

THE ETERNAL RELIGION

Glimpses of Divine Glory

Donald Castellano-Hoyt

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DEDICATION

To Julia Castellano-Hoyt

My wife, whose steadfast commitment to her Lord and family has been a dynamic model for my own interior life,

and

To Amelia 'Mia' Rose Witt

Our great-granddaughter, also known as 'the little one,' whose innate spirituality inspires devotion in all she meets.

Preface

On an April Spring Saturday in 1951 this five year old kid was enjoying the playground of the elementary school in Alsea, Oregon.

As he contemplated his future he was inspired to affirm that he would speak “only from experience” and not theory. The kid was aware that this was as unusual as it was solemn.

Although the kid has had mystical experiences with saints of many religions starting around 24 months or so, he found that his Nazarene preacher parents did not understand his childish attempts to convey his experiences to them.

His mother listened to his accounts of Lord Jesus, but she would not hear of any others. One time, upon hearing the kid mention the name ‘Buddha,’ his mother started a thought-blocking technique uttering “la, la, la, la, la -- Jesus name only will I hear! Stop saying that other name!”

Years later the kid was somewhat bemused to find that his mother had inadvertently pronounced the Arabic word for “no” in her technique. At least, he figured, she got the idea across even though she herself would have thought it blasphemy to ‘talk Arabic.’

As the kid grew up he found other preacher kids with similar glimpses of glory who also could not openly convey their experiences for fear of being consigned to hell. Something like that.

As the kid grew up he found other people with similar stories who could not convey to their clergy what they'd experienced without being cajoled about their truthfulness or experiencing veiled threats of excommunication.

This book is a result of those experiences. It is not a recitation of the kid's glimpses of divine glory but a gathering of published literary accounts from a wide variety of religions of such glimpses of divine glory. These give a much needed validation of the internal experiences of those who have not otherwise been aware of such literary accounts.

The kid gives an open invitation at the end of the book to those who would be willing to share with him their experiences of divine glory.

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Robert E. Lane has lived the life and experienced the glimpses of divine glory presented in this book. He does so in the midst of a severely difficult and dangerous environment. His editorial assistance on this manuscript is appreciated beyond words -- and his perspective is the unique gift of one who “meditates then acts.”

The "Elephant in the Dark"

The gist of this book can best be grasped by considering the retelling of a parable that is told in various religions; I have found it amongst the Hindus; Paramhansa Yogananda retells it in his *Præcepta*, the Jains have a variation. Once you see the point, you'll probably find it told in a thousand different forms in other settings beyond religious.

During the reign of an Eastern sovereign, he remarked that the learned men of his time differed widely in their estimate of the Deity, each ascribing to Him different characteristics. So he had an elephant brought in secret to his capital and placed in a dark chamber; then, inviting those learned men, he told them that he was in possession of an animal which none of them had ever seen. He requested them to accompany him to the chamber, and, on entering it, said that the animal was before them, and asked if they could see it. Being answered in the negative, he begged them to approach and feel it, which they did, each touching it in a different part. After returning to the light, he asked them what they thought the animal was really like. One declared that it was a huge column, another that it was a rough hide, a third that it was of ivory, a fourth that it had huge flaps of some coarse substance; but not one could correctly state what the animal was. They returned to the chamber, and when the light was let in, those learned men beheld for the first time the object of their curiosity, and learned that, whilst each was correct in what he had said, all differed widely from the truth. --
Jalaluddin

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). *MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED]* (Kindle Locations 1999-2008). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

The beloved 19th century saint, Ramakrishna, puts it this way:

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: You were talking of worshipping a clay image. Even if it is made of clay, there is a need for that sort of worship. God himself has arranged for many ways of worship to suit the varied temperaments of his worshippers in their different stages of growth.

A mother has five children. There is fish to be cooked. She prepares different kinds of fish dishes, to agree with every kind of stomach. For one child, she cooks fish pilau, for another pickled fish, for another baked fish, fried fish and so forth. She has cooked all kinds of dishes to appeal to their different tastes and digestions. Do you follow me?

Christopher Isherwood. *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (Kindle Locations 3604-3608). Kindle Edition.

Section I: Introductory Issues

The Meaning of 'The Eternal Religion'

What Do You Want?

Experiences of Reality -- Lay Understanding

*Experiences of Reality -- Scriptural
Understanding*

Eternal Religion -- small minds and lesser gods

Eternal Religion -- "the same Lord over all" (St. Paul)

Jalaluddin Rumi

Eternal Religion -- God & Bliss, the same

The Meaning of the Title, “The Eternal Religion”

The Christian religion’s St. Peter spoke volumes when he said,

“... in old time... holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

2 Peter 1:21- King James Bible "Authorized Version", Cambridge Edition

“Old time[s]” conceivably go back to pre-recorded history, when there was no need to write down such messages. They were received either verbally or through devotional intuition. This occurred throughout the entire world, varying with cultures and sociological environments.

My preacher Dad tried to maintain devotionally that Peter is referring to Jewish scripture (what Dad called the “old Testament”). Dad also invoked Paul’s second letter to Timothy (3:16) that all [Jewish] scripture on which Timothy had been raised was inspired and useful for doctrinal purposes. And, of course, most Protestants maintain the same idea.

However Indian culture (now identified as ‘Hindu’) has named these truths as ‘*sanatana dharma*’ (eternal religion). Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati gives the following explanation,

By its nature, *Sanatana Dharma* is: Experience based rather than belief based...inclusive of all. Applicable to all people of all places and times...Devoid of sectarianism or denominationalism...Loving of all and excluding of none.

[<http://www.swamij.com/sanatana-dharma-what-is.htm>]

While truth is always the truth, the concept ‘*Sanatana Dharma*,’ of course, predates all modern day writings by thousands of years. And of these the Indian *Bhagavad-Gita* would be the eldest statement of revealed scripture; at least for purposes of this book that will be my approach. (I am avoiding the argument about the Indian *Vedas* being much more ancient than the writing of the *Gita*.)

Rene Descartes seems to have understood the impersonal universality of truth when he pointed out that [paraphrasing now]: “the truth is what the truth is.”

Truth as such is subject to experience; never to the manipulations of man’s rational accounting. Descartes, nevertheless, attempted to demonstrate the attainability of knowledge (or truth) by rational means, ending with his belief that such knowledge can be intuitively known. Unfortunately all he ‘proved’ is that he exists because he knows he is thinking. This is the famous “I think therefore I am [Latin: *cogito ergo sum*],” upon which he based his faith that knowledge of truth is possible through mind’s thinking ability.

Yogananda, however, points out,

The dictum of Descartes: “I think, therefore I am,” is not philosophically valid. The reasoning faculties cannot shed light on man’s ultimate Being. The human mind, like the phenomenal

world that it cognizes, is in perpetual flux and can yield no finalities. Intellectual satisfaction is not the highest goal. The seeker of God is the real lover of *vidya*, unchangeable truth; all else is *avidya*, relative knowledge.

(Autobiography of a Yogi, Self-Realization Fellowship Publishers, Los Angeles, CA, p. 374n, 1959 revision of 1951 edition)

The choice of book title implies that there have been men and women throughout the ages who have attained glimpses of truth, occasionally described as glimpses of glory. How this has happened is secondary to the reality of its occurrences, and the answer begins with the primary question, “what do you want?”

What do you want?

The usual questions discussed in Philosophy 101 courses in Western universities are ‘who am I?’ ‘why am I here?’ ‘what is the purpose of life?’ ‘is there a God?’ These academic inquiries take the student through a history of Western philosophic answers, sometimes emphasizing the ‘rightness’ of the individual professor’s views and the ‘wrongness’ of anyone else’s views.

But they don’t answer the questions nor do they give the student the means for any other inquiry. I know firsthand from my twelve years as a philosophy instructor (from 1975 thru 1987) here in San Antonio at St. Philips College within the Alamo Area College district.

Yet in the rich heritage of world-wide scriptures answers are given to these inquiries. But even there, still today, the scriptural “gatekeepers” are self-assured that their scripture is the only right one and their scriptural understanding is the only correct one.

And typically these small minded clerics of lesser gods have no specific method to give the student to find the answers other than to accept blindly their blind assertions of truthfulness. To paraphrase Yogananda, the students ‘eyes of reason’ are poked out and there is

no encouragement for further searches of the truth or a path to the truth. Meantime students starve for answers.

Paramahansa Yogananda, "Journey to Self-Realization", pg 178.

In contrast to this Western encouragement of blind ignorance, Yogananda speaks of the “craziness” of India’s spiritually hungry youth who are willing to give all to find the answers.

These youth are encouraged to satisfy their thirst for answers with the recognition of this primary question, rarely addressed in the West: “what do you want?”

Exploration of that question is a personal rather than an academic one, yet it profoundly affects how each of us conduct ourselves on this earth and why we do so.

The professors of various cultures who have successfully answered that question tend to have personal followers both in an academic setting and in an informal setting. The ‘professors’ are variously called prophets, seers, sages, gurus (i.e., one who removes darkness), saints, and so on. And their history of success in answering and helping students answer these questions typically results in a disruption of the comfort level of varying and various establishment types.

Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and other groups have histories of killing such enlightened embodiments of truth.

I am not as acquainted with Persian treatment of its seers. Nonetheless the martyrdom of the Persian poet Hallaj Mansur is included in this book as an example of a glimpse of divine glory.

Within the traditions of the Hindus the various gurus, from time immemorial thru Krishna, Buddha, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and contemporaneous ones described by Yogananda in his famous *Autobiography of a Yogi*, have been honoured and their insights accommodated culturally without attempts at suppression.

I am aware of political fighting and killing among groups especially over boundary issues, such as Buddhist and Hindu groups; this was never over the issue of the farther truth perceived by the spiritual leaders of these groups.

Experiences of Reality – Laymen’s understanding

What is the importance of the question, ‘what do you want?’

To my knowledge most of the major religions of the world assert that human longings, desires, wants are the central motive in people’s lives. Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism

make such claims. I am less acquainted with Muslim and other schools of thought.

I venture to suggest that the rate of immorality among children schooled in parochial schools is about the same as in secular society. Not because children want to be immoral but because their behavior is guided by their deeper wants...for sensual indulgence.

