed astronomy asked the really important questions about who we were and where we came from. But after he found he couldn't do the math, he changed his major to marine biology. From that point until the present, he had spent more than thirty years involved with science.

Now he had come full circle. His search for truth and meaning had led him away from religion and then back to religion, but not an established religion this time. He remembered something Thomas Paine had written that seemed relevant to his present religious beliefs: "My church," he said, "is in my head."

One of the first things he did was to print at his own expense a book with some of his prison writings. When he saw there was not much interest in the book even among his family and friends, he gave away copies to whomever would take them. He was able to joke, like Thoreau, of having a large library of books, most of which were written by himself. His book contained the following declaration of beliefs:

THE AQUARIAN MANIFESTO

We have been told stories of a cruel, angry God, of original sin, disease, and the need to be saved. Science has taught us that life is meaningless: an accident in a universe that doesn't care whether we live or die.

We reject both mythologies. These are our truths:

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 lived, according to The Aquarian Gospel, "to show the possibilities of man. What I have done all men can do, and what I am all men shall be."

Because you have a personal relationship with God, you don't need to belong to a church to know or serve God. Churches should help men to know and love themselves and others.

Each individual is responsible to the God within. The Golden Rule is still the best guide for living: Do unto others as you would have them do to you.

Now is the time to remember the old wisdom. It is time for man to again accept the validity of inner knowledge. Science must learn to examine nature from her point of view: It will never understand nature by taking her apart. 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.”

He began to speak, at first timidly, before any groups that would listen to him. But the more Paul spoke, the more self-confident he became. When it became known that he had escaped imprisonment by the androids, the curious and the bored also began attending his lectures.

As Ato had predicted, Paul began to run into angry opposition. Many people did not want to be told that they were responsible for their lives. They were happier to claim they were victims or to blame their actions and misfortunes on circumstances of birth or bad luck. And many were not ready to abandon their belief in the devil, evil, a wrathful Father God, and a Son of God who had been tortured and killed for mankind's sins. But many others were ready to seize control over their lives and to knowingly assume their roles as creators. For the next step in the evolution of man was at hand. This was not evolution in the scientific sense—mindless and by chance—this was evolution by conscious design and intent. Paul spoke on this and related subjects in San Diego's Balboa Park:

A thousand years ago the Catholic Church dominated life in Europe, and it taught that all events could be explained in religious terms. It said good fortune was a reward from God and bad fortune was a punishment or a test from God. If a man sinned, it was because he had listened to the devil on his left shoulder instead of the angel on his right shoulder. The Church taught that the earth was in the center of the universe and persecuted Giordano Bruno and Galileo for saying the sun was. It was in an atmosphere like this, where faith, not reason, was considered the road to truth, that educated men could have a serious debate over how many angels would be able to dance on the head of a pin.

By the sixteenth century, men began to question the authority of the Catholic Church. They said, “Many priests and bishops are corrupt. They sell tickets to heaven, wallow in wealth while many of their church members live in poverty, keep mistresses, and lead armies into war. How can we trust them to teach us about God?” New churches sprang up which emphasized man's personal relationship with God. These churches claimed that men did not need priests to interpret the Bible for them.

With the end to the unquestioned authority of the Catholic Church, men began to look for a new way of seeing the universe. They began to take their answers from the men of science, who promised to be logical and rational. Science then set about the task of describing and explaining the world. With the wonders science and technology made available, a material age began and men learned to enjoy life without thought of the consequences.

Now the pendulum is swinging back. It is time for a new spiritual age. This age will not be about worship and blindly following others. This will be an age in which men will recognize the power they have over their own lives, for they will understand that God is within Its creation. As an Indian mystic once said, “There is nowhere God is not.”

When we learn that God is not in some far off heaven, but within us and all things, we

will stop treating other people and nature as objects of contempt. How can we despise others when we know all things are One? How can we look down on other life forms when we know all the creatures on this planet are manifestations of the Divine Presence?

In the future, our minds and bodies will become capable of feats that today only geniuses, great psychics, and great athletes can perform. We will live to old age without losing our physical and mental powers. We will no longer fear death, for we will see beyond it. And we will become aware of our past and future lives and learn from them and change them.

This then is the destiny awaiting the human race. You can choose this path now and begin a journey not to outer space, but to inner space, where all answers lie. Awaken to the God within you!

After the speech, a woman came up to Paul and said, “I dreamed about you. I think I was meant to meet you.” It was Ani, who was now living in San Diego with her sister.

Paul said, “I saw you in my dreams about Daniel. Let’s go somewhere where we can talk. I want to learn more about him.”

They went to a nearby café and talked for hours, until the waiter told them it was time to close. Paul said to the waiter, “I’m sorry. Just let me finish this story.”

He continued, “I don’t know why I am telling you this. I’ve never told anyone this before. Well, on that day, I went down to the basement of the house I was living in so that I could be alone to think about a problem I had. And while I was there, I heard a voice in my head. It was very clear and strong. The voice said, ‘The power you seek is within you.’”

Ani said, “That must have been an inspiring experience.”

“Did you know Daniel used that same sentence in the speech he gave after he escaped from prison?”

“No, I wasn’t with Daniel then.”

“I think there’s a connection between Daniel and me. I think Daniel and I are what Jane Roberts called ‘counterparts.’ She said counterparts have the same soul like in reincarnation, but they live in the same time period. She also said something very interesting about time. She said all time is simultaneous, so our past and future incarnations exist right now.”

“Ato told Daniel and me, ‘It is traditionally thought that reincarnation works in a linear fashion, from the past to the future, but actually our other lives can be considered parallel or adjacent to this one.’”

After seeing that Ani had gotten back safely to her sister’s house, Paul returned to his home. Ani had promised to come over the next night for dinner.

Paul was excited. More excited about a woman than he had been in a long time. His previous experiences with women had been so frustrating that, in a moment of self-pity, he had come up with a kind of *Catch-22* explanation: He fell in love with women who did not love him, and he did not love the women who fell in love with him. Maybe he was afraid of being loved, he thought.

He believed his experience with Ani would be different. Ani was not like any other woman he had ever cared about. She was not only intelligent and beautiful, she was also exotic and sweetly, charmingly innocent. Simply put, he was fascinated with her. He had

recently begun to think that he was too old for love, but now he knew that wasn't true.

6. John's Mission

John was being held captive on the android spaceship. A guard was posted outside his room and he was watched constantly when he left it. A year went by quickly while he spent most of his time doing research. He received this video email from Leia one day:

"Hi, love. Do you recognize the blouse I'm wearing? It's the blouse I wore on our first date. Do you remember what we did? I bet you don't. You helped me carry my sculpture to art class. You were so gallant then. After my class, we had coffee together in the snack bar at the student center. 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. I was so innocent then and you were so handsome in your tight T-shirts...Guess what Cyndi is up to today? She and her friends are visiting the android base. The newest fad is to have your picture taken with android soldiers. I think the androids encourage this to show their benign side. By the way, how's your work coming? Do you get bored being locked up in that room all day? I bet you love it; you can study all you want now. When are you coming home? I have to go. My ride is waiting. I love you."

John replied:

"Hi, dear! It's great to hear from you. I guess things have gotten pretty quiet on Honam if the androids are allowing people to get up close to their soldiers. As you know, for the last year I've been very busy with research. 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*, which was inspired by a book I've read by Noam Chomsky. This is a problem, fortunately, that we don't have to deal with on Honam. Now as I warned you in my last email, I can't go back yet, even though my three years are up. The androids told me I have to stay another year, until they finish building their capital and begin their world government. The humans will have something to say about that, though. But what can I do? I'm at their mercy...I made a startling discovery last week that I can't tell you about now. It will have to wait until I see you again...Paul escaped from prison a few weeks ago. The androids think I had something to do with it. But I'm helpless here. I only wish I could join him. Bye for now. I love you."

A month later an android general named Nietzsche came to see John. General Nietzsche was larger than Terrak and the other androids and he wore a military uniform. He also was the only android with a moustache. He was impressive with his medals, his build, and his height, fifty centimeters more than the other androids.

General Nietzsche said to John, "I want to show you our army. I know you communicate with earthlings. I want them to know what they're up against so they'll think twice before trying anything stupid."

John replied, "They want peace."

“Peace is for wimps. War is what makes a man a man.”

“That sounds like the words of a man who has never seen someone he loved killed in a war,” John said.

General Nietzsche continued, “War allows a man to express his natural hunting instincts. A man never feels really alive unless he is killing something.”

General Nietzsche paused, and John looked at the android as if he couldn’t believe his ears. Then he asked, “How would you know?”

General Nietzsche ignored the question and continued, “Come see the toys I’ve got to play with.”

The general took John to an area in the hold of the ship where John had never been before. What John saw frightened him. There were thousands of soldiers of two kinds: Androids, at least three meters tall and much larger than the android soldiers he had seen on Honam. These soldiers were, like the soldiers on Honam, pure robots. They had computer chips inside them that controlled their various functions and they were also connected by radio to a supercomputer. Unlike the soldiers on Honam, however, they were strong enough to walk through metal doors and designed so well that they could climb over walls.

The general told John that they could withstand any kind of bombardment, even nuclear, except for a direct hit, and great extremes of temperature. The general said, “These are much better soldiers than I had when I conquered your planet. We think they are the most awesome fighting machines in the galaxy. They would make any general proud.”

The other soldiers were mutants, genetically altered men from John’s own planet. Again, they were frightening in their size and strength. General Nietzsche boasted that these soldiers knew no fear and gave no quarter and were trained to never surrender.

General Nietzsche’s last words to John were, “I can’t wait until the earthlings attack us. There’s nothing like the glory of the battlefield. It’s better than sex.”

John dreamed that night of his home planet. He saw a group of android soldiers marching by his village singing the Beatles song “Yesterday.” Suddenly, a crude, homemade rocket was fired at the soldiers from the vicinity of the village. Then another and another. The soldiers did not stop, but continued marching, although at least a dozen of them fell from the rocket attack. A few moments later, four helicopters appeared and began firing missiles into the village. After the smoke had cleared, John saw that several homes had burned to the ground including his own, and he could see his wife’s and daughter’s bodies lying in the ruins. John awoke screaming, “No, no!” He sent this video email to his wife that day:

“Darling, I had a terrible dream last night, like the one I had three years ago, but this time it was even worse. This time I saw you and Cyndi dead after android soldiers attacked the village. I’m afraid for you. Please tell me that you and Cyndi are OK. I won’t sleep until I hear from you again. Please send me an answer immediately. And tell Cyndi I love her. I miss you so much. I love you.”

John spent several sleepless days and nights waiting for an answer, but no answer came. So he sent a text email to Laszlo, an old friend on Honam, asking him to check on

his family.

His friend's reply came the next day and began, "John, I don't know how to tell you this, but..." John did not read the rest of the message. He moved the mouse to the delete bar and clicked. Then he laid his head down on his desk and cried.

A few weeks later, Ato knocked on John's door. When there was no answer, he opened it a little and stuck his head in. He saw John lying on his back in bed with his hands behind his head. He had a sad expression on his face.

"Am I interrupting anything?" Ato asked after he had entered the room and shut the door.

"No."

"Do you know who I am?"

"No."

"I am the rescuer of prisoners important to the story. The author has little imagination, so when he gets stuck, he asks me to help him."

"Oh?" John said, interested. He sat up in bed. "Did you help Paul escape?"

Ato replied, "Yes." Then with a twinkle in his eyes he said, "I'm the author's *deus ex machina* and I'm getting tired of being used. But wait until the end of the book. There you'll see a whale of a *deus ex machina*."

Ato walked a few steps away from John, looked off into space and said: "Oops! My big mouth! Now don't you be turning pages looking ahead at the ending! The author has carefully planned this book out. You'd be spoiling all his hard work."

And then, looking up, he said, "You see, O mighty Shakespeare, how I defend you? Remember this, when you think about cutting me out of the sequel."

Ato heard a loud, booming voice say, "I would never do that, Ato. You're the man!"

"No, you're the man!"

"OK. Then you're the One!"

"No, you're the One!"

"Ato, let's not argue. John's waiting. And by the way, I am not Shakespeare."

Ato said, "Yes, sir!" and saluted. He turned one hundred and eighty degrees and marched back to John's bed.

"Excuse me. I was clearing my throat," Ato said.

Whispering, John, who was still sitting on his bed but with his feet now on the floor, asked hopefully, "Do you think he could bring my wife and daughter back?"

Ato replied, "That's not in the script. I tell you, he's a cold-hearted guy." He then added loudly while looking from his left to his right, "It doesn't help to whisper, he knows everything we say and do."

"He's kind of like a god then."

"Yes, but he has finally given us the freedom to be ourselves."

There was a pause in the conversation. During the pause, Ato saw that John's facial expression had become sad again. So he said, "I'm very sorry about your wife and daughter. But the wheel turns. Now I know that they died quickly. I have just been talking with them in fact, and they send their love to you. In your dreams, you have met them; you just have to come awake when you dream about them so you can remember."

"Really?" John said excitedly. "Then I want to sleep now."

"Do it tonight. We have to go. I'm bringing you to Paul's house. Pack up your things. While you're packing, I'm going for a little walk."

Twenty minutes later Ato returned and said, "Quite a big ship they have here. I nearly got lost."

John said, "I'm ready to go."

"Now take my hand."

"Have you done this before?" John asked as he took Ato's hand.

"Too many times."

The next thing John knew, he was standing at Paul's door.

"Here's where I make my exit," Ato said.

"Wait," John said. "Who are you?"

Ato said, "That's not important. Just remember, it's your job to fight the androids." Then he disappeared.

Somewhat confused, John knocked on the door.

A moment later, Paul opened the door and asked playfully, "John, how did you get here?"

"A little old man brought me."

"Oh, Ato!" Paul exclaimed and he hugged John. "Come in. There's someone I'd like you to meet."

Paul led John to his study where Ani was working at a computer. He walked up to her and took her hand in his. He said to John, "I want you to meet Ani, a special friend of mine. She was Daniel's wife."

"Nice to meet you," John said.

"Ani, this is my main man John. Ato has just brought him to us."

Ani smiled and said, "Paul told me a lot about you. I've been wondering when Ato would rescue you. He rescued Daniel and Paul, so I figured it was only a matter of time before he got around to you."

"He calls himself a *deus ex machina*," John said.

"What's that?"

"That's an improbable character or event used to move a plot along," John said.

"Ato is a clown at heart," Ani said.

"I want to know more about Ato," John said.

"Ato was Daniel's and Ani's teacher in China."

Just then, Michael walked into the room. Paul said, "And this is Daniel's brother, Michael."

"Hello!"

"Hi!"

"Would you like a brewsky? It'll help you relax," Paul said.

"That sounds great. The androids don't appreciate liquid refreshment."

After bringing John a beer, Paul said, "Let's go to the living room to talk."

In the living room Paul began, "How have you been? Did the androids treat you well?"

"I'm OK."

"Are the androids still planting tracking devices on people? I've wondered ever since I escaped if there was some kind of bug on me. They didn't do any work on my teeth this time."

"They stopped using the devices because they encountered such strong resistance from humans."

“Good. Any more news on the androids’ plans?”

“It is more ominous now than the last time I saw you. Think *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Do you remember that I told you the androids were working on a plan to implant their minds into children? It’s now in the advanced stage. Do Ani and Michael know about this?”

“No, I haven’t told anyone. I only told them about the androids’ plans for genetically engineering future generations.”

Ani asked, “What are you two talking about?”

John said, “The androids are going to discard their robot bodies and take human bodies. They want the healthiest, most intelligent females to bear children naturally. These children will not be genetically engineered. When the children are weaned, the androids will take them away from their mothers.”

Ani gasped as she placed her hand over her belly.

Michael asked, “Why can’t they use clones?”

John answered, “Clones are not the same as real people. They are inferior intellectually and physically. Research has shown this.”

John paused and, when no one else began talking, he continued, “After the children are weaned, they will be taken to special nurseries where they will be prepared for the invasion of their bodies. It shall be murder without a corpse. There are experiments now taking place on animals to perfect this. Unfortunately, I am sorry to say that some of your own scientists are helping them. In fact, the experiments are taking place not far from here.”

Ani was now openly sobbing. Paul shivered and groaned. He asked, “But how will they do this?”

“I’m not sure. But I overheard a conversation once. I heard something about a device attached to a person’s head. I think the device will transfer the mind of the android to a human. I know supercomputers will be involved. I also saw an email about potential problems with the experiment. It seems that the transfer process has killed very young animals. So they are trying to find the right age to do this. They don’t want to wait too long because another problem is that the older the child is, the more difficult the transfer will be because the child has attached more memories to its brain cells.”

The room was filled with silence from the horror of what John had told them. Finally, Paul said, “This is too horrible to contemplate, John. Do you have any good news to tell us? What about your family? How are they?”