Lord Jesus (Matthew 6:33) articulates a different spiritual want when he echoes the 37th Psalm [37:4]:

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

[(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 19514-19515; and 31040).]

Most children don't believe or understand how their desire for sensual experience can be satisfied through spiritual (or mystical) means as assured both by Lord Jesus as well as Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita (literally, "The Song of the Lord) and other prophets.

Among recent Indian avatars Swami Sriyukteswar often had his disciples chant, "Desire, My Great Enemy." And Buddhists (from Gautama to the present) teach that human desiring is the thread (or chain!) that brings us and binds us to this earth. When those desires

are fulfilled we will be free from this earth and ready to continue our spiritual growth in heavenly realms.

In my social work career I often ran across the following experiences. A young man exclaims after his first act of sexual intimacy, “O this is what I’ve been seeking all my life!” And he’s quite sincere. The teenage girl explains that she goes after cocaine because her first experience was “what I had been seeking all my life.” I understand that the author of “The Hound of Heaven,” Francis Thompson, alluded as much about his experience with opium.

Of course, having been raised by an ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene, I have sung many times in church various hymns and devotional songs affirming that God is the highest desire.

For purposes of this book what is of interest is the common belief that these blissful experiences (“I have been seeking this all my life”) were produced by senses or drugs or one’s theological beliefs.

And so the person continues on his or her path until reality “sets in” and the bliss is no longer produced. “It’s like I can never get as high as I did the first time...” is the usual lament.

Yogananda points out in one of his many talks,

“The joy we receive from any experience flows from God, even though it may have been roused by some outward circumstance.”

(P.150, Man’s Eternal Quest, “Developing Personality,” Paramahansa Yogananda)

Francis Thompson is one of the many many folk of whom I am aware who was smart enough (or perhaps humble enough) to seek bliss from a different source other than opium (I suspect it was along the lines that Yogananda enunciates above). Certainly Thompson gives credit to his preacher brother-in-law for standing by him during the many times it took Thompson to finally find his desire fulfilled by the presence of the Divine who pursued Thompson like a hunting hound dog.

By contrast the landscape unfortunately is littered with the ruined lives and bodies of suicided clergy, libertines, and ‘druggies’ who insist that their way is the only way to bliss.

Experiences of Reality – Scriptural understanding

In the recorded history of this world many sacred books have been written. These records are rightly called ‘scripture’ (because they are ‘scripted,’ i.e., written). I have always been intrigued since about age 5 listening first to my preacher Dad state that his scripture, the Christian Bible, is the only word of God. Then later I listened

with joy as Rabbi Shepherd in Kankakee, Illinois, allowed a broader understanding of the 'word of God.' To see the fighting between Muslim and Hindu in the 1947 partitioning of India broke my young heart.

Then more recently I read, with joy, this passage from Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*. The young preteen boy has quietly been practicing three religions (Christian, Muslim, and Hindu).

Alas the sense of community that a common faith brings to a people spelled trouble for me. . . . "What is your son doing going to temple?" asked the priest. "Your son was seen in church crossing himself," said the imam. "Your son has gone Muslim," said the pandit. Yes, it was all forcefully brought to the attention of my bemused parents. You see, they didn't know. They didn't know that I was a practising Hindu, Christian and Muslim. . . . [The three clergy exchange stereotypical derogatory descriptions of the others' religions]. . . . Father raised his hands. "Gentlemen, gentlemen, please!" Mother looked at me. A silence fell heavily on my shoulders.

"Hmmm, Piscine?" Mother nudged me. "How do you feel about the question?"

"Bapu Gandhi said, 'All religions are true.' I just want to love God," I blurted out, and looked down, red in the face. . . . That was my introduction to interfaith dialogue. . . .

[Yann Martel. *Life of Pi* (Kindle Locations 959-1038). Harcourt.]

Pi was doing his best to satisfy his most basic want, the desire for God.

He ran into the discord that follows when one religion or religion's scripture is seen as the sole religion or religion's scripture; immediately prior to this chance meeting of the three clergy with him and his parents Pi had described divine glimpses of glory that ensued after joining these various religions.

But Pi did not mistake his glimpses of divine glory as proof of the rightness of any of the religions. He accepted them as glimpses of divine glory without cloaking them in theological language.

In other words, Yann Martel 'gets it.' That is -- that truth (what Yogananda has called "unchangeable truth; all else is *avidya*, relative knowledge") exists, no matter the verbal or conceptual title we assign to it (think of the various parts of the elephant experienced above).

Truth is knowable and powerful ("shall set you free," if you hear what Lord Jesus proclaims); is experienced as bliss, (if you hear what Lord Krishna says and understand the Upanishads), and expresses itself in whatever way it desires (sometimes confounding the intellectualists' attempt to contain, understand, name, describe, or corner the market on it).

Both the Gita and St. Paul describe the truth as that

...in [which] we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Acts 17:28, adapted from King James version.

...dwell he where he may... in Me he dwells and lives, [I] dwell In all which lives....[and] ... all things are in Me, but are not I.

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 333-334, 424-425). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

This understanding does not diminish world scriptures, but aids in distinguishing between ‘faith’ and ‘belief,’ both of which are powerful in their own right. But faith is based on experience and belief is based on rational understanding.

I love the story of the young father who had come to Jesus’ disciples to heal his son. The disciples weren’t able to heal him. When Jesus arrived on the tumultuous scene produced by the disciples’ lack of spiritual power, the young father turned to Lord Jesus,

...if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

[Mark 9: 23, 24]

The man’s son was healed.

Whatever was lacking in the man's "belief," was 'made whole' by Lord Jesus. This then turned his belief into faith. Thankfully the gospel writer didn't theologize this story, reducing it to a set formula.

Eternal Religion – small minds and lesser gods

So let's be clear about the issue. Pi's most basic want was to know God [even if he couldn't theologize about God]. He went about fulfilling this want in the way that suited him, as we all do with our own wants.

One of the excerpts of glorious glimpses of the Divine is that of Ramakrishna Paramhansa who successfully found the Divine through practice of several distinct religions -- Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and even through practice of the tantra yoga discipline.

My Christian mother often quoted Hebrews Ch. 1:1 and 2, as a way of closing off any claims to authority from other religions and their scriptures:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. . .”

But this is unwarranted and done at one's own peril! As
Yogananda has pointed out in his *Autobiography*,

“truths suppressed lead disconcertingly to a host of errors.”

Autobiography of a Yogi, Self-Realization Fellowship, 1959 revision based on 1953 edition.

Lord Krishna addresses this issue showing that the Lord is
responsible for such smallness:

There be those, too, whose knowledge, turned aside
By this desire or that, gives them to serve Some
lower gods, with various rites, constrained By
that which mouldeth them.
Unto all such -- Worship what shrine they will, what shapes,
in faith –
'Tis I who give them faith! I am content!
The heart thus asking favour from its God,
Darkened but ardent, hath the end it craves, The
lesser blessing -- but 'tis I who give!
Yet soon is withered what small fruit they reap:
Those men of little minds, who worship so, Go
where they worship, passing with their gods.
But Mine come unto me!

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata)
(mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 373-377). MobileReference. Kindle Edition. [Cp 7,
Religion by Discernment]

This book addresses several key scriptural anchors used by devout but well-meaning seekers to prove that their interpretation of the truth expressed is the only correct one.

By taking those scriptures from their written and historical contexts and comparing them one begins to see that they spring from a common fount, the nature of which may be endlessly discussed, rationalized, and fought over, but ultimately must be and can be experienced by the spiritual adventurer -- glimpses of divine glory. This fount is called, for purposes of this book, *sanatan dharma*, truth as truth.

The great 19th century avatar Lahiri Mahasaya used to assist his disciples on discernment of scriptural meaning by the following method:

“Lahiri Mahasaya was no bookish interpreter of the scriptures. Effortlessly he dipped into the ‘divine library’ ... If asked to explain the different planes of consciousness mentioned in the ancient texts, he would smilingly assent. “‘I will undergo those states, and presently tell you what I perceive.’ He was thus diametrically unlike the teachers who commit scripture to memory and then give forth unrealized abstractions. “‘Please expound the holy stanzas as the meaning occurs to you.’ The taciturn guru often gave this instruction to a near-by disciple. ‘I will guide your thoughts, that the right interpretation be uttered.’ In this way many of Lahiri Mahasaya’s perceptions came to be recorded, with voluminous commentaries by various students. “The master

never counseled slavish belief. ‘Words are only shells,’ he said. ‘Win conviction of God’s presence through your own joyous contact in meditation.’”

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). Autobiography of a Yogi (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (p. 23). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

Perhaps these glimpses of divine glory will be enough to cause someone to open themselves to “be led into all truth,” to move from belief to faith to oneness with truth.

Eternal Religion – the same lord overall (St. Paul)

According to Claud Field

“the Sufi doctrine is that all religions are the same to God,
Who only regards the heart.”

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED] (Kindle Locations 1980-1981). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

St. Paul

As an example of truth from the eternal religion, consider this statement from the Christian apostle Paul,

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Romans 10:12, King James Bible "Authorized Version", Cambridge Edition

Paul’s exhortation in this passage is usually taken to refer to a universal Jesus Christ, but when other scriptures regarding the Christ [Sanskrit: kutastha consciousness] are consulted (see below

in the appropriate section) one sees that Paul was referring to his spiritual preceptor Jesus who had attained (become one with) the kutastha, Christ, consciousness.

Yogananda further notes,

These Biblical words [John 14:26 ad passim] refer to the threefold nature of God as Father, Son, Holy Ghost (Sat, Tat, Aum in the Hindu scriptures). God the Father is the Absolute, Unmanifested, existing beyond vibratory creation. God the Son is the Christ Consciousness (Brahma or Kutastha Chaitanya) existing within vibratory creation; this Christ Consciousness is the “only begotten” or sole reflection of the Uncreated Infinite. Its outward manifestation or “witness” is Aum or Holy Ghost, the divine, creative, invisible power which structures all creation through vibration. Aum the blissful Comforter is heard in meditation and reveals to the devotee the ultimate Truth.

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) . Crystal Clarity Publishers - A Kindle Edition.