John took a deep breath and said, “They are dead. Android soldiers killed them. Freedom fighters attacked an android column near my village and the androids responded with missiles from helicopters and my home was hit. Leia and Cyndi died instantly.”

Paul pounded his fist on the coffee table.

Ani said, “I am so sorry.”

“Before Ato brought me here, he told me how I could meet them in my sleep. I’m going to try it tonight. Let’s talk about something else.”

Paul said, “We’ve been inside all day and we haven’t had dinner yet. Let me take you to my favorite Chinese restaurant to celebrate your safe return.”

At the restaurant, which was empty since it specialized in takeout and delivery food, they sat down at a table in the back right corner. After ordering the food, Paul looked at Ani and smiled. Then he said to John, “Ani has been dying to ask you some questions.”

Ani looked a little embarrassed, but she said, "I hope you don't mind. Do all aliens look like you?"

"I assume you're referring to extraterrestrial life with abilities that humans have: to make decisions by choice instead of instinct, to imagine different possibilities, and to make complex mental calculations, such as seeing a symbol and relating it to something else. The answer is no. Intelligent alien life has taken many different physical forms. One example that humans are unaware of is the dolphin. But the humanoid form is the most common form among the intellectually developed species in the galaxy. I think it's really marvelous how our bodies have been designed, don't you? Can you think of anything better? Would you change your body in any way? I can't think of anything I would change."

Paul added, "Isn't it amazing how our bodies grow, from a small child to an adult, without conscious thought on our part? Or how our bodies maintain and repair themselves? Jane Roberts said a portion of our consciousness far wiser than what we call the conscious mind makes all the necessary calculations and adjustments for our bodies to function properly."

Ani asked, "How did you get your job, John? I mean, how come you came to earth with the androids? Paul told me you're an expert on human culture."

"I was selected because my graduate school research was on humans."

"How long have you been studying us?"

"More than twenty years."

John turned and looked at Paul. "I want to tell you something important," he said. "I should have told you this a long time ago: The white race on earth is from another planet. It was seeded from outer space thousands of years ago by ancestors of the androids."

"I guess I should have expected some twist like that," Paul said. "Just don't tell me Terrak is my father."

"I won't do that. I didn't tell you about the origin of the white race when I first met you, Paul, because the androids considered it top-secret information. And Ani, the Asian race was also seeded from outer space. In fact, the only humans native to earth, according to the androids, are the aborigines. But that is true on my planet too: There are different races, some of which have come from other parts of the galaxy."

Michael said, "That's amazing. I think this knowledge will change biology. Won't it, Paul?"

"The concept of seeding will allow scientists to get past the tricky subject of the origin of life on earth," Paul said. "Ever since Darwin, science has been handicapped by its inability to prove that the first life began by chance. It has been said that the odds against basic chemicals forming into even a small piece of DNA are ten followed by thirty zeroes to one. Scientists can now say that life began on another planet and worry about how life began there later."

Michael asked rhetorically, "Didn't the astronomer Fred Hoyle say that believing in the theory of evolution is like believing a hurricane could turn a junkyard into a Boeing 747?"

John said, "The theory of evolution is full of holes. Besides not being able to explain how the first life originated and not being able to explain why species suddenly appear and disappear in the fossil record, evolution can't explain the inner workings of our bodies. One of your scientists, a biochemist named Michael J. Behe, wrote a book called

Darwin's Black Box. In the book, Behe says that there are 'irreducibly complex' systems in the human body that couldn't have been produced by the incremental steps of Darwinian evolution. In other words, those systems couldn't have been created by adding one step after another. They have to be whole, a unit, to have a function that could be selected in the process called natural selection. The examples he gives of irreducibly complex systems are blood-clotting, cilia in the respiratory system used to move mucous to the throat, the human immune system, the transport of material within cells, and the creation of nucleotides. He says there are many other irreducibly complex systems in the human body. His conclusion is that there has to be some intelligent design involved in the creation of life.

"Personally, I think he's right. I think evolution can explain small changes, but not complex developments. And when I was reading his book, I had an idea which may help explain how the body does all the complicated things it does. I mean, what tells atom X to join with atom Y and then for atom Z to join them? I think that the atoms and molecules in the body have consciousness and they know what their job is and they want to cooperate with each other."

Paul said, "Science has severely handicapped itself by refusing to consider the possibility of a non-physical or spiritual reality affecting the physical. When you open yourself up to that possibility, you see how silly it is to believe that the incredibly complex creatures of earth were created purely by chance. The acceptance of some kind of outside influence on the universe also opens science up to the possibility of explaining things such as telepathy, instantaneous healing, clairvoyance, precognition, near death experiences, and other events that science ignores because it has no framework in which to place them."

Michael said, thinking aloud, "So if evolutionary theory incorporated divine intervention or some other outside influence, evolution would be simpler and easier to believe? Say, for example, that giraffes appeared suddenly or were planted here instead of a painstakingly slow process where the giraffes ancestors' necks got longer by a chance mutation and then the legs got stronger by another chance mutation and then the necks got longer by another chance mutation and then the legs got stronger by another chance mutation and then the necks got longer by another chance mutation and then the legs got stronger by another chance mutation and then..."

Michael stopped to catch his breath as John, Ani, and Paul laughed. He continued, "Isn't there a mathematical puzzle that goes like this, 'What is the probability that a hundred monkeys banging away on typewriters could produce one Shakespearean sonnet?' And the answer is one chance in some astronomical number. I think producing one sonnet of Shakespeare would be a cakewalk compared to producing a man by chance starting from scratch."

Paul said, "There is an explanation to the origin of life from Jane Roberts that I think can challenge the theory of evolution. She believed that consciousness creates form, not the other way around. She said that lines of development first existed in the spiritual world and then were planted here. So birds did not come from reptiles, for example, but had their own separate creation. She also said the earth was first prepared for life before life appeared from out of the dream or spiritual world. Her explanation is closer to Genesis than to scientific evolution, but it doesn't rule out a species changing to another. Where manlike creatures developed freedom of choice to replace instinct, she argued that

chance mutations were not the agents of change, but influences from outside the physical world.

“I think the debate over what forms us as individuals, ‘nature vs. nurture’—genetics or environment—can be resolved using her ideas that we choose our parents and are born with tendencies and influences due to reincarnation, and by the fact that we select, before birth and on a subconscious level during life, which genes we will turn on.”

John said, “I’m sure you’ve heard of the classic study of a species of moth that lived in a forest outside an English town. The study found that the moths changed to a gray color when the burning of coal in the town caused the bark of the trees in the forest to turn gray. The study is used to demonstrate the theory of evolution—only the moths that happened to be a gray color by a chance mutation were able to safely camouflage themselves from their enemies and survive.”

Paul said, “As you said, evolution can explain small changes. So the moth’s change in color could have been caused by a chance mutation of a gene that was selected through survival. But I think a more likely explanation is that in the spiritual world, a decision was made, perhaps by some form of insect gestalt consciousness, that altered the genes of the moth so the beneficial development could occur.”

Paul paused and then continued, “Actually, I have over-simplified what Jane Roberts said about evolution. She said that all time is simultaneous, so developments from less complex to more complex creatures do not happen. All variations exist now. The dinosaurs exist now, but because we have chosen to see time in a linear fashion, we think they are dead.”

John said, “Who was it in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* who says, ‘Things are getting stranger and stranger’?”

“Wasn’t it Alice? But didn’t she say, ‘Curiouser and curiouser’?” Paul replied.

“Anyway,” John said, “my point is that the universe is far more complex than we can imagine, given our physical and mental limitations. I think we are not advanced enough yet to understand the hows and whys of the universe. What gives us the right to demand that it be reasonable to our minds, anyway?”

Paul said, “The Hubble telescope took pictures of an area of the sky that a grain of sand would cover if it were held at arm’s length. In that tiny space, scientists found more than 1,500 galaxies. Scientists say those photos are representative of the sky. In other words, if you look in any direction, you will probably find that many galaxies. I think those pictures demonstrate that the universe is much too vast for our simple minds to comprehend. We have to accept that and concentrate on what we can understand: the here and now.”

“Did you hear the story the Buddha told about the elephant and the four blind men?” Michael asked.

Paul said, “I have, but I forgot the details.”

“I don’t remember it exactly, but it goes something like this: Four blind men touched different parts of an elephant and then they were asked to tell what it was. The one that touched the tail said the elephant was a rope. The one that touched a leg said the elephant was a pillar. The one that touched the trunk said the elephant was a snake. The one that touched the elephant’s ear said it was a piece of cloth. My point is that when you make judgments based on incomplete information as science is doing, your results are going to be way off the mark.”

Ani said, "I want to tell you guys what Ato said about evolution. He told Daniel and me that the theory of evolution starts off on the wrong foot, by seeing the world as one of bloody violence and competition. This is partly due to Darwin, whose first training was in the Christian ministry. Christians think the world is evil or at least corrupted, so it would be easy for Darwin to take the next step and see the world as a battleground of selfish competitors. Science has completely missed the boat here, he said."

Paul added, "Ato was right. Jane Roberts wrote that nature is based on cooperation, not competition. All animals are aware that they are dependent upon other animals and plants for food and that they are in turn food to other animals and plants. Plants realize that they are dependent upon the sun, the water, the air, the soil, and the animal world. On a level below normal consciousness, she said, every animal and plant consents to its death, knowing that it will live through the creature that has eaten it."

The conversation continued on the topic of competition or cooperation in nature for several minutes before exhausting itself and then Michael asked Paul, "Does Jane Roberts say anything about psychic healers?"

"Jane Roberts said spiritual healers and doctors both depend on their patient's faith in order for them to heal."

No one said anything and John used the break in the conversation to say, "There is something else I want to tell you, Paul."

"You can tell Ani and Michael anything you tell me."

John said, "I learned a startling piece of information while I was looking through old files the androids had mistakenly left on their main computer. Are you ready for this? The androids lied to me: Their sun is not growing like the stars you call red giants, making their planet too hot for life. Years ago the androids turned Valkar into a desert through several devastating nuclear wars. Now all their people have to live underground. The androids placed their minds in robots simply because their bodies became too old to support them. Their medical science is very advanced, but after about two hundred years, their bodies, except for their brains, wear out. Bottom line, the androids are just scientists who are afraid to die."

"The androids are two hundred years old? Wow!" Michael exclaimed. "I guess your information doesn't change much though, does it? They still want to inhabit the bodies of our children and there are millions of them that will be coming in the future."

"Yes. They still want to colonize the earth. Their men and women became infertile about a hundred years ago, which explains why they want our children. I think nothing really changes due to this information, except that their motive is more sinister and selfish now," John said.

Ani said, "John, tell us about your planet. Paul told me you have elves and fairies and you even talked to them when you were a child."

"I used to play in this forest near my home. 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 to go there?"

Paul interrupted them and said, "John, I have a special request. For my friends here, would you sing Steve Martin's *King Tut*?"

"You are putting me at a disadvantage. How do I disappoint your friends?"

"Please," Ani said.

“Oh, all right. But you are the chorus, Paul.”

John sang and danced to the words with Paul providing the chorus in as deep a voice as he could muster.

That night John dreamed a big, glorious dream of holding his wife and daughter in his arms and he was relieved and he remembered the dream when he woke up. In the dream, they told him they were happy and busy with new challenges.

John got up early the next morning. He was feeling good again and felt he should visit the dolphins. He ate breakfast alone and walked to the cove. He called the dolphins telepathically and Cetus and Lotus soon came.

“John,” Lotus said, “it’s so good to see you again and to know that you are safe. But where is Paul?”

“He is busy with his religion.”

“What is religion?”

“Religion is belief about God, the maker of the world.”

“What does Paul believe?”

“He believes God is in me and you and everything.”

“We tried to tell him that.”

“Some things you have to learn in your own time.”

“John, there is someone who’d like to meet you.”

“Really? Who?”

“His name is Septurn. He is very wise.”

“I would like to meet him too, then.”

“We will bring him with us tomorrow.”

“See you tomorrow.”

“See you tomorrow.”

The next morning, Cetus and Lotus were waiting for John when he arrived. There was another dolphin with them.

Cetus said, “Good morning, John. This is Septurn.”

Septurn said, “Hello, John. Cetus and Lotus have told me many things about you. I am pleased to meet you.”

“Pleased to meet you too.”

“I want to tell you who I am.”

“Yes. Go ahead.”

“Do you believe in reincarnation?”

“Yes.”

“Do you believe that a man can be reborn as a dolphin?”

“Well, I studied a marine mammal similar to a dolphin on my home planet. I know that dolphins are intelligent beings.”

“Have you heard about Atlantis?”

“Yes. Atlantis was a continent in the Atlantic Ocean that extended from what is now Europe to North America. The androids told me this.”

“Did the androids tell you about their connection with Atlantis?”

“No. They just told me their ancestors came from earth thousands of years ago.”

“The androids’ ancestors came from Atlantis. Now this the androids do not know because they don’t believe in reincarnation: All the androids on the spaceship are the

reincarnations of scientists who lived on Atlantis at the time of its destruction.”

“Do you have a connection with Atlantis?”

“I was also a scientist on Atlantis.”

“What happened to Atlantis?”

“Atlantis sank into the sea.”

“Why are you here?”

“Like Atlantis, the earth faces great danger because of man’s errors. I am here today to help the world overcome some of the challenges Atlantis could not overcome.”

“Why are the androids here?”

“I think they reincarnated for the same purpose, but they have been blinded by greed. They have failed to learn their spiritual lessons.”

“How did Atlantis sink?”

“A series of earthquakes brought Atlantis down. Some say the sins of Atlantis actually led to its destruction. I don’t know about that, but some scientists on Atlantis were conducting experiments with animals that were very controversial. One of the experiments was creating half-men by the placing of a human head on an animal. I was not involved with those experiments.”

“What experiment were you involved with?”

“I and some other scientists were working on a method to extract energy out of seawater. The experiment was very dangerous because if something went wrong, all of the earth’s water would be contaminated. It was wrong of us to do these experiments, and part of the reason I am a dolphin now is to understand that creatures of the sea have rights just as humans do.”

“Your experiment reminds me of Kurt Vonnegut’s *Cat’s Cradle*.”

“I am not familiar with books.”

“Of course not. They would get wet, wouldn’t they? So are you and the androids the only reincarnations of people from Atlantis?”

“No. Some men and women alive today and some other dolphins also lived on Atlantis.”

“This is indeed a pivotal time for the earth, then.”

Septurn continued, “When I lived on Atlantis, I knew Terrak, the android leader. He was called Lukas then. We worked together on the heavy water experiment. And we fell in love with the same woman, but Lukas won her love. Lukas was quite good-looking and charming then. And not as vain and arrogant as Terrak.”

“That explains his fascination with earth. But what happened to the people on Atlantis? Did they all die?”

“When the destruction began, some Atlanteans traveled to other places on earth and some traveled to other planets, including Valkar. But Lukas and I died on Atlantis.”

“How old were you and Lukas when you died?” John asked.

“I was about one hundred and fifty years old and Lukas was about one hundred and seventy-five.”

“Was it normal for men to live so long on Atlantis?”

“Yes. On Atlantis, men and women lived much longer than now because it was understood that our bodies were designed to last a long time. Plus, we did organ transplants far better than doctors on earth do now. We could transplant any organ except the brain, even a sexual organ, and we didn’t have to take one from a dead or dying

person. We grew them in laboratories, so everyone could have a perfectly new organ. People lived a long time as a result of our belief system and our scientific achievements.”

John asked Septurn about the technology of Atlantis.

“In Atlantis, sounds were used to move large objects. But not sounds that the ear could hear. These were inner sounds. We also used our knowledge of coordination points, which are points in space where energy is strongest, to make roads, buildings, and things like the Great Pyramid. The coordination points allowed us to build very stable structures.”

“So Atlanteans built the pyramids?”

“Actually, survivors from the destruction of Atlantis started the Great Pyramid and Egyptians finished it. Atlantean influences can be seen in Greece, Egypt, Britain, the Middle East, India, Tibet, China, Central America, and the Pacific islands. In fact, its influences are everywhere.”

At their next meeting, Septurn came without Cetus and Lotus but with another dolphin. Septurn talked about the relationships between dolphins and other sea-dwelling mammals and man:

“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. Even if the calves are allowed to live after their capture, it is a shock that scars them for life.

“The military and scientific experiments with powerful sonar are damaging the hearing of dolphins and whales and causing disorientation and death. How would men like it if someone were blasting sounds in their ears all day long?

“The beachings of dolphins and whales are no accident. These are not animals that have gotten lost. They have chosen to die 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 natural environment and callous attitude toward other life forms is a serious violation.’ Let me add that if the present trend continues, it will lead to the end of life as man knows it. The earth will stop supporting man.

“Man has 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 is only to eat, and we treat our hosts—our food—as gods, for they really are. They give us life.”

Septurn paused and then said, “Now I would like you to meet Isis. On Atlantis she was Lukas’ lover. But she has a special meaning for you too.”