Jalaluddin Rumi

Claud Field clarifies Jalaluddin's conception of God:

Jalaluddin's conception of God is a far higher one than is embodied in the orthodox formula of the Koran, "Say: God is One. He neither begetteth nor is begotten." With Jalaluddin God is far more immanent than transcendent. In one place he says, "He who beholdeth God is godlike," and in another, "Our attributes are copies of His attributes." In a remarkable passage anticipating the theory of Evolution he portrays man ascending through the various stages of existence back to his Origin:—

“From the inorganic we developed into the vegetable kingdom, Dying from the vegetable we rose to animal, And leaving the animal, we became man. Then what fear that death will lower us? The next transition will make us an angel, Then shall we rise from angels and merge in the Nameless, All existence proclaims, "Unto Him shall we return."”

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED] (Kindle Locations 2098-2105 ad passim). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

Here is the fable that Rumi wrote regarding the oneness of all religions:

Moses, to his horror, heard one summer day A
benighted shepherd blasphemously pray:
'Lord!' he said, 'I would I knew Thee, where Thou art,
That for Thee I might perform a servant's part;
Comb Thy hair and dust Thy shoes and sweep Thy room,
Bring Thee every morning milk and honeycomb.'

Moses cried: 'Blasphemer! curb thy blatant speech!
Whom art thou addressing? Lord of all and each, Allah
the Almighty? Thinkest thou He doth need 'Thine
officious folly? Wilt all bounds exceed? Miscreant,
have a care, lest thunderbolts should break On our
heads and others perish for thy sake.
Without eyes He seeth, without ears He hears,
Hath no son nor partner through the endless years,
Space cannot contain Him, time He is above,
All the limits that He knows are Light and Love.'

Put to shame, the shepherd, his poor garment rent,
Went away disheartened, all his ardour spent.
Then spake God to Moses: 'Why hast thou from Me
Driven away My servant, who goes heavily?
Not for severance it was, but union, I commissioned thee to
preach,
O hasty one! Hatefulest of all things is to Me divorce,
And the worst of all ways is the way of force.
I made not creation, Self to aggrandize,
But that creatures might with Me communion prize.

What though childish tongues trip? 'Tis the heart I see,
If it really loves Me in sincerity.
Blood-stains of the martyrs no ablution need,
Some mistakes are better than a cautious creed,
Once within the Kaaba [All Mohammedans pray towards the Kaaba] wheresoe'er
men turn,

Is it much to Him Who spirits doth discern?

Love's religion comprehends each creed and sect, Love
flies straight to God, and outsoars intellect.
If the gem be real, what matters the device?
Love in seas of sorrow finds the pearl of price.'

Eternal Religion – God and bliss, the same

Shakespeare famously wrote the Romeo and Juliet lines (for Juliet),

What's in a name? that which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet..."

In the early years of my social work in the Texas prison system I had opportunity to support the meditation and retreat activities of the local Buddhist organization. My MA studies in Religion omitted study of Buddhism, so I was surprised when the leader of the meditation group corrected my statement that the group efforts were to teach prisoners how to meditate on God.

My own guru, Paramhansa Yogananda refers to Gautama Buddha's frequent exhortation to meditate on God. I came to find, then, that the last 1500 years (approximately) of Buddhism has taken an impersonal approach in its seeking, claiming that nirvana is the goal and bliss is the experience.

After a few more years of meditation I have come to find, as the Lord says through Krishna in the Gita that the Lord is both personal and impersonal, and either way bliss is the enlightening experience.

...highest, nearest, best ... is, the devout soul, wise, intent upon the One...They are not "mine," but I -- even I myself!

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Location 370-372). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

In the doctrinal material dealing with the “I am” in world scripture, more will be pointed out about the statement, ‘They are not "mine," but I -- even I myself!’ But there are other passages in the Gita and various Upanishads and Jewish scripture in which God, Brahma, Lord, and other such conceptual names are eclipsed (or elided) by the One reality that encourages its own to “taste and see” what is in store for the seeking devotee.

Section II: "Glimpses of Divine Glory"

Dante Alighiera

St. Paul

St. Augustine

Alfred Tennyson

Rabindranath Tagore

Arjuna

Paramahansa Yogananda

Lahiri Mahasaya

Ram Gopal

Ananda Moyi Ma

Swami Brahmananda

Mathur

Ramakrishna

Hallaj Mansur

Jalaluddin Rumi

Mullah Shah

Note About Correspondence Training

Teresa of Avila

Father Merton

Brother Lawrence

Isaiah

Ezekiel

Dante Alighieri

The first description was called a divine comedy by the readers of Dante's day even though it deals with central and serious Catholic themes of the times. However the irony is not lost that other Jewish, Hindu, and Christian scriptural writers variously describe life (whether on earth, heaven, or shades of hell) as a dream, a sport of God, God's good pleasure, as puppetry -- anything but the dire and important-sounding theological themes invoked by Dante and theologians who had nothing to do with writing down "the Word of God."

Here is a brief excerpt from Dante's Divine Comedy.

I have been in that heaven the most illumined
By light from Him, and seen things which to utter
He who returns hath neither skill nor knowledge;
For as it nears the object of its yearning Our intellect is
overwhelmed so deeply It never can retrace the path it
followed.
But whatsoever of the holy kingdom Was in the power of memory
to treasure
Will be my theme until the song is ended.

Excerpted from The Divine Comedy, Note, p 492, Paramhansa Yogananda, Autobiography of a Yogi, Self-Realization Fellowship, Publisher, 1959 revision of 1951 edition.

Dante of course considered his experience(s) to be proof of the correctness of Catholic teaching. Be that as it may, there is a wise saying from the Hindu sages:

He who knows, tells it not; he who tells, knows it not.

Dante comes close to understanding that issue when he says, above, “He who returns hath neither skill nor knowledge to utter.”

That he has experienced something real is convincingly stated when he acknowledges, as do the mystical sages of every age, our intellect “can never retrace the path it followed.” Why? Because the rational mind does not produce the mystic experience; only the One does that.

Consider, for instance, Isaiah

[42:16] And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 23980-23981).

And consider Surat Al-Ra'ad [13:24],

He said, 'Subhan Allah (How perfect Allah is)! You have guided me to a way that you do not know yourselves. ... it is Him alone that I now worship...Indeed He is the Creator and the Provider.' He then left us and went on his way...he continued to repeat the verse: "Peace be upon you for what you patiently endured. And excellent is the final home!" -

See more at: islamicstories.com/story/25#sthash.1eXjmnrm.dpuf

Dante’s first line “I have been in that heaven” brings to mind Isaiah’s

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 22970-22971). Isaiah 6:11

As well as Paul's remark about the third heaven:

I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago...caught up to the third heaven. And...caught up into paradise, and [he] heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 37839-37843). Kindle Edition. II Corinthians 12:2-4

Isaiah gives a pictorial description of his experience; Paul simply admits that the experience is beyond words. Later in his Roman letter he states,

the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 36794-36795). Kindle Edition. Cp. 8:26.

Certainly those who are skilled at practice of the *hong sau* technique of meditation have no problem with Paul's observation, because the communion in that practice takes the devotee beyond words and thoughts to a higher level of communication. Here (or there) not only is man's rational faculty unsuited for the task, one's inner awareness must be purified to be able to receive those holy 'words.'

The blessed Lord through the lips of Jadava Krishna describes this as [paraphrasing now]

“thought passing from thinking.”

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 326). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

The *hong sau* technique given by Paramahansa Yogananda in the Self-Realization Fellowship lessons as well as in *Yogoda or Tissue-Will System of Physical Perfection*, 1925 (ISBN-13: 9781484846056; ISBN-10: 1484846052, reissued in paperback 2013) is effective in helping the meditator achieve this end. It is included in its entirety later in the book in the “technique scriptures” section.

I taught Herbert Benson’s ‘Relaxation Response’ technique to hundreds of Texas prisoners to assist them with panic and depressive issues. You could tell by their facial expressions how much they benefitted from the technique. None of them said they’d gotten to a ‘thought’less state, but all found themselves immensely calmer. Benson, of course, extracted his technique from a consideration of mental techniques from many sources to avoid the perception that it was a ‘religious’ technique.

The Lutheran apologists on <http://www.soundwitness.org/> take exception to Benson's efforts, calling the technique "antichristian and (therefore) dangerous."

http://www.soundwitness.org/pop_culture/relaxation.htm

Be that as it may, in Section III discussion of doctrinal matters, the authority, truth and meaning of Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know..." will be explored. It may be seen that Persian and Arabic mystic followers of Islam are historically far more open to this reality than other groups.

Suffice for now to say that Christian chaplains across the prison landscape in America tend to prevent the use of effective meditation techniques because of their belief that they don't 'originate with Christ.'

Mindfulness meditation and especially vipassana meditation have documented evidence from India, Canada, and other countries for its ability to turn killers into kindhearted kindred spirits.

In the worst prisons of Alabama and California where vipassana has been allowed, the evidence shatters the objections of the Christian chaplains. Far from being 'anti-christian,' this effect at meditation helps, without exception, the prisoner meditator to find

the 'pearl of great price' within, and finding it, to want to 'live it' without.

St. Paul

Here is a new approach to Paul's statements given above. Bear with me for now on the apparent duplication:

2 Corinthians 12

[12:1] It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. [12:2] I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. [12:3] And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) [12:4] How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. [12:5] Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. [12:6] For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. [12:7] And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. [12:8] For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. [12:9] And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. [12:10] Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 37838-37852).

Taken out of the context of Paul's scolding the church at Corinth what is being affirmed is "the abundance of the revelations" he experiences but he does not go into detail. He gives his own reasons why he doesn't.

What is emphasized here for the sake of this book is that Paul's feet are "on the ground" even while his head and heart (so to speak) are traversing the heavens. Paul thereby highlights a spectacular spiritual issue, but I rather suspect this point is lost on the church at Corinth. Paul's unwitting point, I suggest, is that he himself may be sanctified, vilified, become "all things to all men for the sake of the gospel," but his holiness will absolutely do nothing for a 'believer' who is unwilling to acknowledge the need to change, to be sanctified, to "put some effort" of their own into their own spiritual journey.

Paul isn't going to throw "pearls before swine" though he comes close when he writes,

[12:11] ...for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. [12:12] Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 37852-37854).

There is an issue as well that Paul avoids by not ‘glorifying’ in his spiritual experiences, and that is the danger of losing one’s love and ardor for the One (in Paul’s case for his spiritual preceptor Jesus) if one speaks about them. This is heavily emphasized in all the ashrams of India.

But I have included this brief recitation of Paul’s glimpses of divine glory because it is all too often easy for us, as apparently for the church at Corinth, to “take for granted” in our midst that which is holy and which is sanctifying. The church at Corinth apparently didn’t have the Hindu understanding of ‘darshan,’ whereby just being able to see a holy person is a blessing that occasionally produces healing as well as blissful joy in their presence.

For what it’s worth I have found in my research an apparent long-standing and abiding antipathy towards St. Paul in the Iconium, Corinth, and Phillipi area that is later picked up on by no less than Jalaluddin Rumi. Claud Field explains:

But though he [Jalaluddin] speaks with reverence of Christ, he shares the common Mohammedan animus against St. Paul. As a matter of fact St. Paul is rarely mentioned in Mohammedan writings, but Jalaluddin spent most of his life

at Iconium, where, probably, owing to the tenacity of Oriental tradition, traces of St. Paul's teaching lingered.

In the first book of the *Masnavi* a curious story is told of an early corrupter of Christianity who wrote letters containing contradictory doctrines to the various leaders of their Church, and brought the religion into confusion. In this case Jalaluddin seems to have neglected the importance of distinguishing between second-hand opinion and first-hand knowledge...

Field, Claud (2012-05-12). *Mystics and Saints of Islam* (p. 90). . Kindle Edition.

St. Augustine

The written record of the ecstatic union with the One experienced by Augustine and his mother Monica one night on the 2nd story balcony of their Mediterranean residence must be one of the singular events of human history. It isn't the only one of its type, but it is amazing.

Augustine's writing is more like a prayer of devotion; he isn't praying that his mother be healed or her life prolonged:

The day now approaching whereon she was to depart this life (which day Thou well knewest, we knew not), it came to pass, Thyself, as I believe, by Thy secret ways so ordering it, that she and I stood alone, leaning in a certain window, which looked into the garden of the house where we now lay, at Ostia;

...We were discoursing then together, alone, very sweetly; and forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we were enquiring between ourselves in the presence of the Truth, which Thou art, of what sort the eternal life of the saints was to be, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man.

But yet we gasped with the mouth of our heart, after those heavenly streams of Thy fountain, the fountain of life, which is with Thee; that being bedewed thence according to our capacity, we might in some sort meditate upon so high a mystery.

And when our discourse was brought to that point, that the very highest delight of the earthly senses, in the very purest material light, was, in respect of the sweetness of that life, not only not worthy of comparison, but not even of mention; we raising up ourselves with a more glowing affection towards the "Self-same," did by degrees pass through all things bodily, even the very heaven whence sun and moon and stars shine upon the earth; yea, we were soaring higher yet, by inward musing, and discourse, and admiring of Thy works; and we came to our own minds, and went beyond them, that we might arrive at that region of never-failing plenty, where Thou feedest Israel for ever with the food of truth, and where life is the Wisdom by whom all these things are made, and what have been, and what shall be, and she is not made, but is, as she hath been, and so shall she be ever; yea rather, to "have been," and "hereafter to be," are not in her, but only "to be," seeing she is eternal. For to "have been," and to "be hereafter," are not eternal.

And while we were discoursing and panting after her, we slightly touched on her with the whole effort of our heart; and we sighed, and there we leave bound the first fruits of the Spirit; and returned to vocal expressions of our mouth, where the word spoken has beginning and end. And what is like unto Thy Word, our Lord, who endureth in Himself without becoming old, and maketh all things new?

Saint Augustine (2012-12-18). The Confessions of St. Augustine (Kindle Locations 21852202).

Augustine has taken written expression of glimpses of inner spiritual glory to a new high. I have arbitrarily inserted paragraph marks to assist in “soaking up” these grand expressions.

Alfred Tennyson

Alfred Lord Tennyson, the great poet, wrote in his Memoirs: "A kind of waking trance-this for lack of a better word-I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has come upon me through repeating my own name to myself silently, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state but the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond wordswhere death was an almost laughable impossibility-the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life. ... It is no nebulous ecstasy, but a state of transcendent wonder, associated with absolute clearness of mind."

J. Donald Walters. *The Path: One Man's Quest on the Only Path There is* (Kindle Locations 4008-4012). Kindle Edition.

Rabindranath Tagore

Avatar Paramhansa Yogananda writes of Tagore,

“The songs of Rabindranath have been on my lips since early youth,” I told my companion. “All Bengal, even the unlettered peasants, delights in his lofty verse.” Bhola and I sang together a few refrains from Tagore, who has set to music thousands of Indian poems, some original and others of hoary antiquity. “I met Rabindranath soon after he had received the Nobel Prize for literature,” I remarked after our vocalizing. “I was drawn to visit him because I admired his undiplomatic courage in disposing of his literary critics.” I chuckled. Bhola curiously inquired the story. “The scholars severely flayed Tagore for introducing a new style into Bengali poetry,” I began. “He mixed colloquial and classical expressions, ignoring all the prescribed limitations dear to the pundits’ hearts. His songs embody deep philosophic truth in emotionally appealing terms, with little regard for the accepted literary forms. “One influential critic slightly referred to Rabindranath as a ‘pigeon-poet who sold his cooings in print for a rupee.’ [Nonetheless] the whole Western world paid homage at his feet soon after he had translated into English his *Gitanjali* (‘Song Offerings’).”

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (p. 165). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

Yogananda writes that “The beauty of his lines, to me, lies in his art of referring to God in nearly every stanza, yet seldom mentioning the sacred Name.”

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (p. 168). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

Here is an excerpt illustrating that to which Yogananda refers,
When thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart
would break with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come
to my eyes.

All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet
harmony--and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on
its flight across the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only
as a singer I come before thy presence.

I touch by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy
feet which I could never aspire to reach.

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee
friend who art my lord.

Tagore, Rabindranath (2004-12-01). *Gitanjali* (p. 17). Public Domain Books. Kindle Edition.

In this excerpt from Part VI of his *Reminiscences*, Tagore
describes his experiences of bliss and relates how he expressed them
in his poetry.

After we had stayed for a time by the river, my brother
Jyotirindra took a house in Calcutta, on Sudder Street near
the Museum. I remained with him. While I went on here with
the novel and the *Evening Songs*, a momentous revolution of
some kind came about within me.

One day, late in the afternoon, I was pacing the terrace of our
Jorasanko house. The glow of the sunset combined with the
wan twilight in a way which seemed to give the approaching
evening a specially wonderful attractiveness for me. Even the
walls of the adjoining house seemed to grow beautiful. Is this

uplifting of the cover of triviality from the everyday world, I wondered, due to some magic in the evening light? Never!

I could see at once that it was the effect of the evening which had come within me; its shades had obliterated my self. While the self was rampant during the glare of day, everything I perceived was mingled with and hidden by it. Now, that the self was put into the background, I could see the world in its own true aspect. And that aspect has nothing of triviality in it, it is full of beauty and joy.

Since this experience I tried the effect of deliberately suppressing my self and viewing the world as a mere spectator, and was invariably rewarded with a sense of special pleasure. I remember I tried also to explain to a relative how to see the world in its true light, and the incidental lightening of one's own sense of burden which follows such vision; but, as I believe, with no success.

Then I gained a further insight which has lasted all my life.

The end of Sudder Street, and the trees on the Free School grounds opposite, were visible from our Sudder Street house. One morning I happened to be standing on the verandah looking that way. The sun was just rising through the leafy tops of those trees. As I continued to gaze, all of a sudden a covering seemed to fall away from my eyes, and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance, with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side. This radiance pierced in a moment through the folds of sadness and despondency which had accumulated over my heart, and flooded it with this universal light.

That very day the poem, *The Awakening of the Waterfall*, gushed forth and coursed on like a veritable cascade. The poem came to an end, but the curtain did not fall upon the joy aspect of the Universe. And it came to be so that no person or thing in the world seemed to me trivial or unpleasing. A thing that happened the next day or the day following seemed specially astonishing.

There was a curious sort of person who came to me now and then, with a habit of asking all manner of silly questions. One day he had asked: "Have you, sir, seen God with your own eyes?" And on my having to admit that I had not, he averred that he had. "What was it you saw?" I asked. "He seethed and throbbled before my eyes!" was the reply.

It can well be imagined that one would not ordinarily relish being drawn into abstruse discussions with such a person. Moreover, I was at the time entirely absorbed in my own writing. Nevertheless as he was a harmless sort of fellow I did not like the idea of hurting his susceptibilities and so tolerated him as best I could.

This time, when he came one afternoon, I actually felt glad to see him, and welcomed him cordially. The mantle of his oddity and foolishness seemed to have slipped off, and the person I so joyfully hailed was the real man whom I felt to be in nowise inferior to myself, and moreover closely related. Finding no trace of annoyance within me at sight of him, nor any sense of my time being wasted with him, I was filled with an immense gladness, and felt rid of some enveloping tissue of untruth which had been causing me so much needless and uncalled for discomfort and pain.

...I wandered about amongst the firs, I sat near the falls and bathed in their waters, I gazed at the grandeur of

Kinchinjunga through a cloudless sky, but in what had seemed to me these likeliest of places, I found it not. I had come to know it, but could see it no longer...

But does one write poetry to explain any matter? What is felt within the heart tries to find outside shape as a poem. So when after listening to a poem anyone says he has not understood, I feel nonplussed. If someone smells a flower and says he does not understand, the reply to him is: there is nothing to understand, it is only a scent. If he persists, saying: that I know, but what does it all mean? Then one has either to change the subject, or make it more abstruse by saying that the scent is the shape which the universal joy takes in the flower.

That words have meanings is just the difficulty. That is why the poet has to turn and twist them in metre and verse, so that the meaning may be held somewhat in check, and the feeling allowed a chance to express itself.