The dolphin that had come with Septurn now spoke, or more precisely, began communicating telepathically with John: “Hi, John. Septurn has told me some wonderful things about you.”

“So you were the woman Terrak, I mean Lukas, loved.”

“Yes, John. I liked to call him Osiris. We had quite a torrid affair. In fact, I bore a child from him. The child was born a year after he drowned in an earthquake.”

“So he never met his child. How interesting.”

“Yes.”

“Wait. Did you say the child was born a year later? The child was very late.”

“No, the child was right on time, John, just like you are always on time. The child was conceived three months after Lukas’ death from sperm taken from him.”

Isis paused and then said, “John, sit down. I want to tell you something that might shock you.”

After John sat down, Isis said, “John, do you ever wonder what brought you to earth?”

“The androids asked me to come with them because of my studies.”

“But why were you so interested in earth in the first place?”

“I don’t know. Maybe it was because of the elf king’s prophecy.”

“Yes, that is one reason, John. The other reason is that you lived on earth before. John, you were the child I had from Lukas. You were Lukas’ son.”

“Oh God, no!”

“John, it is not a coincidence that you and I and Terrak are on earth at this time.”

“I have to go now,” John said. He got up and started to gather his writing materials.

“I hope what I said didn’t upset you.”

“No, I’m fine.”

“Then I hope we can meet again.”

“I’m sure we will meet again,” John said as he turned and began to walk back to Paul’s house.

“Be careful, John,” Isis said. She said to Septurn after John had left, “Once a mother, always a mother.”

No one was at home when John returned. John spent the afternoon alone in his room. When John saw Paul that evening, he said, “Do you remember that you said to me, ‘Just don’t tell me Terrak is my father’?”

“That was a joke, John.”

“The joke is on me, Paul. Today I met a dolphin who told me she was my mother and Terrak was my father on Atlantis.”

“That’s too rich. This is starting to sound more and more like Star Wars.”

“I know.”

John and Septurn and Isis had other discussions, which will not be repeated here. But one more important point Septurn made was this: “Dolphins are not superior or inferior to men. Men and dolphins are both highly advanced beings, but our challenges are different. Still, men and dolphins and all the other species on earth have two important things in common—first, that God is within us, and second, that together we create the reality of the world. It is important that men understand these things; dolphins already do.”

7. The God Within

One day, Paul asked John why the androids didn’t bother him anymore. John replied, “When I was on the spaceship the last time, one of them said to me, ‘What was it their Karl Marx wrote? ‘Religion is the opiate of the people’? Let Paul preach his religion. He makes the people docile.’” John then added, “I think today TV is the opiate, don’t you?”

“Well, I wonder if the rampant, random violence on TV and in the movies doesn’t

inspire violence and despair in society and make wars more acceptable.”

Paul was annoyed that the androids were using him, but he decided nevertheless that it was time to form an organization, a—and he hated to use this word, but there was no better word—“church.” He would call his church “The Church of All That Is.” The church would have no holy book, property, priests, rules or rituals, just a website. In one of the first messages on the website he wrote:

Our philosophy is based on a simple concept: God is in the world. This is not a new idea. It can be found in the spiritual beliefs of the American Indians, the aborigines of Australia, and other native cultures; in the teachings of the three great Eastern religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism; and even in the New Testament. For example, the Hindu Upanishads say, “Then He realized, ‘I indeed am this creation for I have poured it forth from Myself.’” And the Apostle Paul said in his speech to the Athenians, “In Him we live and move and exist.” This idea can also be found in the words and writings of the philosopher Spinoza, the American transcendentalists Emerson and Thoreau, the European romantics, and the modern philosophers Joseph Campbell and Jane Roberts.

There are two conclusions we can draw from this idea. One is that we should treat everyone and everything with the respect due God. The second is that, with God within us, we are naturally inclined to the good. How different that is from saying, “Earth is an unholy place. Your natural impulses must be overcome before you can be acceptable to God.”

We believe the spiritual world and the physical world are not separate, nor is one superior to the other. They are united and continuously affect each other. The physical is merely the spiritual in clothes. You don’t need to die to experience eternal life; it is here now. Be here now.

It is time for a new morality. A morality that doesn’t hold men to be the pinnacle of creation. The philosophy to lead us to a new age simply requires that we recognize the sacredness of all things.

I want to talk about other religions for a moment. Some Christians have come to me and said, “If you would accept Jesus into your life, your life will be filled with joy and peace.” In the world there are many different religions and their believers will all tell you that their religions have brought them joy and peace. How can all these different religions bring joy and peace? I think that they do that by providing people a sense of meaning and purpose. Science says your life has no meaning or purpose beyond the survival of the species. By providing a reason to live in a world dominated by scientific beliefs, any religion should bring joy and peace. So, experiences of joy and peace are not proof that your religion is the true religion.

Many people talk about how God or Jesus or a saint has cured them or changed their lives or saved them. I tell you that faith is power, no matter what the object of your faith is. But why walk with crutches when you can walk alone? Why believe that you are weak when you can believe you have wings? The only faith you need is in yourself—in the God

within you. Putting your faith in the God within you will bring you in accord with the Source of Eternal Life whose waters are flowing all around you right now. And with that faith, you will align yourself with the intentions of your soul and be refreshed and guided and protected.

It takes strong men and women to throw off the shackles of a religion that has been handed down to them by their parents and grandparents. It is a lot easier to lean on something outside yourself that you believe is greater than you than to put your trust in yourself. Are you strong enough to accept that God is within you? Then the prophet of old will have been correct when he said, "Ye shall be as gods."

In another message, Paul outlined what he called the Seven Truths:

- 1. Science, all religions, and all philosophies are based upon unprovable assumptions.*
- 2. The major unprovable assumptions of science are that chance created the universe and all its wonders and that the spiritual world does not exist, or if it exists, it does not affect the physical universe.*
- 3. The major unprovable assumptions of Christianity are that the Bible is the Word of God and that Jesus is the Only Son of God.*
- 4. The first teaching (major unprovable assumption) of the Church of All That Is is that there is consciousness within every conceivable point in the universe and that all consciousness comes from God. God is everywhere and in all things. All things, therefore, should be treated with the respect due God.*
- 5. The second teaching of the Church of All That Is is that we have created our reality and can change it by changing our thinking—specifically, our beliefs and expectations. This is not an assumption because it can be proven by experience, which shows us that we get what we concentrate on. Jane Roberts wrote in *The Nature Of Personal Reality* that the body is "your most intimate feedback system...giving you in flesh the physical counterpart of your thought....Your environment and your experience in the physical world also provide you with the same kind of feedback."*
- 6. The third teaching is that no consciousness can be destroyed. We are not our bodies. Our bodies are like cars: They are vehicles to get us around on this planet. We—our consciousnesses—survive when our vehicles go into the junkyard. This life is only one of many; therefore, mistakes made now will not receive eternal punishment.*
- 7. The fourth teaching is that the universe/God is good-hearted—of good intent. It is therefore easier to create positive events than negative events.*

*We believe these teachings can be the basis for the best, most reasonable philosophy, but we could be wrong. **So we will never say these three things:** "This is the only truth and all other philosophies and religions are false." "God loves us more than He loves anyone else." "If you do not believe as we do, you will go to hell."*

In his messages, Paul wrote that government shouldn't interfere in the lives of adults as long as they left others alone. Since all men were gods, why should anyone tell us how to live our private lives? The spiritual growth of mankind in the new age requires freedom from unnecessary control.

Paul went on to say that a man who trusts his spontaneous nature and the altruism of his impulses will find his life unfolding in a way that is positive and fulfilling. Natural impulses guide us to actions that best fulfill our potential and the potential of everyone else at the same time. When natural impulses are suppressed, unnatural impulses arise that are not beneficial. People who do not trust and consistently suppress their natural impulses to change the world are in danger of becoming frustrated idealists or fanatics who will find it acceptable to kill in the pursuit of their ideals.

Many objected to these teachings. They said these ideas would encourage men to live only for themselves and to commit horrible crimes. Paul said that, in fact, society, by teaching men that they are evil, that they are not responsible for their actions, that their lives are meaningless, and that they should suppress their natural impulses, has led men to exactly that result. Paul said that, on the contrary, most men are of good intent. He said natural impulses never encourage you to harm others. So an impulse to harm others should not be followed.

The justification of harmful actions towards others, such as the bombings of cities in wartime or scientific experiments that require animals to suffer, based upon the principle that “the end justifies the means,” is wrong. A good end never justifies or requires a bad means. The principle of the sacredness of life, whether human or animal or plant, is inviolable. The welfare of society or of a nation does not depend upon harm to innocent people or animals. Bad means leads to a disrespect for the rights of others, which harms us all. To cheapen some lives is to cheapen all life.

In late December, Ani gave birth to a healthy and smiling baby she named Sarah. Later, the nurses said they had never seen such a calm and happy baby. Paul had gone to the hospital with Ani, but he didn’t go into the delivery room with her. And in his excited state of mind, he didn’t notice that Ato was in the waiting room with him. Ato even slapped him on the back after the baby was born and gave him a cigar. A week later, when Ani and Paul saw the photos taken at the hospital, there was one of a smiling Ato looking like a proud grandparent as he held Sarah in his arms.

Paul took two weeks off from his busy schedule of writing, speaking, and meeting people to be with Ani. He helped her take care of Sarah and he did the cooking and cleaning. It was a time when they grew closer to each other.

Paul considered his most important teachings to be about the nature of God. He quoted in his messages from the books of Jane Roberts, who spoke for an “energy-personality essence” named Seth. Seth, who could be called Jane’s future self, was a wise character with a great sense of humor. He said this about God or All That Is:

He is not human in your terms, though he passed through human stages; and here the Buddhist myth comes closest to approximating reality. He is not one individual, but an energy gestalt....

This absolute, ever-expanding, instantaneous psychic gestalt, which you may call God if you prefer, is so secure in Its existence that It can constantly break Itself down and rebuild Itself.

Its energy is so unbelievable that It does indeed form all universes; and because Its energy is within and behind all universes, systems, and fields, It is indeed aware of each

sparrow that falls, for It is each sparrow that falls....

There is no personal God-individual in Christian terms, and yet you do have access to a portion of All That Is, a portion highly attuned to you....There is a portion of All That Is directed and focused within each individual, residing within each consciousness. Each consciousness is, therefore, cherished and individually protected. This portion of overall consciousness is individualized within you.

The personality of God as generally conceived is a one-dimensional concept based upon man's small knowledge of his own psychology. What you prefer to think of as God is, again, an energy gestalt or pyramid consciousness. It is aware of itself as being, for instance, you....It is aware of itself as the smallest seed....This portion of All That Is that is aware of Itself as you, that is focused within your existence, can be called upon for help when necessary.

This portion is also aware of itself as something more than you. This portion that knows itself as you, and as more than you, is the personal God, you see. Again: this gestalt, this portion of All That Is, looks out for your interests and may be called upon in a personal manner.

Paul talked about death. He said in Western culture, death was looked upon as an evil that should be avoided at all costs. To prevent it from taking place, vast sums of money were spent, vast resources were consumed, and many animals and plants were killed or injured in scientific experiments. Paul felt it was wrong to think that human life should be protected no matter what the cost to other life forms. Death was a natural part of life for all creatures and was necessary to make room for new life.

Paul told his audiences that their bodies were designed to maintain themselves well into their nineties without the intervention of medical science. The reason most people did not live longer, healthier lives was mainly because of two reasons: their belief system, which told them their bodies would wear out as they got older, and because they subjected themselves to too much stress.

Paul said that in old age, people experienced revelations, expansions of consciousness, and surges of creativity. But these experiences often were labeled as symptoms of senility and/or were suppressed by drugs. He said that these experiences were natural preparations for life after death.

Paul had a series of funny dreams at this time. In the first dream, he went to see a doctor. He asked the doctor to look at his heart. The doctor said, "Your heart looks fine. Patients always want medications, so take this to the pharmacy on your way out. And be sure to pay the receptionist in cash. I see from your paperwork that you don't have insurance." He went to a second doctor who said before Paul had a chance to explain to him why he was there, "Lie down. I want to examine you." After a short examination, the doctor said, "Just as I thought. We'll have to operate." Paul said, "But the other doctor said I was fine." "All the more reason. We have quotas to meet and standards to keep." He went to a third doctor for a second opinion and the doctor said, "Yes, you need surgery. If you let me do it, I'll give you a better deal. I really want to get the new Porsche 911 Carrera and I don't have the down payment." Paul said, "So you expect me

to be your down payment!” and he ran out of the doctor’s office.

8. Farewell

False rumors were being spread about Paul. The rumors said that he worshipped the devil, preached Communism, and practiced free love. They claimed that, despite his championing the cause of the poor, he lived a life of luxury. And they said that he had the support of the androids. Actually, there was some truth to that last rumor for the reason already mentioned.

Around this time, Paul began having dreams in which he saw himself facing a man with a gun. After having these dreams nearly every night for three weeks, Paul decided to talk to John. He told John about the dreams and then said, “When I was about twenty, I went to a theatre to watch the movie *Slaughterhouse Five*. It was based on the book by Kurt Vonnegut, which I had just read. I identified with the main character, Billy Pilgrim, who is assassinated while giving a speech when he is an old man. In the movie, but not in the book, Billy Pilgrim is asked when his birthday is. He replies, ‘July fourth.’ That is my birthday, as you know. When I heard him say that in the movie theatre, I almost melted in my seat. I left the theatre petrified and sat in my car and cried. I thought I had just witnessed my death.”

“Sort of like the boy in *12 Monkeys*.”

Paul continued, “Since then, I’ve concluded that being shot is not a bad way to die. It’s quick and people will remember you. 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. Four months before his death, Gandhi talked of demonstrating the art of living and dying nonviolently by one perfect act. And on the morning of the day he was shot, he asked his secretary to bring him all his important papers. I’m sure these men knew on a subconscious level that they were going to die.”

John said, “Now that you’ve told me this, what do you expect me to do?”

“Nothing. Don’t tell anyone.”

“Where are you killed in these dreams?”

“Various places.”

“I guess it’s out of the question for you to stop appearing in public, isn’t it?”

“Yes.”

“And if you’re killed, how do you think I’ll feel? If anyone found out I concealed this and did nothing, it wouldn’t look good for me, would it? You have put me in a difficult position. This is what I’ll do: I won’t tell anyone about your dreams, but from now on I’m going to be your personal bodyguard whenever you go out in public. And if anyone knocks on your door, let me answer it.”

That evening Paul gave what was later called, along with his speech the next day, his farewell addresses. These are excerpts:

When I die, do not mourn for me. 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 is frightening and death is terrifying. But if you recognize you are part of life—and everything is alive—then you know you cannot die, you only change form. Identify with the universe of which you are a part, and there is nothing to fear.

We all must die to make room for new life. Without death, life lacks an edge. Without death, we would feel no need to do anything. Death gives us a deadline to complete our work. And if you believe in life after death, then death should be welcomed because it is a door to new experiences.

I have sometimes been asked for the key to peace or enlightenment or happiness. So I made up a three-part formula. The first part is from the philosophy of Jane Roberts. The second and third parts I have put together from the teachings of the three great Eastern religions—Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. First, realize that you create your own reality. Second, have no attachments; accept that everything in this life is subject to change. Third, recognize your unity with the universe and understand that the whole universe is holy.

Someone said that if you are on a journey and the end of the journey keeps receding, then the goal of your life is the journey itself, and not the end. Good night and happy travels.

The next afternoon, Paul spoke in San Lorenzo Park in Santa Cruz, California from the small hill on the lawn near the playground. About seventy or eighty people were there to hear him speak. Paul began:

Many people today are having experiences that science and Christianity say are impossible. They are having precognitive dreams and personal revelations. They are making connections between their thoughts and the events in the world around them; they are experiencing feelings of unity with the universe.

People today need a mythology that will help them understand these experiences. Science denies these experiences occur or pooh-poohs them and, along with Christianity, looks on them with suspicion, as they should. For these experiences undermine science and institutional religion. These experiences point to man's direct connection to "that source from which all life came" in the words of Joseph Campbell, and point to the power within each individual to form his life and the role each individual plays in the creation of the world's events.

Paul paused, then continued:

Traditional science and Christianity are both mythologies, and they both see man as an unsavory beast, someone you wouldn't want to invite over for dinner. Science says man is a born killer alive only because of his cunning and brutality. Christianity says man is inherently evil, born in sin and unable to stop sinning. Traditional science and Christianity tremble, for your days are numbered! There is coming a revolution that will

knock you both off your thrones!

The audience was loud and supportive that day. Someone cried out, “Tell it like it is!”

The world we know is the result of the beliefs we hold as a society. What do you choose to believe? Do you believe that God made you lord of the earth and told you to increase and multiply without concern for the other life on earth? Look where that belief has led us: Many precious species, creatures with their own right to exist, creatures that have contributed to the unique beauty of planet earth, have been wiped out. Many other wonderful species are in danger of disappearing from the earth. The belief that the earth is ours to do with as we please has also resulted in the destruction of forests and wetlands and the pollution of the air, water, and soil.