This utterance of feeling is not the statement of a fundamental truth, or a scientific fact, or a useful moral precept. Like a tear or a smile it is but a picture of what is taking place within. If Science or Philosophy may gain anything from it they are welcome, but that is not the reason of its being. If while crossing a ferry you can catch a fish you are a lucky man, but that does not make the ferry boat a fishing boat, nor should you abuse the ferryman if he does not make fishing his business.

The Echo was written so long ago that it has escaped attention and I am now no longer called upon to render an account of its meaning. Nevertheless, whatever its other merits or defects may be, I can assure my readers that it was not my

intention to propound a riddle, or insidiously convey any erudite teaching. The fact of the matter was that a longing had been born within my heart, and, unable to find any other name, I had called the thing I desired an Echo.

When from the original fount in the depths of the Universe streams of melody are sent forth abroad, their echo is reflected into our heart from the faces of our beloved and the other beautiful things around us. It must be, as I suggested, this Echo which we love, and not the things themselves from which it happens to be reflected; for that which one day we scarce deign to glance at, may be, on another, the very thing which claims our whole devotion.

I had so long viewed the world with external vision only, and so had been unable to see its universal aspect of joy. When of a sudden, from some innermost depth of my being, a ray of light found its way out, it spread over and illuminated for me the whole universe, which then no longer appeared like heaps of things and happenings, but was disclosed to my sight as one whole. This experience seemed to tell me of the stream of melody issuing from the very heart of the universe and spreading over space and time, re-echoing thence as waves of joy which flow right back to the source.

This all-pervading joy of a first outflow, however, has the effect of leading us to an acquaintance with the particular. The lake in its fullness seeks an outlet as a river. In this sense the permanent later love is narrower than first love. It is more definite in the direction of its activities, desires to realise the whole in each of its parts, and is thus impelled on towards the infinite. What it finally reaches is no longer the former indefinite extension of the heart's own inner joy, but a merging in the infinite reality which was outside itself, and

thereby the attainment of the complete truth of its own longings.

In Mohita Babu's edition these *Morning Songs* have been placed in the group of poems entitled *Nishkraman, The Emergence*. For in these was to be found the first news of my coming out of the *Heart Wilderness* into the open world. Thereafter did this pilgrim heart make its acquaintance with that world, bit by bit, part by part, in many a mood and manner. And at the end, after gliding past all the numerous landing steps of ever-changing impermanence, it will reach the infinite,—not the vagueness of indeterminate possibility, but the consummation of perfect fullness of Truth.

From my earliest years I enjoyed a simple and intimate communion with Nature. Each one of the cocoanut trees in our garden had for me a distinct personality. When, on coming home from the Normal School, I saw behind the skyline of our roof-terrace blue-grey water-laden clouds thickly banked up, the immense depth of gladness which filled me, all in a moment, I can recall clearly even now. On opening my eyes every morning, the blithely awakening world used to call me to join it like a playmate; the perfervid noonday sky, during the long silent watches of the siesta hours, would spirit me away from the work-a-day world into the recesses of its hermit cell; and the darkness of night would open the door to its phantom paths, and take me over all the seven seas and thirteen rivers, past all possibilities and impossibilities, right into its wonder-land.

Then one day, when, with the dawn of youth, my hungry heart began to cry out for its sustenance, a barrier was set up between this play of inside and outside...

This loss of the harmony between inside and outside, due to the over-riding claims of the heart in its hunger, and consequent restriction of the privilege of communion which had been mine, was mourned by me in *the Evening Songs*. In the *Morning Songs* I celebrated the sudden opening of a gate in the barrier, by what shock I know not, through which I regained the lost one, not only as I knew it before, but more deeply, more fully, by force of the intervening separation.

Thus did the First Book of my life come to an end with these chapters of union, separation and reunion.

Tagore, Rabindranath (2011-03-23). *My Reminiscences* (Kindle Locations 1964-1991; 2008-2037; 2052-2079). Part VI, 34

Arjuna

Arjuna is known in India as the ‘model disciple’ who knows how to discipline himself in his search for God. The BhagavadGita (approximately 700 stanzas) is the dialogue between Arjuna and his guru, Lord Krishna.

Even so this ‘model disciple’ finds himself emotionally unprepared (at first) to “do what must be done” spiritually to find God. In this excerpt Arjuna is given the ‘vision of visions’ longed for by countless devotees. It is cast in the language and conceptual field to which Arjuna is accustomed. Nonetheless the vision is as awful as it is awesome.

Arjuna to Krishna.

If this can be, if I may bear the sight, Make Thyself visible,
Lord of all prayers! Show me Thy very self, the Eternal God!

Krishna.

Gaze, then, thou Son of Pritha! I manifest for thee Those hundred
thousand thousand shapes that clothe my Mystery:

I show thee all my semblances, infinite, rich, divine, My
changeful hues, my countless forms. See! in this face of mine,
Adityas, Vasus, Rudras, Aswins, and Maruts; see Wonders
unnumbered, Indian Prince! revealed to none save thee.
Behold! this is the Universe! -- Look! what is live and dead I
gather all in one -- in Me! Gaze, as thy lips have said, On
GOD ETERNAL, VERY GOD! See Me! see what thou

prayest! Thou canst not! -- nor, with human eyes, Arjuna!
ever mayest! Therefore I give thee sense divine. Have other
eyes, new light! And, look! This is My glory, unveiled to
mortal sight!

Sanjaya to Dhritirashtra.

Then, O King! the God, so saying, Stood, to Pritha's Son
displaying All the splendour, wonder, dread Of His vast
Almighty-head. Out of countless eyes beholding, Out of
countless mouths commanding, Countless mystic forms
enfolding In one Form: supremely standing Countless radiant
glories wearing, Countless heavenly weapons bearing,
Crowned with garlands of star-clusters, Robed in garb of
woven lustres, Breathing from His perfect Presence Breaths
of every subtle essence Of all heavenly odours; shedding
Blinding brilliance; overspreading -- Boundless, beautiful --
all spaces With His all-regarding faces; So He showed! If there
should rise Suddenly within the skies Sunburst of a thousand
suns Flooding earth with beams undeemed-of, Then might
be that Holy One's Majesty and radiance dreamed of!

So did Pandu's Son behold All this universe enfold All its
huge diversity Into one vast shape, and be Visible, and
viewed, and blended In one Body -- subtle, splendid,
Nameless -- th' All-comprehending God of Gods, the Never-
Ending Deity! But, sore amazed, Thrilled, o'erfilled, dazzled,
and dazed, Arjuna knelt; and bowed his head, And clasped
his palms; and cried, and said: Arjuna. Yea! I have seen! I see!
Lord! all is wrapped in Thee! The gods are in Thy glorious
frame! the creatures Of earth, and heaven, and hell In Thy
Divine form dwell, And in Thy countenance shine all the

features Of Brahma, sitting lone Upon His lotus-throne; Of
saints and sages, and the serpent races Ananta, Vasuki; Yea!
mightiest Lord! I see Thy thousand thousand arms, and
breasts, and faces, And eyes, -- on every side Perfect,
diversified; And nowhere end of Thee, nowhere beginning,
Nowhere a centre! Shifts -- Wherever soul's gaze lifts -- Thy
central Self, all-wielding, and allwinning! Infinite King! I see
The anadem on Thee, The club, the shell, the discus; see Thee
burning In beams insufferable, Lighting earth, heaven, and
hell With brilliance blazing, glowing, flashing; turning
Darkness to dazzling day, Look I whichever way; Ah, Lord! I
worship Thee, the Undivided, The Uttermost of thought, The
Treasure-Palace wrought To hold the wealth of the worlds;
the Shield provided To shelter Virtue's laws; The Fount
whence Life's stream draws All waters of all rivers of all being:
The One Unborn, Unending: Unchanging and Unblending!
With might and majesty, past thought, past seeing! Silver of
moon and gold Of sun are glories rolled From Thy great eyes;
Thy visage, beaming tender Throughout the stars and skies,
Doth to warm life surprise Thy Universe. The worlds are
filled with wonder Of Thy perfections! Space Star-sprinkled,
and void place From pole to pole of the Blue, from bound to
bound, Hath Thee in every spot, Thee, Thee! -- Where Thou
art not, O Holy, Marvellous Form! is nowhere found!

O Mystic, Awful One! At sight of Thee, made known, The
Three Worlds quake; the lower gods draw nigh Thee; They
fold their palms, and bow Body, and breast, and brow, And,
whispering worship, laud and magnify Thee! Rishis and
Siddhas cry "Hail! Highest Majesty!" From sage and singer
breaks the hymn of glory In dulcet harmony, Sounding the
praise of Thee; While countless companies take up the story,

Rudras, who ride the storms, Th' Adityas' shining forms,
Vasus and Sadhyas, Viswas, Ushmapas; Maruts, and those
great Twins The heavenly, fair, Aswins, Gandharvas,
Rakshasas, Siddhas, and Asuras,²² -- These see Thee, and
revere In sudden-stricken fear; Yea! the Worlds, -- seeing
Thee with form stupendous, With faces manifold, With eyes
which all behold, Unnumbered eyes, vast arms, members
tremendous, Flanks, lit with sun and star, Feet planted near
and far, Tushes of terror, mouths wrathful and tender; -- The
Three wide Worlds before Thee Adore, as I adore Thee,
Quake, as I quake, to witness so much splendour! I mark
Thee strike the skies With front, in wondrous wise Huge,
rainbow-painted, glittering; and thy mouth Opened, and orbs
which see All things, whatever be In all Thy worlds, east,
west, and north and south. O Eyes of God! O Head! My
strength of soul is fled, Gone is heart's force, rebuked is
mind's desire! When I behold Thee so, With awful brows a-
glow, With burning glance, and lips lighted by fire Fierce as
those flames which shall Consume, at close of all, Earth,
Heaven! Ah me! I see no Earth and Heaven! Thee, Lord of
Lords! I see, Thee only-only Thee!

Now let Thy mercy unto me be given, Thou Refuge of the
World! Lo! to the cavern hurled Of Thy wide-opened throat,
and lips white-tushed, I see our noblest ones, Great
Dhritarashtra's sons, Bhishma, Drona, and Karna, caught and
crushed! The Kings and Chiefs drawn in, That gaping gorge
within; The best of both these armies torn and riven! Between
Thy jaws they lie Mangled full bloodily, Ground into dust and
death! Like streams down-driven With helpless haste, which
go In headlong furious flow Straight to the gulping deeps of
th' unfilled ocean, So to that flaming cave Those heroes great

and brave Pour, in unending streams, with helpless motion!
Like moths which in the night Flutter towards a light, Drawn
to their fiery doom, flying and dying, So to their death still
throng, Blind, dazzled, borne along Ceaselessly, all those
multitudes, wild flying! Thou, that hast fashioned men,
Devourest them again, One with another, great and small,
alike! The creatures whom Thou mak'st, With flaming jaws
Thou tak'st, Lapping them up! Lord God! Thy terrors strike
From end to end of earth, Filling life full, from birth To
death, with deadly, burning, lurid dread! Ah, Vishnu! make
me know Why is Thy visage so? Who art Thou, feasting thus
upon Thy dead? Who? awful Deity! I bow myself to Thee,
Namostu Te, Devavara! Prasad!²³ O Mightiest Lord! rehearse
Why hast Thou face so fierce? Whence doth this aspect
horrible proceed?

Krishna. Thou seest Me as Time who kills, Time who brings
all to doom, The Slayer Time, Ancient of Days, come hither
to consume; Excepting thee, of all these hosts of hostile
chiefs arrayed, There stands not one shall leave alive the
battlefield! Dismayed No longer be! Arise! obtain renown!
destroy thy foes! Fight for the kingdom waiting thee when
thou hast vanquished those. By Me they fall -- not thee! the
stroke of death is dealt them now, Even as they show thus
gallantly; My instrument art thou! Strike, strong-armed
Prince, at Drona! at Bhishma strike! deal death On Karna,
Jyadratha; stay all their warlike breath! 'Tis I who bid them
perish! Thou wilt but slay the slain; Fight! they must fall, and
thou must live, victor upon this plain!

Sanjaya. Hearing mighty Keshav's word, Tremblingly that
helmed Lord Clasped his lifted palms, and -- praying Grace

of Krishna -- stood there, saying, With bowed brow and accents broken, These words, timorously spoken:

Arjuna.

Worthily, Lord of Might! The whole world hath delight In Thy surpassing power, obeying Thee; The Rakshasas, in dread At sight of Thee, are sped To all four quarters; and the company Of Siddhas sound Thy name. How should they not proclaim Thy Majesties, Divinest, Mightiest? Thou Brahm, than Brahma greater! Thou Infinite Creator! Thou God of gods, Life's Dwelling-place and Rest! Thou, of all souls the Soul! The Comprehending Whole! Of being formed, and formless being the Framer; O Utmost One! O Lord! Older than eld, Who stored The worlds with wealth of life! O Treasure-Claimer, Who wottest all, and art Wisdom Thyself! O Part In all, and All; for all from Thee have risen Numberless now I see The aspects are of Thee! Vayu²⁴ Thou art, and He who keeps the prison Of Narak, Yama dark; And Agni's shining spark; Varuna's waves are Thy waves. Moon and starlight Are Thine! Prajapati Art Thou, and 'tis to Thee They knelt in worshipping the old world's far light, The first of mortal men. Again, Thou God! again A thousand thousand times be magnified! Honour and worship be -- Glory and praise, -- to Thee Namō, Namaste, cried on every side; Cried here, above, below, Uttered when Thou dost go, Uttered where Thou dost come! Namō! we call; Namostu! God adored! Namostu! Nameless Lord! Hail to Thee! Praise to Thee! Thou One in all; For Thou art All! Yea, Thou!

Ah! if in anger now Thou shouldst remember I did think Thee Friend, Speaking with easy speech, As men use each to

each; Did call Thee "Krishna," "Prince," nor comprehend
Thy hidden majesty, The might, the awe of Thee; Did, in my
heedlessness, or in my love, On journey, or in jest, Or when
we lay at rest, Sitting at council, straying in the grove, Alone,
or in the throng, Do Thee, most Holy! wrong, Be Thy grace
granted for that witless sin! For Thou art, now I know, Father
of all below, Of all above, of all the worlds within Guru of
Gurus; more To reverence and adore Than all which is
adorable and high! How, in the wide worlds three Should any
equal be? Should any other share Thy Majesty? Therefore,
with body bent And reverent intent, I praise, and serve, and
seek Thee, asking grace. As father to a son, As friend to
friend, as one Who loveth to his lover, turn Thy face In
gentleness on me! Good is it I did see This unknown marvel
of Thy Form! But fear Mingles with joy! Retake, Dear Lord!
for pity's sake Thine earthly shape, which earthly eyes may
bear! Be merciful, and show The visage that I know; Let me
regard Thee, as of yore, arrayed With disc and forehead-gem,
With mace and anadem, Thou that sustainest all things!
Undismayed Let me once more behold The form I loved of
old, Thou of the thousand arms and countless eyes! This
frightened heart is fain To see restored again My Charioteer,
in Krishna's kind disguise.

Krishna. Yea! thou hast seen, Arjuna! because I loved thee
well, The secret countenance of Me, revealed by mystic spell,
Shining, and wonderful, and vast, majestic, manifold, Which
none save thou in all the years had favour to behold; For not
by Vedas cometh this, nor sacrifice, nor alms, Nor works
well-done, nor penance long, nor prayers, nor chaunted
psalms, That mortal eyes should bear to view the Immortal
Soul unclad, Prince of the Kurus! This was kept for thee

alone! Be glad! Let no more trouble shake thy heart, because
thine eyes have seen My terror with My glory. As I before
have been So will I be again for thee; with lightened heart
behold! Once more I am thy Krishna, the form thou knew'st
of old!

Sanjaya.

These words to Arjuna spake Vasudev, and straight did take
Back again the semblance dear Of the well-loved charioteer;
Peace and joy it did restore When the Prince beheld once
more Mighty BRAHMA's form and face Clothed in
Krishna's gentle grace.

Arjuna. Now that I see come back, Janardana! This friendly
human frame, my mind can think Calm thoughts once more;
my heart beats still again!

Krishna.

Yea! it was wonderful and terrible To view me as thou didst,
dear Prince! The gods Dread and desire continually to view!

Yet not by Vedas, nor from sacrifice, Nor penance, nor
giftgiving, nor with prayer Shall any so behold, as thou hast
seen! Only by fullest service, perfect faith, And uttermost
surrender am I known And seen, and entered into, Indian
Prince! Who doeth all for Me; who findeth Me In all; adoreth
always; loveth all Which I have made, and Me, for Love's sole
end That man, Arjuna! unto Me doth wend.

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 511-599). Cp. XI MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

Paramhansa Yogananda

Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi* is probably the best known autobiography of all time. This excerpt is Yogananda's description of the 'vision of visions' given him at age 17 by his own guru Swami Sriyukteswar.

A few mornings later I made my way to Master's empty sitting room. I planned to meditate, but my laudable purpose was unshared by disobedient thoughts. They scattered like birds before the hunter.

"Mukunda!" Sriyukteswar's voice sounded from a distant inner balcony. I felt as rebellious as my thoughts. "Master always urges me to meditate," I muttered to myself. "He should not disturb me when he knows why I came to his room." He summoned me again; I remained obstinately silent. The third time his tone held rebuke. "Sir, I am meditating," I shouted protestingly.

"I know how you are meditating," my guru called out, "with your mind distributed like leaves in a storm! Come here to me." Snubbed and exposed, I made my way sadly to his side.

"Poor boy, the mountains couldn't give what you wanted." Master spoke caressively, comfortingly. His calm gaze was unfathomable. "Your heart's desire shall be fulfilled." Sriyukteswar seldom indulged in riddles; I was bewildered.

He struck gently on my chest above the heart. My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet. Soul and mind instantly lost their physical bondage, and streamed out like a fluid piercing light from my every pore. The flesh was as though dead, yet

in my intense awareness I knew that never before had I been fully alive.

My sense of identity was no longer narrowly confined to a body, but embraced the circumambient atoms. People on distant streets seemed to be moving gently over my own remote periphery. The roots of plants and trees appeared through a dim transparency of the soil; I discerned the inward flow of their sap. The whole vicinity lay bare before me. My ordinary frontal vision was now changed to a vast spherical sight, simultaneously all-perceptive.

Through the back of my head I saw men strolling far down Rai Ghat Road, and noticed also a white cow who was leisurely approaching. When she reached the space in front of the open ashram gate, I observed her with my two physical eyes. As she passed by, behind the brick wall, I saw her clearly still. All objects within my panoramic gaze trembled and vibrated like quick motion pictures.

My body, Master's, the pillared courtyard, the furniture and floor, the trees and sunshine, occasionally became violently agitated, until all melted into a luminescent sea; even as sugar crystals, thrown into a glass of water, dissolve after being shaken.

The unifying light alternated with materializations of form, the metamorphoses revealing the law of cause and effect in creation. An oceanic joy broke upon calm endless shores of my soul.

The Spirit of God, I realized, is exhaustless Bliss; His body is countless tissues of light.

A swelling glory within me began to envelop towns, continents, the earth, solar and stellar systems, tenuous nebulae, and floating universes. The entire cosmos, gently

luminous, like a city seen afar at night, glimmered within the infinitude of my being. The sharply etched global outlines faded somewhat at the farthest edges; there I could see a mellow radiance, ever-undiminished.

It was indescribably subtle; the planetary pictures were formed of a grosser light. The divine dispersion of rays poured from an Eternal Source, blazing into galaxies, transfigured with ineffable auras. Again and again I saw the creative beams condense into constellations, then resolve into sheets of transparent flame. By rhythmic reversion, sextillion worlds passed into diaphanous luster; fire became firmament.

I cognized the center of the empyrean as a point of intuitive perception in my heart. Irradiating splendor issued from my nucleus to every part of the universal structure. Blissful amrita, the nectar of immortality, pulsed through me with a quicksilverlike fluidity. The creative voice of God I heard resounding as Aum, the vibration of the Cosmic Motor. 96

[Footnote 96 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”—John 1:1.]