Now, what if we choose a different set of beliefs? What if we choose to believe that God wants us to share the world with all the other species? What if we choose to believe that we do not own the earth, that no one can own the earth, for the earth belongs to all creatures, both human and non-human, past, present, and future? What happens if we accept these beliefs? We recognize that plants and animals and also future generations have the right to enjoy the earth. We clean up the earth and limit greenhouse gases. We stabilize and then decrease our population. We limit development and exploitation of nature. We start to share the wealth that we already have. We break up governments and any other large institutions that have too much power and return power to people. And the result: There is finally hope for peace on earth, as even the poorest among us has the opportunity for a good education, a decent job, and a decent life.

Paul was interrupted by shouts and a cry of “Now you’re talking!”

Gandhi said, “There is enough for everyone’s needs, but not for everyone’s greed.” If we share the earth, no one need want. Who speaks for the rights of the poor and the downtrodden? The world belongs to the peasants in China and India and the rest of Asia and Africa and Latin America, and all the other poor struggling to survive, as much as it belongs to the rich in their mansions and yachts.

Someone yelled, “Take no prisoners, Paul!”

I want to talk about war. If I take a knife or a gun and kill my neighbor, I’m sure you will all agree that I have committed a crime and should be punished. However, if I join the military and take a gun or a plane or a helicopter or a tank and kill men, women, and children in another land, I am praised and given a ribbon for valor and asked to walk in a parade. How is it that an act committed by one man is a crime, and the same kind of act, done by men wearing uniforms, is an honorable and beautiful thing? How can nations get away with murder on a mass scale? They do it by telling you war is a glorious, sacred act in defense of family and home.

Do not be fooled, my friends, by leaders who talk about the glory of defending your

country by killing innocent people in distant lands. Most wars are mass murders, pure and simple, for which a whole nation is guilty of a terrible crime. The philosopher-mystic Jane Roberts wrote something that I think should be the first commandment of the new age: "Thou shalt not kill even in the pursuit of your ideals."

Paul paused and then in a loud voice said:

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied!" In your lifetime, you are going to be winners. Because for the first time in recorded history, there will be truth and justice and peace on earth.

Paul sat down and the audience gave him a standing ovation. He stood up and said:

I forgot to tell you that the philosophical basis for the new age is quite simple: God is in the world, within everything. Since God is within everything, there is goodness within each one of us. So there is no justification for treating anyone or anything badly. Let this be your code to live by: Treat all things with respect. You will be able to live without regret if you do this.

Paul paused, then said:

*Some have asked me what they should do now. I think that you should act like the gods that you are and seize conscious control of your lives and create a beautiful world around yourself. First, each of you should examine your mind. Discover the beliefs about reality and about yourself that you have accepted. Understand that your experiences flow from those beliefs. If the experiences of your life are not satisfactory, change the beliefs that led to the unsatisfactory results and playfully use your imagination and emotions to mentally experience the results that you desire. Just as you have been creating your experiences all your life by unknowingly using beliefs and imagination and emotion, you can also create your experiences consciously using beliefs and imagination and emotion. Read Jane Roberts' book *The Nature Of Personal Reality* for more on this.*

The audience, which was still standing, cheered, whistled, and clapped their hands. Paul said with a smile:

If a man can write his own epitaph, I would like mine to be: "He saved the best for last."

Paul and John returned to Paul's home after the speech. John went to his room, but Paul fell asleep on the sofa while watching the movie *Jesus Christ Superstar* on TV with Ani, who was nursing Sarah.

In sleep, Paul had a dream similar to the dreams he had been having for several weeks: While he was watching TV with Ani, he heard a knock on the door. He said, "It's for me," and he got up from the sofa to answer it. At the door was a man who said, "You are not God." The man pulled a gun out from under his coat and shot Paul three times in the chest.

Paul exclaimed, "Oh God!" and fell to the floor. Ani screamed and rushed to the

front door.

Paul had a second dream, a new dream. In this dream he saw Sarah as a small child with Ani at a cemetery. Ani laid some roses on a grave and then, pointing to the tombstone, said to Sarah, "Daddy." Sarah repeated, "Dad-dy." The tombstone's inscription said, "Here lies Daniel. He died so that others may live." Ani laid some roses at the grave next to Daniel's and said as she pointed, "Uncle." Sarah repeated, "Un-cle." The tombstone had Paul's name on it and the inscription: "He loved truth and justice and peace."

In the dream, Paul then saw more events of Sarah's possible future life: her graduations from high school and college, her marriage, and the birth of her children. At all of these events, Ani was there alone.

Paul now had another new dream, a third dream, in which he saw many happy moments with Sarah, who had become very close to him. The dream made him feel needed and important. At the end of the dream, he saw Ato, who said, "Paul, in the immortal words of Jane Roberts, 'Your point of power is in the present.' Your future is not predetermined. No one has to die on such and such a day at such and such a time." And then in a flash of inspiration, Paul knew he could choose to live.

Paul awoke. On TV, Mary Magdalene sang the words, "Could we start again?" as Jesus walked away from her. Paul looked at Ani, who appeared to be crying.

Just then he heard a loud knock on the door. "It's for me," he said, and he got up from the sofa to answer the door.

At the door was a man who at first seemed surprised to see Paul opening the door. Then he said, "You are not God," and he began to reach into his coat.

Paul said, "I've decided to live," and he took a step toward the man. When the man pulled a gun out from under his coat, Paul grabbed it with his left hand while he pushed on the man's face with his right hand. As he did, he said, "I didn't say I was God. I said God is within us, but no one is God."

The gun went off, but the bullet missed him. At the sound of gunfire, John, Michael and Ato came running from other parts of the house and subdued the attacker.

Ani, who was now standing beside Paul, said with tears in her eyes, "I've already lost one man. I don't want to lose another."

Paul said, "The new age doesn't need martyrs. If death is not the end to consciousness, then where is the sting?"

After the attacker had been tied up, John said to Paul a bit angrily, "I thought you were going to let me answer the door."

"I forgot."

Paul walked up to Ato and took his hand in his and said, "Ato, we've missed you."

Ani now noticed Ato and she said, "Ato, it's so good to see you! But what are you doing here?"

"Just making sure you and Paul and Sarah are safe."

Ani said, "Thank you, Ato."

Paul put his arms around Ani and kissed her. Then he said, "Let's go for a walk. We have a lot to talk about."

Michael said, "Wait a minute, Paul." Then he said loudly, "Gather around everybody. I want to take a group picture."

Ani went back into the house. She found Ato holding Sarah in his arms and rocking

her back and forth while he sang the nursery rhyme “Old MacDonald Had A Farm.” Ani went into her bedroom to get the baby carrier, a type of pack that could be worn on the front. She came back to the living room and took Sarah from Ato and put her in the carrier so that Sarah was facing forward, the position she preferred. Then Ani put the carrier on and she and Ato walked outside.

Everyone—John, Paul, Michael, Ato, Ani, and Sarah—stood together as one of the policemen who had just arrived took a picture with Michael’s digital camera.

“That was our fellowship of the ringer of the bell photo,” Ato said. Then he waved, said, “Goodbye for now,” and disappeared. Everyone went back inside except Paul and Ani, who took off on their walk.

As they were going down the driveway, Paul said, “When I was young, I had a book called *Be Here Now*. That title speaks volumes. I’ve been neglecting you and Sarah. I’ve gotten too involved in my church. I’ve forgotten what’s really important.”

Ani said, “You told me your favorite song when you were young was ‘The Impossible Dream.’ That was Daniel’s favorite song when he was young too.”

“Yes. But I’m not interested in impossible dreams anymore. I like winning. That’s what drives my car.”

Paul and Ani walked silently for a few moments and then Paul said, “I read this book once about John F. Kennedy. It said that in 1956 his brother Robert called their father, who was in Europe on vacation, and told him that John was going to try to win the Democratic Party’s vice presidential nomination to run alongside Adlai Stevenson. Apparently Joseph Kennedy swore up a storm when he heard that. He said that Stevenson was going to lose to Eisenhower and you didn’t want to be associated with a loser. He said John should only be interested in a sure bet. Kennedy went on to win the Presidency in 1960.”

“Was that a sure bet?”

“No. Good point. It was a close election.”

“And wasn’t he killed?”

“Yes, but that’s another story.”

“Daniel told me all his heroes were killed: John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, and Lincoln.”

“Assassination is a marvelous way to die. It puts an exclamation point on your life. But I want to grow old with you and Sarah. Don Juan said most men don’t know when it is time to get off a path until the path is ready to kill them. I think it’s time for me to retire from teaching. The path with heart for me now is with you and Sarah.”

Ani said, “I’ll hold you to that, Mr. Heart.”

They walked for a little ways and then Paul said, “Did John tell you his joke about the Buddhist monk and the hot dog vendor?”

“Yes, but I didn’t get it. Buddhists are vegetarians.”

“Well, maybe some are not. You would expect Buddhists to be pacifists too, wouldn’t you? But I heard about some street fights between factions of a Buddhist order in Korea not so long ago. And in the past, there were armies of Buddhists monks in Japan that ransacked cities. Even Popes had armies. And mistresses. All the great religions have been corrupted. Did you ever read *Elmer Gantry*? It’s about a horny Bible preacher in the Midwest who...”

“What about your religion?”

"I'm sure if it survives, it will be corrupted. Then I will have to come back and straighten it out too."

When Paul and Ani returned from the walk, they found a female reporter and a TV camera crew waiting to interview Paul. The reporter asked him, "Are you OK?"

"Yes. I'm fine."

"Did you know the man who attacked you?"

"No."

"Did he say anything to you?"

"He said, 'You are not God.'"

"What do you think his motive was?"

"I imagine he thought I was a threat to Christianity."

"Are you?"

"I believe in the Christ of love and compassion, even for those who disagree with us. The Christ who taught that men are naturally good and that God is within us. If I am a threat to Christianity, then I have to wonder if Christianity hasn't lost sight of the real Christ."

"Paul, what did you mean when you said in Santa Cruz, '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?"

"Well, a nonviolent one. A revolution of the heart. A revolution that sees the good in all men."

"Paul, tell us about your time in the androids' prison. I heard that you received special treatment."

"The androids wanted me to be happy there. They even gave me a computer to use. I think they thought my philosophy would encourage people to ignore what they were doing to the world."

"What do you think will happen after the vote on July third at the UN? If the nations of the world vote against the androids' proposal, what will the androids do?"

"I don't know, but I don't think they will be serving us cake and ice cream."

"You have been called a demagogue. Tell us what your feelings are about that."

"I've only said what needs to be said. But anyway, it doesn't matter. I've decided to retire and cultivate my garden."

"How can you quit now? You don't seem like a quitter."

"I don't need to prove anything to anybody. Life is meant to be lived, not talked about."

"Paul, what are you really trying to do? A lot of people are confused."

"I'm trying to present people 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 am trying to present a philosophy that can be used to build a healthy world. This philosophy, if accepted, will not only change our present experiences in many ways, it will change our past. And of course our future will be very different too."

"What's the purpose of life, Paul?"

"That's a difficult question, but I think it is important that we learn that our beliefs create our health, our experiences, and the world's events."

The reporter said, "Many people today are seeking happiness. You've said happiness

comes through fulfillment.”

“Yes, and once we learn the universe’s main rule, which simply is that we get what we concentrate on, then the door is open to our fulfillment as individuals and as a species. I think fulfillment is a moving target. As we grow, our potentials grow too. But many people today are frustrated because society, their jobs or their beliefs are blocking their fulfillment.”

“Thank you for talking with us tonight, Paul. And we’re glad to know you weren’t injured in the attack.”

“You’re welcome.”

After the interview was aired on a national news program, Paul became a celebrity. Some said he was a dangerous man; others said he was just what the world needed. Paul said, trying to play down the event, “That was my fifteen minutes of fame.” Paul was besieged by requests for interviews and appearances on talk shows, but he turned them all down.

9. Honam

John had a conversation with Septurn soon after Paul’s retirement. It began after Septurn activated the alarm Paul had set up for the dolphins to contact him.

When John arrived at the cove, Septurn said, “I have a message for you from Honam.”

“My friends can send me emails. Why would they send a message through you?”

“This friend doesn’t have a computer. So he sent the message to me in a dream.”

“What’s his name?”

“I don’t know.”

“What does he look like?”

“He is old and thin with a long gray beard and bushy eyebrows.”

“The elf king! What did he say?”

“He said, ‘Tell John he must come to Honam. It’s very important.’”

“But how will I get to Honam? The androids won’t let me leave earth.”

“I know someone who can take you there,” Septurn said.

“Who?”

“They’re called the 24 civilizations.”

“The androids asked me about them four years ago. They wanted to know if dolphins had been in contact with the 24 civilizations. Who are they?”

“Only a few dolphins, dolphins like me who have lived on Atlantis, know about them. They are a collection of advanced civilizations that have an interest in earth.”

John arrived on Honam in the late afternoon. The ship dropped him off on the outskirts of the Forbidden Forest, where he was met by elves who escorted him to the underground palace of the elf king.

At the palace he was reintroduced to Talembo, the elf king’s chief councilor, 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 king’s private chamber.

"It's been more than thirty years since we talked, my son," the elf king said when he saw John. "I think it's time for the prophecy to come true. It was not my prophecy, you know, but was told to me by my father. He said I would meet a boy who, when he was a man, would go to earth to help save it. Now I want to tell you the second part of the prophecy."

"There is more? I feel burdened already, your majesty."

"Please don't call me that!" the elf king exclaimed. Then he added quietly, "Yes, you may be right. One thing at a time."

"What can I do to help save the earth?"

The elf king said, "Do you know that android soldiers have been to the Forbidden Forest several times in the last few years? They have been looking for us, but they are so clumsy we hear them from far away and can hide from their sensors. The androids learned many years ago that a prophecy had come 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 instead, that a dolphin will betray them. I think they have been coming to the Forest to try to find out what that means."

"Did you know that one of my hobbies on Honam was the study of marine mammals similar to the dolphins on earth?"

"No! When you went to earth, we hadn't seen you for many years."

"Because of my studies of marine mammals, the androids asked me to investigate the human research on dolphins."

"Because of the prophecy we fed to them, which was meant to protect you," the elf king said.

"Instead, it turned the attention back on me," John said. "But without the prophecy about the dolphins, I never would have met Paul and I wouldn't be here now."

"How strange life is!"

The elf king looked at Talembo and then said, "We will talk about this at another time. Now I want you to meet Long Ears. She is a deep trance channel."

Talembo went out of the room and quickly returned with a young female elf.

Long Ears went into a trance after drinking some beer with the king and John. She then spoke in a voice that at times seemed masculine and at times seemed feminine.

"Good evening, John," Long Ears said. "I am Silva, a spokesperson for the 24 civilizations. We are very disturbed by the developments on earth. We see a terrible war on the horizon. We want you to help us stop the androids before it is too late."

"I'll do whatever I can. They killed my family."

"We know and we offer our sincere condolences."

"How can I help?"

"It is widely expected that when the nations of the earth meet on July third at the UN, they will vote against forming a world government under the control of the androids. We believe the androids have already decided to launch an attack after that meeting. We also think that the androids, in preparation, 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 too, then. We will work ourselves on getting both the androids and the humans to go to Megiddo for their battle."

"Megiddo! Do you understand the biblical implications?"

“Yes, yes. You must trust us about this. All I can say now is that we will show the humans some things that we believe will overwhelm them.”

“And overwhelm the androids too, then?”

“I can’t give you any more details. I’m sorry.”

“Is there anything else?”

“Yes. We would like you to try to stop the mind implants. They must not succeed. The consequences are not good for the entire universe.”

When Long Ears came out of trance, the elf king said, “You’re a popular fella, John. Now there are two fairies who would like to talk to you.”

He told Talembo, “Bring in Medina and Tuse.”

A few minutes later Talembo came back with two beautiful fairies. Medina, a female, was a deep blue sea color and Tuse, a male, was a rich forest green.

Medina spoke first: “John, do you remember us? You were only a small boy when we met. You have grown into a fine young man.”

John said, “I remember you and Tuse, although I had forgotten your names. You told me we would meet again. I remember that. I also remember Tuse taking me for a ride on his back above the forests. Although for many years, I thought it was only a dream or my imagination.”

Tuse asked, “Would you like to fly above the forests again?”

“I think I’m too heavy for you now.”

“But 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 are very upset about the destruction that is taking place.”

John said, “I am too. Do you know that the humans are cutting down tropical rain forests and killing dolphins and whales as we speak?”

“How horrible.”

Tuse said, “Is there anything you can do to stop these awful things from happening?”

“I don’t know what I can do,” John said. “I am an alien among humans, a stranger in a strange land.”