Suddenly the breath returned to my lungs. With a disappointment almost unbearable, I realized that my infinite immensity was lost. Once more I was limited to the humiliating cage of a body, not easily accommodative to the Spirit. Like a prodigal child, I had run away from my macrocosmic home and imprisoned myself in a narrow microcosm.

My guru was standing motionless before me; I started to drop at his holy feet in gratitude for the experience in cosmic consciousness which I had long passionately sought. He held me upright, and spoke calmly, unpretentiously. “You must

not get overdrunk with ecstasy. Much work yet remains for you in the world. Come; let us sweep the balcony floor; then we shall walk by the Ganges.”

I fetched a broom; Master, I knew, was teaching me the secret of balanced living. The soul must stretch over the cosmogonic abysses, while the body performs its daily duties.

When we set out later for a stroll, I was still entranced in unspeakable rapture. I saw our bodies as two astral pictures, moving over a road by the river whose essence was sheer light. “It is the Spirit of God that actively sustains every form and force in the universe; yet He is transcendental and aloof in the blissful uncreated void beyond the worlds of vibratory phenomena,” 97 Master explained. “Saints who realize their divinity even while in the flesh know a similar twofold existence. Conscientiously engaging in earthly work, they yet remain immersed in an inward beatitude. The Lord has created all men from the limitless joy of His being. Though they are painfully cramped by the body, God nevertheless expects that souls made in His image shall ultimately rise above all sense identifications and reunite with Him.” The cosmic vision left many permanent lessons. By daily stilling my thoughts, I could win release from the delusive conviction that my body was a mass of flesh and bones, traversing the hard soil of matter. The breath and the restless mind, I saw, were like storms which lashed the ocean of light into waves of material forms—earth, sky, human beings, animals, birds, trees. No perception of the Infinite as One Light could be had except by calming those storms. As often as I silenced the two natural tumults, I beheld the multitudinous waves of creation melt into one lucent sea, even as the waves of the ocean, their tempests subsiding, serenely dissolve into unity.

[Footnote 97: “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”—John 5:22. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”—John 1:18. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”- John 14:12. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said to you.”—John 14:26.

These Biblical words refer to the threefold nature of God as Father, Son, Holy Ghost (Sat, Tat, Aum in the Hindu scriptures). God the Father is the Absolute, Unmanifested, existing beyond vibratory creation. God the Son is the Christ Consciousness (Brahma or Kutastha Chaitanya) existing within vibratory creation; this Christ Consciousness is the “only begotten” or sole reflection of the Uncreated Infinite. Its outward manifestation or “witness” is Aum or Holy Ghost, the divine, creative, invisible power which structures all creation through vibration. Aum the blissful Comforter is heard in meditation and reveals to the devotee the ultimate Truth.]

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (pp. 93-95). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

Lahiri Mahasaya

Lahiri Mahasaya is the first in a spiritual lineage ordained by Babaji to spread the ‘creedless teachings of kriya yoga.’ The lineage includes Swami Sriyukteswar and Paramahansa Yogananda.

My preacher Dad recounted to my 6 year old ears that at least 500 people saw Lord Jesus after his death on the cross. That was quite reassuring. I do not know how many souls witnessed the Prophet’s ascension there in Jerusalem, although I had the privilege (back in 1965) of making a pilgrimage there.

The account here of Lahiri Mahasaya’s passing is recounted by Guru Paramhansa Yogananda. ‘Lahiri’ is this dear saint’s last name. ‘Mahasaya’ is a combination of two Sanskrit words, ‘maha’ (large, or great) and ‘saya’ (mind, or consciousness). His title means that he has attained the status of which Lord Jesus had prayed for his own disciples, i.e., Lahiri is one with the Lord (John 17:21). It is entirely the opposite of small-minded!!!

The term, ‘paramhansa,’ a title applied to my guru Yogananda by his own guru Swami Sriyukteswar is a combination of the two words, ‘parama’ (great, beyond, supreme) and ‘ahansa,’ (or ‘ahamsa,’ swan). This is an allusion to the same status of consciousness attained by Lahiri Mahasaya.

Sometimes the term is spelled ‘parama’ (Paramahansa) and sometimes the final ‘a’ is dropped. I noted earlier this year a similar occurrence with the term ‘kumbha,’ during the 2013 Kumbh Mela held in Allahabad. Ordinarily I would have pronounced it ‘kumbha,’ with the final ‘a’ but the internet reviews all present it as Kumbh Mela.

I do not know if it’s the Bengali pronunciation that drops the final ‘a’ or if it’s Sanskrit. Personally for Yogananda’s name I tend to prefer the way he, as a Bengali pronounced his own name, and that was by dropping the final ‘a’ and not pronouncing the ‘ah’ of ‘ahansa.’(Para-mansa).

In this excerpt from Chapter 36 of *Autobiography of a Yogi* the final days and passing of Lahiri Mahasaya are recounted by three witnesses to his resurrection.

“That was one of my last visits to Benares to see my guru,” Sriyukteswar concluded. “Even as Babaji had foretold at the Kumbha Mela, the householder-incarnation of Lahiri Mahasaya was drawing to a close.

During the summer of 1895 his stalwart body developed a small boil on the back. He protested against lancing; he was working out in his own flesh the evil karma of some of his disciples. Finally a few chelas became very insistent; the master replied cryptically:

“The body has to find a cause to go; I will be agreeable to whatever you want to do.’

“A short time later the incomparable guru gave up his body in Benares. No longer need I seek him out in his little parlor; I find every day of my life blessed by his omnipresent guidance.”

Years later, from the lips of Swami Keshabananda, an advanced disciple, I heard many wonderful details about the passing of Lahiri Mahasaya.

“A few days before my guru relinquished his body,” Keshabananda told me, “he materialized himself before me as I sat in my hermitage at Hardwar.

“‘Come at once to Benares.’ With these words Lahiri Mahasaya vanished.

“I entrained immediately for Benares. At my guru’s home I found many disciples assembled. For hours that day the master expounded the Gita; then he addressed us simply.

“‘I am going home.’ “Sobs of anguish broke out like an irresistible torrent.

“‘Be comforted; I shall rise again.’ After this utterance Lahiri Mahasaya thrice turned his body around in a circle, faced the north in his lotus posture, and gloriously entered the final maha-samadhi.

“Lahiri Mahasaya’s beautiful body, so dear to the devotees, was cremated with solemn householder rites at Manikarnika Ghat by the holy Ganges,” Keshabananda continued.

“The following day, at ten o’clock in the morning, while I was still in Benares, my room was suffused with a great light. Lo! before me stood the flesh and blood form of Lahiri Mahasaya! It looked exactly like his old body, except that it

appeared younger and more radiant. My divine guru spoke to me.

“‘Keshabananda,’ he said, ‘it is I. From the disintegrated atoms of my cremated body, I have resurrected a remodeled form. My householder work in the world is done; but I do not leave the earth entirely. Henceforth I shall spend some time with Babaji in the Himalayas, and with Babaji in the cosmos.’

“With a few words of blessing to me, the transcendent master vanished. Wondrous inspiration filled my heart; I was uplifted in Spirit even as were the disciples of Christ and Kabir when they had gazed on their living gurus after physical death.

“When I returned to my isolated Hardwar hermitage,” Keshabananda went on, “I carried with me the sacred ashes of my guru. I know he has escaped the spatio-temporal cage; the bird of omnipresence is freed. Yet it comforted my heart to enshrine his sacred remains.”

Another disciple who was blessed by the sight of his resurrected guru was the saintly Panchanon Bhattacharya, founder of the Calcutta Arya Mission Institution.

I visited Panchanon at his Calcutta home, and listened with delight to the story of his many years with the master. In conclusion, he told me of the most marvelous event in his life.

“Here in Calcutta,” Panchanon said, “at ten o’clock of the morning which followed his cremation, Lahiri Mahasaya appeared before me in living glory.”

Swami Pranabananda, the “saint with two bodies,” also confided to me the details of his own supernal experience. “A

few days before Lahiri Mahasaya left his body,” Pranabananda told me at the time he visited my Ranchi school,

“I received a letter from him, requesting me to come at once to Benares. I was delayed, however, and could not leave immediately.

As I was in the midst of my travel preparations, about ten o’clock in the morning, I was suddenly overwhelmed with joy to see the shining figure of my guru.

“‘Why hurry to Benares?’ Lahiri Mahasaya said, smiling. ‘You shall find me there no longer.’”

“As the import of his words dawned on me, I sobbed brokenheartedly, believing that I was seeing him only in a vision.

“The master approached me comfortingly. ‘Here, touch my flesh,’ he said. ‘I am living, as always. Do not lament; am I not with you forever?’”

From the lips of these three great disciples, a story of wondrous truth has emerged:

At the morning hour of ten, on the day after the body of Lahiri Mahasaya had been consigned to the flames, the resurrected master, in a real but transfigured body, appeared before three disciples, each one in a different city.

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.] O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” [1 Corinthians 15:54, 55]

The term ‘*mahasamadhi*,’ is made up of the Sanskrit word for ‘great,’ (explained above), and the term ‘*samadhi*,’ (literally: concentrated together), meaning the meditator’s final (i.e. great) immersion in bliss. Great yogis always know the time of their appointed death, and will usually perform a yogic technique to accomplish this (As seen above Lahiri Mahasaya three times “turned his body around in a circle, faced the north in his lotus posture, and gloriously entered the final maha-samadhi.”)

My Christian colleagues have often expressed their puzzlement over St. Paul’s remark, “

I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord,
I die daily.

1 Corinthians 15:31

Yogananda boldly asserts that Paul knew the same kriya yoga technique (or one very similar to it) that Lahiri did for attaining the bliss consciousness of the Lord. When this technique is used in daily meditation the heart and lungs are stilled, and in the blissful stillness the adept enters into oneness with the divine.

A naive physician may wrongly conclude that the person has died permanently (so to speak).

The same ecstatic union, of course, can be obtained by other means, such as single hearted devotion, service, love,

singlemindedness (as opposed to narrow-mindedness or rigidity)
etc, etc.

Additionally there are degrees of attainment according to one's own preparedness.