“Well, then, can you tell the people in Greenpeace and Save The Earth and the World Wildlife Fund and all the other environmental groups not to get discouraged?” Tuse said. “Tell them help is on the way.”

After the fairies had left, the elf king said, “It is evening and time for food and merriment. No more serious talk tonight.”

In the main chamber of the palace long wooden tables had been set up parallel to the length of the room. The room was now filled with elfin guests awaiting the return of the king and John from their meeting. When the king arrived, they all stood and shouted, “All hail, king!”

The elf king and John sat down at the head table and then everyone else sat down. This was a feast in honor of John, whom many of them 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 android occupation of Honam.

At the end of the feast, a very drunk king rose and said, “I want to tell you a story from elfin lore. There once was an elf named Stone. He was called that because he was hardheaded and not very sharp.”

The king paused and everyone laughed at his joke. Then he continued, “Stone was a

carpenter. One day he got an order to make a bed for the marriage of an elf maiden to a man. When he made the bed, he made one side longer than the other side. When he delivered the bed to the man's house, the man asked, 'How did you know that I sleep on the right side of the bed?'"

"Stone answered, 'Because I have been told that the man is always right.'"

The king paused so that everyone could laugh.

"On another occasion, Stone got an order to make a table for my grandfather, who was not a king, if you recall."

"Stone asked my grandfather, 'What kind of a table would you like, sir?'"

"My grandfather said..."

The elf king paused and then motioned for Talembo to come to him. After they had conferred for about half a minute, the elf king said, "Friends, we are here today to honor John, a man who has been to planet earth. I remember the first time I met him. 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 soon return to earth and defeat the androids!"

The king sat down and all the elves stood and cheered and then began filing out. John was too embarrassed to look up.

John waited until everyone had gone before he got up to go. Talembo came up to him as he was walking out of the main chamber and said, "Let me show you to your room."

They walked together silently, but when they got to the room, Talembo asked, "Could I talk privately with you?"

John said, "I am tired, but I have sensed all evening that there is something you want to tell me, so please come in and sit down."

Talembo followed John into the room and closed the door. He did not sit, but stood. He said, "I will be quick." He paused and then said, "The king is getting quite old and he has no heir. I'm afraid there will be a struggle after he dies. As you know, he has a daughter from a not very secret liaison with a lady of the court. I saw you looking at her tonight. She is quite beautiful, isn't she?"

"Yes, she is the fairest elf I have 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 unprecedented 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 is secretly in love with you."

"How would you know that?"

"I am not the king's chief councilor for my good looks, John. It is my job to know those kind of things."

"I will need time to think about this. It is too soon after my wife's death. And first I must finish my work on earth."

“I understand.”

The next morning John had a private breakfast with the king. The king told John things that he had told no one else, not even Talembo. As John was leaving, the king said to him, “We are counting on you, John. We know you will make us proud.”

Before returning to earth on the spaceship of the 24 civilizations, John paid a visit to his village and spent a week with his parents.

One morning, android soldiers passed by the village on their way to the Forbidden Forest. When they returned in the afternoon, John went out to meet them. He stood in the middle of the road as they walked past the village. John did not say a word, but the look in his eyes could have nearly melted steel or whatever alloy the android soldiers were made of. The soldiers walked over him and around him as if he were a bump in the road. Fortunately, two arms quickly dragged him off to the side. The arms belonged to his friend Laszlo.

“John, you didn’t accomplish anything by doing that. Those robots are mindless machines.”

“I don’t know why I did that. I just felt overwhelmed with hate and helplessness.”

“I want to apologize for not going to see you at your parent’s house, 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. I didn’t expect the android soldiers to attack the village after we fired rockets at them. We thought they’d chase us. We planned to ambush them in the forest.”

“I didn’t read all of the email you sent me, but my parents told me the story. It wasn’t your fault. I want you to stop feeling guilty. But that was a pretty stupid plan.”

“I know. I don’t have any right to talk, but I want to give you a piece of advice that was given to me since then and 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 androids and you hate armies and war. 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, Laszlo. It will take time, but I will learn to stop hating the androids.”

“Replace your hatred with love and forgiveness, John.”

“I think I must first visit their graves. Will you come with me?”

“Yes. I’ll show you where they are.”

The graves were about a kilometer outside the village, on a small hill under a large oak tree. Two sparrows were singing in the tree when John and Laszlo arrived.

John and Laszlo stood silently near the graves for several minutes. Then John said, “That’s enough. Let’s go.”

On the walk back to the village, John said, “When we were at the graves, I had the strong feeling that my wife and Cyndi are not dead. That they are as alive as you or me, only they don’t have physical bodies now. That they chose to leave their bodies when they did because it was the right time for them. It confirms the dream I had of them.”

Just before the week was up, Tuse came to John when he was on a walk in the Forbidden Forest.

“Are you ready to go on that ride I promised you?” Tuse asked.

“Yes. I’ve been looking forward to it.”

“Where shall we go?”

“I would like to see a forest with really old trees.”

“Fine. There is a very powerful redwood grove nearby.”

Tuse touched John’s shoulder and together they soared into the air, several hundred meters above the ground.

John said, “This is marvelous. 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 with an appreciation of the massive and old consciousnesses that felt secure in the knowledge of their place in the universe and that did not fear their deaths, for they could see beyond them. John also had an insight into possible futures for that redwood grove. Some of the possible futures were troubling to him, but he told no one about them at that time. After Tuse brought John back to his village, he told him that they would meet again.

When John arrived back at Paul’s home several days later, he rested. The next day he felt he was ready to play his role in helping save the earth and defeat the androids. He first thought about how he could lure the android army to Israel, as Silva had requested him to do. He decided to ask for a meeting with General Nietzsche and he phoned Azir.

“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 see my wife’s and daughter’s graves. Besides that, I will not say.”

“We think you talked to the 24 civilizations and we would love to know what they told you.”

“They gave me a message for General Nietzsche.”

“And the message is?”

“No more questions.”

Azir called John later that day and told him that General Nietzsche had agreed to meet him at Paul’s house the next day. John said, “Tell him to come at twelve o’ clock.”

General Nietzsche was late for the meeting. When he arrived, Ani was the one who opened the door. She had told John that she had always wanted to see an android in person, so John invited her to be present at the meeting. General Nietzsche, who had to duck when he came in, seemed happy to see a woman. When Ani stood beside him in the entrance to the house she looked very small, like a child.

Ani ushered him into the living room, where John was eating his 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?”

John, who was sitting on the sofa, said, “That oath was made under the threat of harm to my family. It had no validity. The reason I asked you here was because I wanted to tell you that the New Atlantis construction in Jerusalem site will be attacked.”

“Why should I trust you? This is some kind of trick.”

“No, I just want to make sure there is no violence.”

“Violence is good. It allows the fittest to survive and to take their rightful place as rulers. Besides, it’ll give me a chance to try out some of our new weapons. An army that doesn’t go to war every few years is risking not being able to keep up with its own technology.”

“War is a license to kill. 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. Well, 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 the door and into the waiting shuttle.

The next day, after consulting with Terrak, General Nietzsche began sending android and mutant soldiers down to earth. A few were sent to the New Atlantis construction site and the rest were sent to the Valley of Jezreel, where Megiddo was located. General Nietzsche had decided that the northern end of the valley would be a good place for a battle. He believed John’s story was a trick and he didn’t understand what the purpose was, but he was happy to finally be preparing for a battle.

10. The Resistance Fights Back

In the countryside in caves and under ground, resistance cells had formed. They were there to avoid detection by the cameras and listening devices on the thousands of black blimps the androids had placed above the earth.

In early June, on the fourth anniversary of the androids’ arrival, resistance forces staged attacks on the android prison in Mexico and on the half dozen other android prisons around the world. The battles were brief if they occurred at all, for the prison guards were no match for the well-armed resistance fighters. In most cases, the guards surrendered without a fight.

The resistance leaders had expected the androids to send in their robot and mutant soldiers when the attacks began, but that was not done. When Terrak was asked by Newton, the head of the secret police, if some soldiers could be sent to the prisons to counterattack, Terrak said, “Never mind. Why worry about them when we are so close to our goal?”

A few days after the successful attacks, Michael awoke in the morning with the thought, “I should visit a resistance cell.” At the urging of Paul, he decided to follow through with his impulse. Ani wanted to go too. Paul said it would be OK, but he made Michael and Ani promise they would be careful.

That afternoon, Michael drove for several hours into the desert east of San Diego and then turned off onto a side road. He drove for about a kilometer and parked the car when he felt it was a good time to stop. Then he and Ani got out of the car and started walking. They were soon surrounded by resistance fighters, who had come from behind rocks and bushes. The resistance fighters quickly recognized Ani, as she had been seen on the TV news with Paul, and they took her and Michael to see the leaders of their cell.

During the meeting, the resistance leaders told them of a research facility nearby that an android shuttle visited daily.

Now, John had previously told Michael and Ani that human scientists were assisting the androids in developing the implant device that would transfer android minds to children. Michael and Ani told the resistance leaders of the experiments and they all agreed that this might be where it was being done.

When Michael and Ani returned to Paul's home that evening, they told John what they had learned. John saw this as the opportunity he had been waiting for. Together the three of them made a plan. First, they needed to get into the facility. John, who knew of the androids' security procedures and who could pretend to be one of their alien workers, would get them in.

Early the next morning, John, Ani, and Michael drove to the research facility and stopped at the gate. John told the security guard that he was an alien and that he had come with Ani and Michael, two reporters from the *San Diego Sentinel*. John said the androids had authorized him to bring the reporters in for a tour. The guard let them in after making a call to the human director of the project, Dr. Lear.

Once inside the building, they were taken to Dr. Lear's office. He was surprised to hear that the androids had authorized a tour, but he was willing to spend a few minutes of his time with them.

Michael asked him, "Can you tell us what the androids are doing here? There are rumors that the androids are conducting experiments on animals with the help of human scientists. The rumors say that what is learned from the experiments will be used on children."

"I'm glad you've given me the opportunity to tell our side of the story. Before I begin, let me say that this is the most exciting time to be a scientist ever. There is so much we can learn from the androids! They have promised to show us how to grow organs, so that sick people don't have to wait for a donor. And I think, from the experiments we are conducting with their scientists, we will learn how to transfer our minds when we get old into fully mature clones. Then we will be immortal like the Greek gods! I think the year of the androids' arrival will go down in history as the beginning of a new age on earth. In the future, we will date our years from it: B.A. and A.A: before the androids and after the androids."

Dr. Lear looked at the three faces, which were incredulous, and said, "Well, maybe I got a little carried away about the dating. What was it you wanted to know?"

"More about the experiments you're conducting here. Can we see them?" Michael asked.

"That's impossible. The androids have forbidden it. Besides, you wouldn't understand." Dr. Lear paused and then said, "But maybe it's time that we present our case to the world. So I will try to explain what we are doing."

He took a deep breath and began: "There are two phases to the androids' plans for us. The first phase is totally altruistic. They want to improve the human species through genetic engineering."

He paused and looked across his desk at his visitors before continuing: "Do you understand that there has been a weakening of the human genome due to the social welfare movement of the last two centuries?"

"I didn't know that," Michael replied skeptically.

Dr. Lear continued, "The weak and sick are surviving and having children. This has never happened before in the history of evolution on earth. As a result, unbeneficial genes are accumulating in man's gene pool. The androids can help us stop this. We, the scientists at this institute and the android scientists, have been developing banks of superior genes that can be placed into the eggs of inferior human females to create a strong species again."

"I have heard that you are working on creating docile people that can easily be controlled," Michael said.

"That's not true. Our goal is to make efficient human beings."

Dr. Lear rubbed his hands together and cracked his knuckles. "Do you understand the power we scientists have, now that we've unraveled the secrets of the human genome? In our hands is the power to create leaders or followers, nurturers or murderers, great artists or great failures. The possibilities are endless. I feel like we're touching the mind of God here. Unfortunately, this first phase has been put on the back burner. Terrak has asked us to concentrate on the second phase. We've been hard at work at that for nearly two years."

"And what is the second phase?"

"You must understand that the androids want to get rid of their robot bodies. For that, they need hosts. With all they are doing for us, it isn't too much to ask that we provide the hosts, is it? It will give us something to do with surplus children too. And with what we learn from the experiments, it may be possible to eliminate death, except by murder, suicide or accident, from the human experience."

"But at what cost? Isn't it true the androids are going to kidnap babies from their mothers' breasts and implant their minds into them?" Michael asked angrily.

"That's a distortion of the facts. The children will be weaned first."

"It sounds like Jonathan Swift's 'A Modest Proposal' to me," Michael said.

Dr. Lear replied brusquely, "I haven't read that book."

Michael snapped back, "Well, maybe you should. And it's not a book—it's an essay."

Dr. Lear seemed uncertain of what to say next. He looked around, as if he were hoping someone would come by to give him an excuse to change the subject. Finally he said, "Well, let me show you the wonderful nurseries we've set up for the children."

Dr. Lear explained as they walked to the nurseries, "For the first implants, the plan is to take a few kids who have no future, homeless children from Asia, and give them an opportunity their countrymen would die for. Later, when the procedure is perfected, we will select women who are healthy, intelligent and strong as mothers."

"Have any implants been tried yet?" Michael asked.

"We have been successful with dogs and monkeys. Tomorrow is the big day—I must say that Terrak has been quite impatient with us. But we will finally try to implant an android mind into a human child."

While they were walking to the nurseries, a shuttle landed outside the facility. It brought Terrak and another android. Terrak had been scheduled to come the following day to observe the implant, but he decided to come on the flight that day so that he could inspect the equipment. The android that came with Terrak had been selected for the first implant.

As Terrak was entering the facility, Dr. Lear was showing Ani and Michael and John

the host child for the first implant. He was a cute boy about three years old who had been found living on the streets in one of the great cities of south Asia. He had been chosen because he was mentally sharp, healthy, and physically strong. There were also several other young children with him who were considered potential future implant recipients.

Ani felt sympathy for the young boy and she wanted to do something. She pulled John to the side and asked him, "Is there some way we can stop the implant?"

"That is what I'm here for. If you and Michael can distract Dr. Lear for a few minutes, I can hack into their main computer through the terminal in this room."

Just then Terrak came around the corner. "What's he doing here?" Terrak asked, looking at John. Then, motioning to the security guards nearby, he said, "These people are spies. Arrest them."

Just as the security guards surrounded them, John, Michael, and Ani dematerialized. They re-materialized outside the cave of the resistance fighters. There they saw an image of Ato, not solid, but ghostlike. Ato said, "Boy, that took all I've got! I'm bushed. Next time, I hope you guys have a transporter." Then he disappeared.

"What did he mean by 'transporter'? Isn't that the name of a movie?" Ani asked.

John said, "Haven't you ever seen *Star Trek*?"

"No."

"Ask Paul to show you his videotapes."

"I did see *Star Wars*."

"That's nothing like *Star Trek*."

"I really liked Darth Vader. Does *Star Trek* have someone like him?"

"How could you like Darth Vader?"

"I don't mean I liked him personally. But his conflict was interesting, how he was good at first, but got corrupted by the power of the Dark Side."

"*Star Trek* had really great personalities: Spock, Captain Kirk, Scotty, the doctor—what was his name—Bones?"

Michael answered, "McCoy." He added impatiently, "Do you guys think we might get out of view before we're discovered?"

They ran into the cave, where the resistance leaders were waiting for them. After a short discussion, they decided they had to act that night and they made a plan. The plan was for the resistance fighters to conduct an attack to distract the guards while Ani and John and Michael corrupted the computer code and kidnapped the boy.

Later that evening, Ani and Michael waited on the road outside the research facility for the van with the workers who cleaned the facility every night. When Michael saw the van approaching, he signaled to Ani, who laid down on the pavement as if she had been hurt in an accident. Michael stood in the middle of the road and waved the van down.

When the van stopped, Michael asked the driver if he would take his injured friend to the hospital. Just then a resistance fighter came out from behind a rock and, pointing his gun at the driver of the van, told him and the other workers to get out. After the workers had taken their uniforms off, Michael and Ani tied them up and moved them to a location where they could not be seen from the road.

About half an hour later, Michael, Ani, John, and the resistance fighter, dressed in the uniforms of the cleaning company, pulled up to the gate at the entrance to the research facility.

The guard was in a joking mood and he said, "You guys aren't the usual cleaning

people. Are you sure you aren't from the resistance? What's the password?"

Michael, the driver of the van, did not know what to say. But he spoke the words that came suddenly to his lips: "The resistance sucks."

"Big time. The androids gave me a job."

As the guard opened the gate he said, "I was just kidding. There's no password."

Once inside, Michael, Ani, John, and the resistance fighter went into the large cleaning supply closet and reviewed a map of the facility that John had downloaded from the Internet. Then Michael and Ani went to work cleaning the restrooms, emptying the trash, and polishing the floors. John and the resistance fighter looked for and found the entrance to the roof and climbed onto it.

Soon afterwards the attack by the resistance fighters began, drawing all the guards away from the center of the facility. From the roof, John and his accomplice found the main computer room. Like in the movie *Mission Impossible*, John was lowered down on a cable into the room through a vent in the roof. While in this position—suspended in the air—he was able to corrupt the computer code for the device that was supposed to transmit brain waves to the implant host. When John had finished, he and the resistance fighter escaped through a hole that had been cut in the fence at the back of the facility.

Meanwhile, Ani and Michael found the boy and whisked him away through the back exit and through the same hole in the fence just before the guards discovered their entry into the nurseries. As soon as everyone had safely escaped, the resistance fighters ended the attack on the research facility and released the cleaning company workers.

John, Ani, and Michael, along with the young boy, arrived at Paul's home late that night, tired, but satisfied that they had done important work.

After what he had seen and learned at the research institute, John felt more than ever that he had to do something soon to stop the androids. He knew that what he had done to the main computer would only delay them. He also knew that time was short because, according to the warning from the 24 civilizations, the androids might begin their war anytime after July third. So he worked on a plan with Paul.

Two weeks later on a warm July third afternoon, Paul, John, Ani, and Michael watched on TV the proceedings at the UN General Assembly, where the nations of the world were voting on the androids' demands. The final vote was nearly unanimous against the androids. In an interview right after the vote, the android ambassador to the UN warned that there would be consequences.

About an hour later, the alarm sounded in Paul's home. Both Paul and John ran to the cove.

Septurn was there to meet them. He said, "I just received a message from Silva of the 24 civilizations. He said the androids are going to attack in Megiddo on July fourth at one o'clock. He said you must do whatever you can to delay them."

Paul and John looked at each other and Paul responded silently to Septurn, for he and John could now understand each other's telepathic communications: "Thank you for warning us, Septurn. John and I have a plan that we will put into action now."

Paul stayed to discuss with Septurn the dolphins' role in the plan, while John rushed back to Paul's house to prepare to leave for LA with Michael. John, who had twice escaped the android spaceship, now wanted to smuggle himself back on.

That night, John and Michael sneaked aboard a shuttle just before it left from the office building where John had once lived and worked. John was determined now, but

scared. He thought of how he had failed his people and his own family. He was afraid to fail mankind too.

After the shuttle had docked with the spaceship, John and Michael waited, hoping the guards would doze off or get distracted, but they remained alert. Finally John whispered to Michael, "We can't wait any longer. Let's go."

They got up and ran. Guards shouted. Alarms went off. But they got beyond the security doors just before they closed.

After an hour of running and hiding, they reached the large hall in the hold of the ship, where the androids held their meetings. At the far end of it they could see twenty desks, but only two were occupied. Behind the desks were a couple of security guards. Boldly John and Michael walked toward the desks.

When they were about ten meters away, the android on the right, looking at John, demanded, "How did you get in here?" It was Kepler, the Secretary for Planetary Affairs.

John said, "I've come to see Terrak."

"He's busy."

"Then I want to ask you a question. Why did you lie to me? You told me if I came to earth, my family would be protected."

"The death of your wife and daughter is regrettable, but it was unavoidable. Our soldiers were attacked from your village. They had to defend themselves."

"By killing women and children? Those were just mindless robots that were injured in the rocket attack."

"Robots have rights too. Anyway, terrorists must understand that all attacks will be met with overwhelming force. Peace through war is our policy. We intend to civilize your planet even if we have to kill everyone on it."

"We have a level of civilization that you cannot even imagine."

"You don't even have a proper government."

The other android, Newton, the head of the secret police, opened a drawer in his desk and placed his hand in it. As he did, he said to John, "You've joined the resistance, haven't you?"

"Yes," John replied.

Newton lifted his hand and pointed a gun at John.

"Maybe I should just kill you now and avoid the paperwork," he said. He stood up and walked toward John.

"If you kill us, what purpose would it serve?" John said as he looked toward Michael for some help, maybe an expression on his face that would indicate what to do, but Michael looked scared too.

"You are a bother to us. If I had my way, we wouldn't try to appease the men on earth and Honam like Terrak wants us to do—we would exterminate the resistance on both of your planets and be done with you."

"You think you can rule the Milky Way with your android soldiers, don't you?" John said.

Kepler said, "Everything we do is for the good of the galaxy. Someone needs to police unruly planets—the 24 civilizations won't do it." And looking at Michael, he added, "The earth, with its nuclear weapons in the hands of immature governments, is a threat to all peace-loving worlds. Once the earth is disarmed, we can begin a glorious age of interstellar free trade."

“A kind of Pax Valkar, then,” John said.

“Yes, the Roman model was an excellent one, but we will make earth the Rome of the galaxy. Peace and prosperity will extend out from earth in all directions.”

“And you will do this by force. When will you learn that violence is the father of violence?”

“Force is the only method that gets results. Humans respect force.”

“A wise human once said, ‘As you sow, so shall you reap.’ Have you tried to encourage voluntary, mutual disarmament?”

“We can’t trust humans to disarm. We know they would violate any agreement they signed. Besides, humans aren’t smart enough to know what’s good for them.”

“And you and your fellow Valkarians are.”

“Yes.”

John looked at his watch. “We really need to talk to Terrak soon,” he said.

Newton said, “I can give him a message after I tell him how ironic it is that you have been killed by guards from your own planet while you were attempting to escape. What do you want to say to him?”

“I have something very important to tell him that I cannot reveal to anyone.”

Newton turned toward the guards and said, “Arrest these men.” The guards began walking toward John and Michael.

John felt his knees shaking. He again turned toward Michael for some help, but Michael looked at him with a bewildered expression.

John suddenly remembered the time he had gotten lost in the Forbidden Forest when he was a boy. He had been scared until he saw a figure standing in the shadow of a tree. The figure’s facial expression was warm and its gesture was beckoning. When the figure disappeared, he walked in the direction it had indicated and soon found his way out of the forest.

Now John heard a familiar voice in his head say, “The power you seek is within you.” A series of realizations burst forth in his mind and he knew this moment had been planned long before. He knew he and Newton were partners in a cosmic dance and he only needed to let the inner music guide him.

John concentrated on the gun in Newton’s hand, and, as he did, he held out his right hand and said loudly but calmly, “Give me that gun.”

Feeling a tugging on his hand, Newton asked, “What are you doing?”

“The gun in your hand could hurt someone.”

“It’s going to hurt you in a second,” Newton said, cocking the gun. “But you won’t feel a thing because you will die quickly, unlike your wife and daughter.”

Anger flashed through John’s mind and his attention wavered. He was overwhelmed by the thought of wanting to smash Newton into little pieces. But then it passed and he again focused on the task of removing the gun from Newton’s grasp. After a final burst of concentration, the gun flew from Newton’s hand and into his own outstretched hand.

Looking at his hand, Newton said, “I’ve got to get my hand in for a tune-up. It’s not gripping the way it used to.”

Now out of the corner of his eye, John could see a short, limping figure approaching from the side. It was Ato!

Ato, who appeared old and tired, came up to John and said, “There’s nothing to be gained by arguing with a fanatic.”

Kepler, who was now standing, looked down at Ato and said, "Who's the shrimp?"

In an instant, Ato's blue jeans and long-sleeve button shirt changed into a long brown robe and his tennis shoes became boots. And he appeared to grow younger and taller.

Ato jumped into the air and, with a yell that sounded like "Yacho!", kicked Kepler in the chest. The kick sent Kepler sprawling while Ato landed on top of the desk. He dropped down from the desk and walked over to the android and said, "You're no Kepler."

Newton, who was about two meters from John, lunged at him. In a spontaneous reaction, John pulled the trigger of the gun. A bullet pierced Newton's head where his balance and speech functions were located and he fell to the floor. His eyes remained open, but he could not speak.

The two guards pointed their weapons at John and Ato, but as they did, the guns flew out of their hands and into the hands of John and Michael.

John looked at Ato and said, "Ato, I'm surprised to see you here."

"Well, I was sitting around in heaven feeling a little bored and I saw what you were up to, so I thought I would join the fun. How was my acting?"

"I thought you were overacting and acting out of character."

"I haven't been to acting school, you know," Ato said a little sheepishly.

"You're doing fine, Ato. I'm so glad to see you," John said and he gave Ato a hug.

John then said, "Let's tie these guys up." John walked over to the guards and took their own belts and used them to tie their hands. Then he said, "Let's turn Kepler off." He walked over to the android and punched in a code on a small keypad behind Kepler's left ear. "And let's put this camera to sleep too." John went over to the camera on the wall behind the desks and pushed a button on it.

John said to Ato, "We're fortunate that the androids have only a few guards left on the spaceship. Almost everyone is down on earth. That gives us the opportunity we need. Let's capture the Brain Room and then go to Terrak's office and either convince him to give up or take him hostage. Then maybe we can get the android army on earth to withdraw."

Michael said, "I don't know how to fight. What should I do?"

"You can't fight!" Ato exclaimed. "Why did you come along? I know: You can carry the guns."

John said, "I don't know how to get to the Brain Room from here."

Ato said, "I do. Follow me," and he led them through the door behind the androids' desks.

The two warriors, with Michael tagging along, ran down the corridors of the spaceship and soon found themselves at the entrance to the Brain Room. There was only one guard, whom Ato disarmed using psychokinesis. Then, using his psychic powers again, he opened the doors to the Brain Room. Ato, John, and Michael rushed in and quickly overpowered the alien attendants, who were not allowed to have weapons.

Michael counted the brains in the glass cases and said, "Something's wrong. There are only eighteen brains here."

"Twenty-one if you count us," Ato said.

John said, "They must have the other two at the research facility on earth."

Leaving Michael to guard the Brain Room, Ato and John ran to Terrak's office. No one was there, but an alien secretary told them Terrak was in the command center. They raced to the center and took out the guards with a series of punches and kicks. Then they burst through the door and found Terrak and his alien aides sitting around a table.

Terrak did not look up from the document he was reading when they entered, but merely said, "What took you so long to get here? We've known you were on the ship ever since you arrived."

John said, "I had a little business to take care of with Newton and Kepler."

Terrak now looked at John and said, "So we meet again. Why did you disappear the other day? That wasn't very nice. And who's the little man? He looks familiar."

Ato said dramatically, "I am your worst nightmare."

Terrak said to John, "You weren't involved in the kidnapping and computer hacking at the research facility that day I saw you, were you?"

John did not answer.

Terrak said, "Just as I thought. Well, it was only a minor annoyance. Hey, you've come just in time to watch the start of our little war." He looked at the clock on the wall, which said 12:30.

"Not if we can help it," John replied. "Your Brain Room is right now under our control."

"You don't scare me."

Ato said, "Look at the lower right video screen. There's a gun pointed at your brain...Attaboy, Michael."

On the wall on the other side of the room were four video screens. On one screen, Michael could be seen moving toward the glass case in the center of the room.

"You wouldn't hurt our brains. I know that people from Honam are pacifists, John."

"Just because we don't have guns or an army doesn't mean we are pacifists," John replied.

"But the report I read talked about vegetarianism and your non-violent religions..."

John interrupted, "That report was written by me to encourage you not to use force on Honam. I learned from humans that it is possible to make history say what you want it to say by emphasizing events that agree with your point of view and ignoring the events that don't agree with your viewpoint."

"So you deceived us," Terrak said.

"It wasn't the first time."

"You really have gone native," Terrak said.

Ato interrupted the conversation: "Tell the guards who are just about to come through the door to go back to their stations and to stay away from the Brain Room too."

Just as Ato had predicted, guards rushed into the command center. Terrak said to them, "It's all right. Everything is under control. Go back to your stations and stay away from the Brain Room."

[11. Armageddon?](#)

One positive consequence of the arrival of the androids was the lessening of the enmity between Muslims and Jews. The androids had miscalculated. They had expected

the destruction of Jerusalem to frighten mankind, but instead it had galvanized Jews and Muslims.

In June, four years after the arrival of the androids, Jews and Muslims started coming together in the southern end of the Plain of Esdraelon, also known as the Valley of Jezreel, near Megiddo in northern Israel. They formed an army they called the Army of Abraham. Armies from the European Union, NATO (which included Russia), the OAU, the OAS, and ASEAN also began assembling there. The android invasion had united men as never before.

The androids had placed their army on the northern end of the Valley of Jezreel. They had recently reinforced their army with soldiers from two other large spaceships.

Now in July, a great battle was about to be waged. Some Christians were calling this the battle of Armageddon that was foretold in the Book of Revelations of the Bible. They said the end of the world was at hand and men had little time left 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 to heaven.

Back on the spaceship, Terrak was trying to negotiate with Ato and John. Suddenly, Terrak's dog sprang on John and pinned him to the floor. Snarling and waiting for the command to tear at John's throat, the dog looked at Terrak.

Terrak said, "Let's make a deal."

Ato answered, "OK. Let's make a deal. Call off your dog and you won't die. Michael is under orders to shoot your brain first if anything happens to us."

Terrak said, "Come here." The dog climbed off John's chest and returned to Terrak's side. "Why don't you two join us? We can make both of you rich and powerful men."

Ato levitated about a meter off the floor and said, "I don't need anything you can give me."

John, now standing, said, "I don't believe you. Besides, you are going to lose. Somehow, someday, the humans will defeat you. Maybe not today or this year, but you are doomed and you know it. They are vital, alive. You should be dead."

"We will take you and the earth down with us. We have nuclear weapons and we will use them."

John said, "You're bluffing. You don't like to kill, do you? You delayed dropping the asteroid on Jerusalem until everyone got out."

"Don't tempt me."

"Let's go to the Brain Room. We'll see how brave you are," Ato said.

"Those cases are bulletproof. Besides, how do you know that's my brain?"

"It's in the center of the room and it has the constant attention of one attendant and it has the best equipment. Your arrogance has revealed yourself to us," John replied with satisfaction.

"OK, Sherlock Holmes. But if humans would listen to me, life on earth could be so much better. I can end the destruction of the environment, discrimination, war, feed the starving children in Africa..."

John interrupted him to say, "Thomas Jefferson said men would rather have a bad government of their own than a good government imposed upon them."

"Who is this Thomas Jefferson? I shall have him arrested."

"He lived over two hundred years ago."

Terrak asked, "Why won't humans listen to reason?"

John replied, "They throw reason out the window when it conflicts with what they want to believe. They see what they want to see and they think they are being reasonable."

Ato added, paraphrasing a biblical quotation, "There are none so blind as those who refuse to see."

"Unlike on our planets," John said, "men here let their emotions interfere with their thinking. My people and your people, Terrak, are able to separate their reasoning from their emotions. It is something humans have a really hard time doing."

"I only want men to live in peace and harmony," Terrak pleaded.

John decided it was time to play their last card. He said, "Do you remember another scientist named Septurn who worked with you when you lived on Atlantis?"

Terrak replied adamantly, "Impossible. I've never lived before. Reincarnation is rubbish."

"I've met Septurn. He's told me some things about you."

"I want to meet this phony. Where is he?"

"Septurn has come back to earth as a dolphin. Send a blimp to Paul's house and you can talk to him."

Terrak nodded to an aide, who walked over to a computer terminal and typed some commands. Then a view of downtown San Diego at night appeared on the upper left video screen. The picture began to move and soon a view of Paul's house was seen on the screen.

John said, "Now go a little further to the north."

The view on the screen moved until a cove with a breakwater on its southern end was in the center of the picture. Because of the lights on the breakwater, the camera was able to zoom in on two people in wetsuits. They were Paul and Ani, who were playing with several dolphins. The listening device on the blimp allowed those in the command center to hear their conversation.

Ani said, "They're so cute. Do you know their names? Can you really talk to them?"

"Yes. I'll ask Cetus to come up to you," Paul said. Mentally he instructed Cetus, "Cetus, give Ani a kiss."

Cetus swam up to Ani and pressed his muzzle against her cheek. She squealed with delight as loudly as Cetus did.

Terrak looked at the aide sitting at the terminal, who then typed some commands. On the upper right video screen, a door was seen opening on the bottom of the blimp. Then on the large screen on the left, a small disk-like device could be seen swooping down and hovering over Ani's and Paul's heads.

"Go ahead," Terrak said. "Speak into this." He pointed to a microphone that had floated up from a recess on the table. It moved into a position in front of John's neck.

"Do you understand that Paul can communicate telepathically with the dolphins?" John asked.

"Yes, I'm aware that you taught him in violation of your orders from us."

John began, "Paul, this is John. I have Terrak here. Where is Septurn?"

"He's right here," Paul said, as he grabbed a dolphin swimming nearby.

Using telepathy, Paul said to Septurn: "We are talking to Terrak now. What do you

want to say to him?”

Paul transmitted the reply: “Septurn said, ‘It’s been a long time, Terrak. You may not remember me, but we knew each other on Atlantis. There’s someone here you should meet.’”

Terrak objected, “How do I know this isn’t a trick?”

Paul sent this message to Septurn: “Terrak wants you to prove you knew him on Atlantis.”

Paul transmitted the answer: “He said, ‘On Atlantis you had a love of gold. Do you have anything gold on you now?’”

Everyone looked at Terrak, who was in fact wearing a heart-shaped golden pendant around his neck.

“Mere coincidence. I’ve had this since I was a child.”

Paul reported Terrak’s words to Septurn and then relayed Septurn’s reply: “Septurn said, ‘You drowned during the destruction of Atlantis. Do you have any unusual fear of water now?’”

“No!” Terrak shouted.

John protested, “Not true. It’s well-known on the spaceship that you’re afraid of water.”

“I’m trying to protect my servomotors.”

“Your servomotors are protected by your great engineering.”

“Two mere coincidences don’t prove anything,” Terrak objected.

Paul responded, “Septurn said, ‘I think you should meet Isis now. We both loved her, but she loved you.’”

Another dolphin came up to Paul and he said, “This is Isis. She said you used to call her ‘my tall, dark-haired beauty.’ She called you ‘Osiris.’ She asked if you remember the promise you made to her? ‘I will love you forever,’ you said.”

The memories of the haunting, pleasant dreams that he had had several times in the last two years came flooding back into Terrak’s mind. He could no longer deny the suspicion that had been growing on him ever since he had come to earth. The feeling of déjà vu, that he had been to earth before. Finally, Terrak’s impulses broke through and he said in an excited voice, “Isis, I still love you. I have never forgiven myself for letting you out of my sight. Stay where you are.”

Terrak looked at Ato and John and then at his aides. “Order the army to stand down,” he said to Avon. He then got up and walked out of the room with his dog following behind him.

As Avon made a phone call, John said quietly, “See you later, dad.”

Ato, who was standing next to John, whispered, “Aren’t you going to tell him?”

“One shock is enough for now. I’ll let Isis tell him.”

“I was hoping you two would have a fight with lightsabers,” Ato said.

Avon put down the phone and said, “The order has been received.”

Ato exclaimed quietly, “Ah, the power of love.”

Avon left the room and ran after Terrak. When he caught up with him, Terrak said, “Have a shuttle prepared for flight.”

“Where to, sir?”

“California. San Diego. And see about bringing my brain.”

In the command center, John was intently watching the lower left video screen. He

said, "Not so fast, Ato. The androids' weapons are still in launch mode."

Everyone looked at the screen, which showed the position of the blimps above the battlefield and the status of their weapons.

John said to the aliens in the room, "Someone tell General Nietzsche to have the army stand down or I will personally put a bullet through his brain."

One of the aliens responded, "Didn't you hear? General Nietzsche's brain died last week. He's not a humanoid android any longer. He's a pure machine."

Another alien said, "And he hasn't been himself since his death. His computer-generated mind hasn't fully integrated his personality yet."

John said, "Damn!"

In the Valley of Jezreel, the two armies were lined up farther than the eye could see, although their front lines were only two kilometers apart. The news media had estimated that there were seven million human soldiers and more than two million android and mutant soldiers in the valley.

Just before one o'clock, General Nietzsche, who was in a tent with his android generals, received Terrak's command to stand down. "Terrak has betrayed us for a dolphin," he sneered when he told his generals about the order. But he did not have the army stand down.

An hour later, both human and android space satellites began picking up signs of a massive presence in space emerging from behind the full moon. The humans feared that these were android reinforcements; the android generals knew the truth.

By late afternoon, the generals, knowing the looming presence in space was not theirs, had become very anxious to begin the battle. However, General Nietzsche, who was pacing back and forth outside the tent, was distracted. As he paced, he repeated these words: "Terrak is the dolphin. Terrak is the traitor."

His thoughts were finally interrupted by his aide, who came to him with this message: "The generals asked me to tell you they want to attack now, sir, before it is too late."

General Nietzsche said to his aide, "Just what I was thinking. Orders were meant to be broken."

At 1800 hours General Nietzsche read a prepared speech to the mutant soldiers: "Men, you should know why you're fighting. You're fighting to bring down a sick society. Humans destroy ancient forests to make furniture. They torture animals to make perfume. Half the humans in the world are poor, but they have no voice in world affairs, and what's worse, they have no hope for a better future. Fight hard, men, for the cause is good and just!" Then in a loud voice he said, "Onward to glory, men and machines!"

Upon hearing the order, the android and mutant soldiers to be used in the first assault emerged from the trenches. They made two lines, with the androids in front. While they were waiting for the next command, the mutants began performing some ritualistic motions with their arms and legs. At the completion of each set of movements, they repeated a chant in their native language. The chant sounded like this: "O doan santo! Pahta paal hoo ha!"

General Nietzsche turned to his aide and said, "Aren't they magnificent?"

"Yes, sir!"

"I love the moments before a battle, when the smell of napalm is in the air."

“We aren’t using napalm, sir.”

“Why not?”

“Have you forgotten that you banned the use of napalm?”

“Yes, I have forgotten.”

A whistle blew and each mutant soldier moved directly behind an android soldier, an arm’s length from its back. Then the mutant soldiers placed their left hands on a handle built near the waist of the android soldiers.

From overhead the android soldiers’ metal bodies could be seen gleaming in the light of the evening sun. The mutants could be seen leaning forward with their heads bowed as the green-feathered sashes on their bare backs ruffled in the breeze.

A drumbeat began from the android side of the battlefield. Over a period of about a minute, it built to a crescendo and then stopped. The mutants then shouted out three times, each time louder than before, “It’s a great day to die!”

Then trumpets sounded, and together the android and mutant soldiers began marching toward the human lines. As they marched, the android soldiers sang the words to 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.

In a panic, General Nietzsche said to his aide, “What’s going on? That’s not the song they were supposed to sing! Stop the singing!” The aide ran to the tent to investigate.

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”
Was there a man dismay’d?
Not tho’ the soldier knew
Someone had blunder’d:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs 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 out of the tent and ran to General Nietzsche. The singing was very loud and the aide had to shout, "We can't stop it, sir. Something has taken control of the main computer."

Flash'd all their sabres 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.

The human generals decided it was time to launch a few tactical nuclear weapons. The order was given, but the mechanisms on their artillery would not release the weapons.

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 the android soldiers finished singing, they froze in their tracks, as if the main computer had overridden their onboard computers, as indeed it had. The mutants were obviously surprised by the action of their metal comrades and they waited to see what the

android soldiers would do. But after trumpets were sounded, the mutants stepped around the android soldiers and continued marching forward.

Meanwhile, John was in Paul's home, lying on his bed. He imagined the battle scene as he saw it being shown on TV. Mustering all his will power, he began to send this telepathic message to his mutant countrymen: "Men do not kill men. Your real enemy is the androids." At the same time, a similar message was being sent to the mutant soldiers from another, more powerful source. Now the mutants began to hesitate. Then they looked around at each other and stopped advancing too.

The two opposing armies, unable to fire on each other, stood down.

12. The 24 Civilizations

During the night and the next morning the news media around the world talked and wrote about only one thing: The fact that thousands of spaceships were approaching earth.

Around noon, everyone at the battlefield felt a strong vibration and heard a roar that originated from the air, not the ground. Over a period of a few minutes, the sky became dark as thousands of spaceships arrived above the battlefield. A few of the spaceships were the size of the androids' ships; most others were smaller. There were saucer, cigar, top, and V-shaped craft.

The spaceships landed between the two armies. Over the next few hours, from the spaceships emerged humanoids and creatures not so human.

The visitors from space waited outside their spaceships, neither moving to one camp nor the other. Around ten o'clock, soft, invigorating pipe-like music began coming from the ships of the visitors. It was heard on both sides and continued throughout the night. It seemed to inspire thoughts of peace and cooperation.

Of course, the news media, which was broadcasting live around the world, was having a field day. What was the reason for this second invasion of earth? Were these aliens friendly or hostile? Speculation was rampant. When the music stopped the next morning, a humanoid went to the android camp and asked to speak to the leader.

At Paul's home north of San Diego, California, John dreamed of Ato, who said, "Well-done, John. You will go down in history for what you did. You stopped the implants and you delayed the war until the 24 arrived. With your help, mankind has avoided the catastrophic prophecies of the Bible. Men will now understand they are not slaves to the past, but in every moment choose their future. And now a personal note: You never failed your people or your family by not fighting the androids on your planet. You could not have done anything except get in the way of a steamroller. There's no point in that."

"You're right. Thanks for the advice."

"I guess we won't be seeing each other for a while."

"Why?"

"He's almost done with this book and at the rate he writes, it'll be ten years before the sequel is finished. Take care of yourself. I'll visit your planet in the next book."

"I'll hold you to that. Take care."

John's dream of Ato ended.

Ato smiled and looked upward and said, “Hey, man, I had you going, didn’t I? I don’t really want to be in your sequel. I’m going to write my own book.”

“Sorry, it’s too late. I’ve already begun it,” a loud, booming voice replied.

“Oh, all right,” Ato said with a look of resignation on his face.

“Ato, you’re a rascal. I don’t know what I’m going to do with you.”

“Really? How about putting my name in the title of the next book? How does this sound: *Ato’s Excellent Adventures*?”

“Now wait a minute...Hey, you’re pulling my leg again. I want you to stop laughing right now or you might just be wearing a cheerleader’s outfit in the next book.”

“Yes, sir, Mr. Wizard...”

“Oh?”

“...of Oz!”

“Don’t call me that!”

“You need to relax. You’re finished, so why don’t you take a nap?”

“Easy for you to say. Now where was I? You made me lose my chain of thought... There it is.”

Over the next few days, the android and mutant soldiers returned to their spaceships using shuttles and larger transport ships. Then without warning, the android spaceships left earth orbit.

At this time, the first contacts between men and the aliens from the 24 civilizations began. Some soldiers went over just to take pictures. Others were invited aboard the spaceships. A lucky few were taken on short flights. Landings now began to take place all over the planet and in every nation.

Two weeks after the arrival of the 24 civilizations, Silva, a humanoid, spoke before the United Nations. It (for it was not known if Silva was male or female or both) said:

I am here as a representative of the 24 civilizations that have an interest in the Earth. 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 Earth, the most beautiful planet in the galaxy. This we could not allow. Earth is the legendary home for many of us. But moreover, the spiritual health of Earth is vital to the spiritual health of the universe. Earth is unique and pivotal in the evolution of consciousness. So while you have free will, there are limits to the destruction you will be allowed to create.

We have come as true friends, for we have no interest here except to want you to grow and develop peacefully. We will give you as much of our technology as you can safely handle. And from now on we will give you more guidance.

As your mystic-philosopher Jane Roberts said, the universe vibrates with life. All aspects of it are endowed with choice and vitality. A plant or an animal has fewer choices than you, but it chose to be born just as you chose to be alive now. Life encompasses far more than your scientists imagine, then. Energy is not finite in the physical universe either, but can be drawn from outside it. New energy is constantly being created.

We come not only to bring peace, but with a joyful message. The message is this: There is a much more beautiful view of reality available to you than is to be found in your sciences and Western religions. In this view, life on Earth is only one of many challenges for you. You exist because God wants to experience reality in as many ways as possible. God is constantly surprised by what It creates.

I cannot convey the thrill, the excitement of this new philosophy. You must experience it on your own. But I hope that soon you will understand that the universe, both the physical and the non-physical, has only just begun to be explored by man. And 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.

It is time for a golden age on Earth. A spiritual age, when men will recognize their unity with all life and with the Earth herself. Goodness is spread across the face of the Earth, even if you do not see it yet.

Many years later, Paul wrote:

It certainly could be argued that the arrival of the 24 civilizations was the most important event in human history. First of all, the 24 civilizations forced us to destroy all our weapons. The metals that could be salvaged from the weapons were turned into farm implements. And they helped us to conquer poverty, one of the most remarkable achievements of our age, I think. Production has been adjusted so that there is now enough food and basic material goods for everyone.

Animals and the rest of nature are no longer considered the property of man. It is accepted that they have rights too. A dialogue has begun between men and dolphins and whales and other sea-dwelling mammals.

In the field of politics, governments and other large institutions have been decentralized and deprived of most of their power. And the promise of the American Declaration of Independence has finally been achieved: Governments exist for the benefit of people and nature and respect the rights of all or are replaced.

As for a world government, Jerusalem, including the old temple, was rebuilt and the UN moved its headquarters into the structure the androids had been constructing for their world parliament building in New Atlantis. Now all international disputes are settled peacefully and the main job of the UN is to monitor the activities of governments to insure that human rights and the rights of nature are respected.

People today are accepting responsibility for their lives and for the planet. As Seth said, "The realization that you form your own reality should be a liberating one. You are responsible for your successes and your joys. You can change those areas of your life with which you are less than pleased, but you must take responsibility for your being." (615 NPR)

Men and women are free now to seek their fulfillment through lives of quality, growth, and action. They are learning that they are multi-dimensional beings, living in many times and places at once. Intuitions and impulses have become accepted as valid sources of knowledge and action. Discrimination and violence against women and other races, religions, and nationalities has essentially ended as we have learned that we have lived past lives in other sexes, races, religions, and countries.

In sum, the long-awaited Golden Age of Earth has arrived. I don't mean to imply that all of society's problems have been solved. However, spiritual ignorance was the cause of many of them, and as our spiritual understanding has grown, many problems have simply gone away. And as for the rest, let me mention what I have learned in my personal life. I have found that problems and solutions are two sides of the same coin. Once you have defined a problem, the solution can be found. Where there is a will, there is a way.

And finally, Terrak and Isis were together again. A male dolphin agreed to allow a portion of Terrak's consciousness to share its body. Terrak's consciousness joined the dolphin's mind, but without the use of the technology the androids had developed to use on our children. Instead, earth fairies taught him how to do it. Terrak and Isis then lived normal dolphin lives, raised offspring, and died loving each other.

John went home soon after the arrival of the 24 civilizations, but he visited us whenever his busy schedule would allow him a few days off.

Paul looked over what he had written, and he liked it. He wanted to show it to Sarah, who was in the next room making dinner, but he was distracted. He suddenly remembered his worries when he turned fifty and he was amused. Old age should not be feared. It was true he did not have the energy or the physical abilities he had when he was fifty, but on the other hand, at fifty he was so ignorant! The added understanding and wisdom of old age more than made up for the losses, except for those he loved. He thought about Ani, who had just recently passed away, and how much he missed her. Then his thoughts turned to the present, his point of power, and he said, "Sarah, honey, I'm finished." His heart slowed, then stopped beating. His head slumped forward onto the keyboard and he was gone.

Paul's body was laid to rest next to Daniel's and Ani's after a simple ceremony. At his request, copies of his three books were buried with him and his worn copy of his first book was laid open on his chest to pages 46-47. On the right page, the words "Blueprints For Revolution" could be seen and on the left page these words were highlighted, "Don't ever forget God is all there is. Treat all things with respect—except for concentrations of power, which are by definition undemocratic. Attack all concentrations of power." There were two handwritten notes below those words. The first said, "War is a crime, not a solution. Truth, justice, patience, attention to detail, and peace are the solution." The second said, "The pen is mightier than the sword."

Postscript

The armies had been aligned in the Valley of Jezreel near Megiddo with the help of powerful mental suggestions from the 24 civilizations. I don't mean to imply that the 24 civilizations took over anyone's mind. But their suggestions encouraged the leaders on both sides to do what they were already inclined to do.

The place called Megiddo served as a station for the arrival of the spaceships from the 24 civilizations. It was an energy center, one of the strongest on earth. It had been used in the past as an entry point for spaceships and was in fact the location where the androids' spaceship was first seen.

[Appendix](#)

This is an essay about Christianity that Paul wrote. He began the essay during his first prison experience and finished it a few years later.

CHRISTIANITY: TRUTH OR MYTHOLOGY?

The Bible

Christians say the Bible was inspired by God and is, therefore, the Word of God. There are two major reasons why God could not have inspired the Bible. The first is that the God of the Bible is responsible for the deaths of many innocent people. The second is that not all of the statements in the Bible are true.

In the Bible's Book of Joshua, God makes the walls of Jericho fall after the Jewish priests had marched around the city on seven consecutive days. Then, according to Joshua 6:20, the Jewish army "took the city, and killed all that were in it, man and woman, young and old." Joshua 10:10 tells us that "the Lord...slew them with a great slaughter in Gabaon....And when they were fleeing from the children of Israel...the Lord cast down upon them great stones from heaven....And many more were killed with the hailstones than were slain by the swords of the children of Israel." The rest of chapter ten is a description of a series of massacres performed "as the Lord the God of Israel had commanded":

Joshua took Maceda and destroyed it with the edge of the sword, and killed the king and all the inhabitants thereof. He left not in the least remains....And he passed...to Lebna....And the Lord delivered it...into the hands of Israel....And they destroyed the city with the edge of the sword, and all the inhabitants thereof. They left not in it any remains....And the Lord delivered Lachis into the hands of Israel...and he put it to the sword, and every soul that was in it....And he passed from Lachis to Eglon...and put to the sword all the souls that were in it...He went up also...to Hebron...and destroyed it

with the edge of the sword....and all the towns of that country, and all the souls that dwelt in it....Returning from thence to Dabir, he took it and destroyed it...and all the towns round about he destroyed with the edge of the sword. He left not in it any remains....So Joshua conquered all the country of the hills and of the south and of the plain....He left not any remains therein, but slew all that breathed, as the Lord the God of Israel had commanded him.

Chapter Eleven of the Book of Joshua tells of the Jewish assaults on the cities of northern Canaan. I will not discuss these events because I will be repeating myself, for they contain more examples of cold-blooded murder in the name of the God of the Bible. I think the evidence I have presented has already proven my point: The Bible could not have been inspired by God because God would not have told the Jews to kill innocent people.

We need to look to history to understand what was happening in the Book of Joshua. The study of history teaches us that men often attach a noble or holy purpose to their territorial aggressions. An example was the colonization of the New World by Europeans. Many of the men involved in the often ruthless conquest of Indian lands believed they were exercising some kind of a divine right or duty. In America this came to be known as Manifest Destiny. Another example can be found in the brutal invasions and occupations of Korea, China, and the nations of Southeast Asia by the Japanese in the first half of the twentieth century. At the time, many Japanese soldiers believed they were doing their duty to their emperor and their country, that they were acting in self-defense, or that they were liberating the people of Asia from Western imperialism. In the case of the atrocities in the Book of Joshua, the Jewish people believed that God had promised Palestine to them and had commanded them to kill the people living there.

The second reason why the Bible could not be the Word of God is that not everything in the Bible is true. I have found errors, inconsistencies, and contradictions in the Bible. One of the Old Testament's mistakes occurs at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, where we are told that God made the universe in seven days. The Book of Genesis says that day and night were created on the first day. However, it says the sun was not created until the fourth day. Now how can there be day and night without the sun?

A major error in the Gospels occurs when Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world and then says (Matthew 24:34, Mark 13:30, Luke 21:32): "This generation will not pass away till all these things have been accomplished." A generation is considered to be about twenty-five years; eighty generations have passed since Jesus supposedly spoke those words, and the end of the world has still not come.

Here are some of the inconsistencies I found in the Gospels: The Matthew (1:1-16) and Luke (3:23-38) Gospels record the line of descent leading up to the birth of Jesus, but for almost thirty generations the Gospels of Matthew and Luke disagree as to Jesus' ancestry. The Matthew, Mark, and Luke Gospels say that Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus carry the cross, but John's Gospel tells us that Jesus carried it by himself. The Matthew and Mark Gospels say that both of the robbers crucified with Jesus mocked him, but Luke reports (23:40-42) that one robber said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." According to Mark (15:34), Jesus says just before dying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But according to Luke (23:46), he says something entirely

different: "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit."

The Gospel of Matthew presents us with a Jesus who contradicts himself and acts out of character. In Matthew 5:44 Jesus says, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you." In Matthew 5:9 he says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." But in Matthew 10:15 Jesus places a curse on any town that will not accept his disciples: "Amen I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that town." In Matthew 21:19 a hungry Jesus walks up to a fig tree and, seeing that it has no fruit, says, "May no fruit ever come from thee henceforward forever!" Matthew then reports that the tree immediately withered up. But in Mark 11:13 we are told that it was not the season for figs. To condemn a tree because it is not bearing fruit out of season is an act of spite and something you might expect from a man, but not from the Son of God.

The errors in the Bible, the inconsistencies between the Gospels, and the contradictions in the teachings and words of Jesus are further proof that the Bible could not be a holy book. I do not mean to put down Jesus by saying this, for I believe he was a great soul. But I believe he did not say all the things attributed to him in the Bible.

The logical explanation for the Gospels and the other books of the Bible is that they were written by men. We know from the way men wrote in those days that it was common to present fictional stories as true stories. It is likely, therefore, that some of the stories in the Bible are fiction.

St. Paul, The Essenes, And The Gnostics

Now I want to discuss the roles played by St. Paul, the Essenes, and the Gnostics in the early history of Christianity.

Paul was born about ten years after Jesus. Well-educated in the Jewish scriptures, he took part in the first persecutions of Jesus' followers. At the time, these early Christians lived together in small groups in the cities of Palestine. They preached to their Jewish brethren, but were uncertain as to whether they should attempt to find converts among non-Jews.

After his vision on the road to Damascus, Paul became a fervent follower of Jesus. He believed the news of Christ's message should be spread beyond Palestine to Jews and non-Jews, and so he traveled to Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, and Italy, teaching wherever he went.

Paul was faced with a dilemma. He wanted to spread the message of this great man who, he believed, had overcome death. But how was he to compete with the other religions with their gods and myths? Paul made a decision, perhaps in a dream or a trance. Paul decided the message should be that God loves us so much that He sent His Only Son to earth to die for our sins. After Jesus' death on the cross as atonement for our sins, He rose from the dead and opened the gates of heaven to us. If we believe in Him and repent of our sins, we will be allowed to live with Him in heaven forever. Later, according to Marvin Perry in *Western Civilization: A Concise History*, Paul added this to his message: "Alone, the individual was helpless, possessed by sin, unable to overcome his or her wicked nature." In his letter to the Romans (7:23-25) Paul wrote, "What a wretched man I am! Who can save me from this doomed body? Thank God! It is done

through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

It was Paul who made Christ into the Son of God. Paul is correctly regarded as the founder of Christianity, for before him, the apostles thought of themselves as merely leaders of a sect of Judaism, a sect that proclaimed the Messiah had come.

Paul’s charismatic personality, his great energy, and his courage were responsible for bringing more converts to this new religion than any of the other apostles. His influence has extended throughout the history of Christianity because his letters have become foundations for Christian dogma.

It is clear to me that the origin of Christianity can be tied to the decisions of the early Christian leaders, among whom Paul was the most influential. These men were responsible for turning a great mystic and prophet into the Son of God. Nowhere in the Gospels is it recorded that Jesus told his disciples to worship him. Moreover, Jesus did not leave instructions for his followers to start a church; the early Christian leaders created on their own an institution with doctrines, rituals, rules, and a hierarchy. I prefer Mahatma Gandhi’s interpretation of the meaning of the life of Jesus to what Christianity has presented the world:

It was more than I could believe that Jesus was the only incarnate son of God, and that only he who believed in him would have everlasting life. If God could have sons, all of us were His sons. If Jesus was like God, or God Himself, then all men were like God and could be God Himself.

For nearly two thousand years, our knowledge of the birth and early years of Christianity had been mainly limited to what the Bible told us. Fortunately, in 1945 two priceless sets of ancient manuscripts were found that have thrown new light on that period of Christian history. One discovery, in Palestine of Essene writings, raises the possibility that Jesus borrowed portions of his teachings from the Essenes. The other discovery, in Egypt of Gnostic manuscripts, gives us an opportunity to learn about a group of early Christians who honored a Jesus who was different from the one created by Christian leaders. Both discoveries help us to better understand the human origin of Christianity.

In 1945 a Bedouin shepherd found several old manuscripts in a cave near the Dead Sea. Later, other ancient manuscripts were found in the same area. Among these manuscripts were writings of the Essenes, a major Jewish sect in the first centuries B.C. and A.D. What is most remarkable about the Essene books is that they contain passages comparable to Gospel teachings, including those in the Sermon on the Mount. The similarities point to the likelihood that Jesus was an Essene or that he had studied in the Essene library, and bring up the question of whether the first Christians were ordinary Jews or members of the Essene sect.

Of all the Essene writings found near the Dead Sea, the Book of Enoch bears the closest resemblance to the teachings of Jesus and his apostles. During the first centuries of the Christian era, the Book of Enoch was considered part of the Bible, and was placed just before the Gospels. But when St. Jerome assembled the first official version of the Bible in the late fourth century, he left out the Book of Enoch, perhaps because it made some of the ideas in the Gospels appear to have been borrowed.

The other important discovery in 1945 was of old Gnostic texts, uncovered beneath

cliffs outside the town of Nag Hammadi in Egypt. According to *The Gnostic Gospels* by Elaine Pagels, many of the texts found at Nag Hammadi were supposed to be secret teachings of Jesus and his apostles. Some of the texts criticize the beliefs in the virgin birth, the crucifixion, and the bodily resurrection of Christ. Other texts claim that Jesus had female disciples and that he and Mary Magdalene were lovers.

Some Gnostic texts challenge the orthodox Christian view that Jesus was the Son of God. These texts maintain that Jesus talked about ignorance and illumination, not sin and repentance. In the Gnostic Gospel Of Thomas, Jesus tells his apostles: "He who drinks from my mouth will become as I am. I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him." Joseph Campbell said of this passage:

That's Buddhism....We are all to wake up to the Jesus within us. This is blasphemy in the normal way of thinking in Christianity, but it is the very essence of Gnosticism and the Thomas Gospel.

The Gnostics believed revelations from God occur in the present as well as in the past. They believed God's revealed truths were available to all men and women, not just the chosen few. In their refusal to accept the authority of the Catholic Church over dogma, the Gnostics were anti-institutional, for no church could survive as an institution if it could not control the beliefs of its members. They were also anti-hierarchical, for many Gnostic groups had no clergy. In their religious services, the members took turns playing the role of the priest.

In the early Christian centuries the leaders of the Catholic Church attacked Gnosticism in sermons and books. The popes, bishops, and priests of the Church understandably felt threatened by a movement within Christianity that taught that the road to God did not go through them.

The hierarchy of the Catholic Church won the struggle with the Gnostics. By 392 A.D., when Christianity had become the state religion of the Roman Empire, the leaders of the Catholic Church were using the police powers of the Empire to suppress Gnostic writings. Scholars believe the manuscripts found under the cliffs at Nag Hammadi were hidden there by people who feared that they would be burned.

Faith

Christian leaders are always talking about the need for faith. Do you know what kind of faith they want us to have? The faith that allows a person to accept what he is told to believe without question. Another name for this kind of faith is blind faith. Christianity wants blind faith from its members because it cannot prove that it is the one true religion.

A lot of horrible crimes have been committed by individuals with a blind faith in Christianity: the persecutions of the Jews over the centuries, which resulted in the deaths of millions of people; the Crusades, in which millions of innocent people died; the Inquisition, under which millions were tortured and killed; the wars between Catholics and Protestants, which cost the lives of millions of Europeans; and the torture and killing from the Middle Ages through the eighteenth century of millions of women accused of witchcraft.

Now I am only criticizing faith in institutions and leaders. There is a personal faith each of us was born with that was essential to our childhood development. The creed of this faith is, "I was born in a state of grace that I can never leave." Nothing we do can cause us to fall out of this state of grace. We will die in a state of grace. This is something the animals know instinctively. Unfortunately, our faith in our innate worth was probably undermined by Judeo-Christian teachings, which told us we were born with the stain of the sin of Adam and Eve on our souls.

There is another kind of personal faith available to us that can open the door to the achievement of our potential. This faith is faith in the inner voice or inner self. It is only through faith in the inner self that we can take full advantage of the great power of our souls to advise, guide, and inspire us. Jane Roberts said of this faith, "If you trust your inner thrust, you will always be supported." I believe Joseph Campbell was referring to guidance from the inner self when he talked about following your bliss in choosing a career.

Many Christians maintain that they have been healed through their faith in Jesus Christ or God, or that their faith in Jesus Christ or God helped them through difficult times. I believe they are illustrating the power of faith itself. Faith in one's self or faith in Jesus or God produces the same results because the powers of the inner self are activated by our beliefs, no matter what they are. Our beliefs are like magnets, drawing to us what we concentrate on.

Christian leaders talk a lot about the decline of religious faith and moral values. Religious faith and moral values have declined because Christianity has become irrelevant to many people. By insisting upon the literal interpretation to a set of books written several thousand years ago by a different people in a different place, Christianity has locked itself into a world view out of touch with the lives of the majority of the men and women of today.

Summary And Conclusion

In this essay I have analyzed the claim of divine inspiration for the Bible; presented a short study of the Apostle Paul, the Essenes, and the Gnostics; and briefly discussed faith. In summary:

The Bible could not have been inspired by God because it contains stories of murders committed by, with the assistance of, or under the command of God; because it contains errors of fact and prophecy; and because the Gospels disagree among themselves and depict a Jesus who contradicts himself.

St. Paul joined a cult formed around a Jewish prophet and helped turn it into a world religion. In the process, he, more than anyone else, was responsible for creating the myth that Jesus was the Only Son of God. Passages in the Essene texts discovered near the Dead Sea in 1945 are so similar to the teachings of Jesus that the possibility must be considered that Jesus learned from the Essenes. An examination of the Gnostic texts found at Nag Hammadi reveals that not all of the early Christians worshipped Jesus; some Christians saw him as a man like Buddha: a great teacher sent to show us the way to enlightenment.

Christianity, like all other religions, needs followers with blind faith, for Christianity

cannot prove that it has the truth. The blind faith demanded by Christian leaders has resulted in a lot of horrible crimes. Faith in the inner self, on the other hand, will open men up to the power and wisdom of their souls.

In conclusion: Now if you understand that Christianity was built upon the beliefs, decisions, and writings of ordinary men, then you can see that Christianity is, like all religions, fundamentally a body of stories told about gods, heroes, and men. Having taken that step, you should have no trouble realizing that the myths of Christianity are symbols for spiritual truths.

A problem today is that some people want to view Christian myths as historical truths. If you believe the life and death of Jesus really occurred as described in the Bible, you are making the mistake of confusing symbols with facts. For example, the Bible says that Jesus ascended physically to heaven. We now know (but did not know two thousand years ago) that above us is not heaven, but outer space. So Jesus could not have gone to heaven by going upward. However, if you look for the meaning behind the event, a new understanding emerges. Joseph Campbell said the message of Jesus' ascension is that each of us must make a journey "through the inward space to that source from which...all life came."

To me, these words of Jesus (Luke 17:21) contain the most important spiritual truth in the Bible: "The Kingdom of God is within you." This statement reminds me of what Jesus said in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas: "The Kingdom is spread across the earth and men do not see it." A Jesus who made those statements would find no value in sacrificing his life for us, for he would know that nobody needs to be saved. There might have been a crucifixion at Calvary, but the man who died there was not Jesus, but another man who took upon himself the mantle of messiah. This can explain the incident in the Gospels in which Peter three times denies knowing the man who had been arrested at Gethsemane.

All civilizations have been involved in experiments with consciousness and ours is no exception: Several thousand years ago in mass shared dreams, Western man decided to de-emphasize his animal awareness, which informed him of his unity with nature and his innate worth, in order to concentrate on the manipulation of physical reality. Judeo-Christianity has played an essential role in this experiment by teaching men that God gave them dominion over the earth, and by telling them that they were born in sin and that their natural impulses were evil.

Strong beliefs act as filters, forcing us to see only what agrees with those beliefs. Our belief in evil led to the "discovery" that the law of nature is ruthless competition. (This is called survival of the fittest in the theory of evolution. The theory of evolution, although incorrect because it ignores the cooperation within and between species, denies that the nonphysical plane has affected life on earth, and assumes that time is one-directional, has correctly brought us back to the understanding that we are part of nature. Unfortunately, science, by refusing to accept the reality of a spiritual dimension, has had no option but to tell men that they are machines programmed by their genes for survival. Science offers man a universe so lacking in meaning or hope that acts of altruism are seen as the results of misguided parental or group survival instincts.) The law of nature really is this: Respect all things; only kill to sustain life. The animals instinctively understand this law; they do not kill for profit or sport as men often do.

The mistaken notion that selfish competition occurs in nature has been used to justify capitalism, an economic system built on the belief that greed is good. The

worldwide acceptance of capitalism has resulted in greater concentrations of wealth than ever before and an accelerated assault on the weak and powerless—the poor, nature, and future generations.

I believe we have carried our experiment too far. Our focus on physical reality has become so complete that we have forgotten the value of intuitive wisdom. It is time to remember what man had known before the beginning of Western civilization (and what is still recognized in Eastern religions and native cultures): that all life is sacred and that nature is based upon cooperation.

When Western, scientific, Judeo-Christian man stops ignoring the wisdom of his inner voice, which tells him that God lives in the world and that he is born into a state of grace he can never leave, he will feel no need to be saved from his sins or from the events of nature. When our culture rejects the errors of the scientific and Judeo-Christian religions, we will enter a new age of peace, equality, and responsibility. Man will then be ready to begin the greatest adventure of all: the exploration of inner space.

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About The Author

The author teaches English at a private university in South Korea. He was born in 1950 in Omaha, Nebraska and came with his family to the beautiful Santa Clara Valley in California (then the prune and apricot capitals of the world) a few weeks later. After dropping out of the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1969, he spent two and a half decades studying philosophy before publishing his first book, *My Country Is Called Earth*. He moved to the hermit kingdom in 1996.