I love this explanation given by Fariduddin Attar:

In the path traversed by Abraham the Friend of God, can a feeble spider keep pace with an elephant? Let the gnat fly as hard as he may, he will never keep up with the wind. Thus the degrees of knowledge attained to by the initiated are different; one only reaches the entrance of the temple, while another finds the Divinity who dwells in it. When the Sun of Knowledge darts its rays, each is illumined in proportion to his capacity, and finds in the contemplation of the truth the rank which belongs to him. He sees a path lie open before him through the midst of the fire, the furnace of the world becomes for him a garden of roses. He perceives the almond within the shell, that is to say, he sees God under the veil of all apparent things. But for one happy man who penetrates into these mysteries, how many millions have gone astray? Only the perfect can dive with success into the depths of this ocean.

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED] (Kindle Locations 1628-1634). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

Of course the disciples of all saints are generously treated to encounters with their preceptor even after the 'final bliss.' I listened to the reading of a letter written by an SRF (i.e., SelfRealization

Fellowship) devotee who related that Lahiri had appeared to her when she was a child. She called him

‘grandfather,’ and acknowledged that even today she refers to him that way, rather than as ‘His Holiness,’ etc. (I’m using my own words here, not hers.)

What the adept comes to is a spiritual maturity wherein he or she sees the ‘holy one,’ not as some exalted being waiting to be worshipped, but as a friend, a fellow disciple, lover of the same Lord.

The same bliss such spiritual encounters engender then become normal in meditation (or other devotional settings) and the adept no longer gets ‘excited,’ but welcomes the opportunity to visit with a fellow pilgrim (as it were).

Then memories awaken of other meetings earlier in this life perhaps or in previous lifetimes with those great ones who, in wondrous humility, are ever ready humbly to share the bliss of the Divine’s presence.

Ram Gopal

Ram Gopal was a highly advanced kriya yoga disciple of Lahiri Mahasaya. In Yogananda's *Autobiography* he was chosen to be present when Babaji, in the presence of Babaji's sister Mataji and Lahiri Mahasaya, announced that he would stay in his current body until the end of the age (several thousand years from now). Ram Gopal himself was so advanced on the kriya path that he had long ago dispensed with the need for sleep.

In the writings and lectures of Paramhansa Yogananda many glimpses of divine glory are given. At the tender age of 17 Yogananda visited Ram Gopal, seeking permission to seek God in the Himalyan mountains. Ram Gopal sends Yogananda back to his guru, Swami Sriyukteswar with the sage observation that "mountains cannot be your guru."

"Are you able to have a little room where you can close the door and be alone?" [Ram Gopal inquired].

"Yes." I reflected that this saint descended from the general to the particular with disconcerting speed.

"That is your cave." The yogi bestowed on me a gaze of illumination which I have never forgotten.

"That is your sacred mountain. That is where you will find the kingdom of God."

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (p. 89). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

Then an interesting exchange occurred:

Overwhelmed by his spiritual magnetism, I ventured a request.

“Sir, why don’t you grant me a samadhi?”

“Dear one, I would be glad to convey the divine contact, but it is not my place to do so.”

The saint looked at me with half-closed eyes.

“Your master will bestow that experience shortly. Your body is not tuned just yet. As a small lamp cannot withstand excessive electrical voltage, so your nerves are unready for the cosmic current. If I gave you the infinite ecstasy right now, you would burn as if every cell were on fire.

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (p. 90). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

And of course, less than two weeks later Yogananda’s guru Sriyukteswarji gave Yogananda that divine touch described by Yogananda earlier.

Ananda Moyi Ma

The story of Ananda Moyi Ma is thrilling. Some of it is captured in this excerpt. Relatively recently Ma returned to her abode in the Lord “ever the same.”

In his *Autobiography* Yogananda gives an example of an unprepared person receiving the shock of ‘excessive electric voltage’ mentioned above.

It occurs in the life of Ananda Moyi Ma. Yogananda asks for information about her life.

“Please tell me something of your life.”

“Father knows all about it; why repeat it?” She evidently felt that the factual history of one short incarnation was beneath notice.

I laughed, gently repeating my question.

“Father, there is little to tell.” She spread her graceful hands in a deprecatory gesture.

“My consciousness has never associated itself with this temporary body. Before I came on this earth, Father, ‘I was the same.’ As a little girl, ‘I was the same.’ I grew into womanhood, but still ‘I was the same.’

“When the family in which I had been born made arrangements to have this body married, ‘I was the same.’ And when, passion-drunk, my husband came to me and murmured endearing words, lightly touching my body, he

received a violent shock, as if struck by lightning, for even then 'I was the same.'

"My husband knelt before me, folded his hands, and implored my pardon.

"'Mother,' he said, 'because I have desecrated your bodily temple by touching it with the thought of lust—not knowing that within it dwelt not my wife but the Divine Mother—I take this solemn vow: I shall be your disciple, a celibate follower, ever caring for you in silence as a servant, never speaking to anyone again as long as I live. May I thus atone for the sin I have today committed against you, my guru.'

"Even when I quietly accepted this proposal of my husband's, 'I was the same.'

"And, Father, in front of you now, 'I am the same.' Ever afterward, though the dance of creation change around me in the hall of eternity, 'I shall be the same.'"

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (pp. 282-283). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

Swami Brahmananda

Swamiji was a highly advanced disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa after whom the Ramakrishna Mission and the Vedanta Society have been founded.

I have been blessed by his presence in my home here in San Antonio.

Brahmananda spent the last years of his life in a state of high spiritual consciousness, coming down from it only in order to help and teach others. He began to have the vision of Ramakrishna almost every day; not only seeing him but also talking with him. And yet, in conversation with strangers who came to visit the Mission, he would discuss a variety of worldly topics with intelligence and apparent interest; only his intimate disciples were aware that he remained completely detached.

In 1922, shortly after the celebrations of Ramakrishna's birthday, Brahmananda had a slight attack of cholera. This was followed by a serious diabetic condition. He suffered greatly for several days, but his mood was ecstatic; for he had visions of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and other brothers who were no longer alive in the body. He heard Krishna calling him to dance, and he exclaimed, 'Put anklets on my feet - I want to dance with Krishna!'

There was no coma at the end, as is usual in cases of diabetes. He had clear consciousness of his surroundings. His eyes were brilliant. He was perfectly calm. His last words to his disciples were, 'Do not grieve, I shall be with you always.' On April 10, 1922, he left the body in samadhi.

Ramakrishnananda said of Brahmananda, while he was still alive, 'Maharaj's mind has become one with the mind of

Ramakrishna.' Shivananda, speaking to a disciple of Brahmananda who was leaving to take up his duties as a resident swami at one of the centres in the United States, expressed himself even more strongly: 'Never forget that you have seen the Son of God. You have seen God.' That same disciple, writing many years later, says, 'He was our father, mother, and everything. After his passing away I felt no void. As long as Maharaj was in the physical body there was a barrier. Afterwards, the barrier was gone. I know that Maharaj is still living - and helping all of us.

Christopher Isherwood. Ramakrishna and His Disciples (Kindle Location 4528-4538). Kindle Edition.

Mathur

Mathur was a disciple of Ramakrishna. The excerpt closely models Psalm 37:23: "the steps of a righteous man are ordered by the Lord."

Mathur used to beg Ramakrishna to communicate ecstasy to him by a touch. Ramakrishna tried to dissuade him from this desire, telling him he would do much better to wait and be patient, and that, anyhow, he should keep his life balanced between devotion to God and worldly obligations; that being his dharma. But Mathur persisted, until Ramakrishna said, 'Very well, I'll ask Mother about it; she will do as she thinks best.' A few days later, Mathur went into the lower form of samadhi at his house in Calcutta.

This is how Ramakrishna would describe what happened next. 'He sent for me; and when I went there I found him altogether changed - he wasn't the same man. Whenever he spoke of God, he shed floods of tears; his eyes were red from weeping. And his heart was pounding.

When he saw me, he fell down and clasped my feet.

"Father," he said, "I admit it - I'm beaten ! I've been in this state for the past three days. I can't apply my mind to worldly affairs, however hard I try. Everything is going wrong. Please take back the ecstasy you gave me. I don't want it."

"But you begged me for ecstasy," I said.

"I know I did. And it is indeed a blissful state - but what's the use of bliss, when all my worldly affairs are going to pieces? This ecstasy of yours, Father, it only suits you. The rest of us don't really want it. Please take it back !"

Then I laughed and said, "That's what I told you, all along."

"I know you did, Father. But what I didn't understand was that this thing like a spirit would possess me, and that I'd have to take every step and do everything exactly as it told me to, twenty-four hours a day!"

So then I just rubbed Mathur's chest with my hand, and he was himself again.'

Christopher Isherwood. *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (Kindle Location 1788-1798). Kindle Edition.

Ramakrishna

This excerpt is chosen because it is so unique, as was the entire incarnation of his holiness Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Christopher Isherwood points out that Ramakrishna's own life was...both a protest against sectarian exclusiveness and a demonstration that every sect can show the way to knowledge of God.

Christopher Isherwood. Ramakrishna and His Disciples (Kindle Location 2756). Kindle Edition.

The following occurred after Ramakrishna had successfully followed Muslim doctrine and devotion to a knowledge of the Lord.

All in all Ramakrishna practiced several religions and sects showing how they each can lead the true devotee to knowledge of the indwelling Lord.

Shambhu was a devout student of the scriptures of various religions. He was the first to read to Ramakrishna from the Bible and speak to him of Jesus of Nazareth; Sri Isha, as the Hindus call him. Ramakrishna's thoughts began to dwell upon the personality of Jesus.

As it happened, he often took walks to a garden-house which was situated to the south of the Dakshineswar Temple grounds, and rested there; and the parlour of this garden-house was hung with pictures of holy personalities, including one of the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus sitting on her lap. Ramakrishna became especially attached to this picture.

One day, while he was looking at it, he felt that the figures of the Mother and Child began to shine, and that rays of light struck forth from them and entered his heart. As this happened, he was aware of a radical change in his attitude of mind. He felt just as he had felt during the time of his initiation into Islam by Govinda Roy - that his Hindu way of thinking had been pushed into the back of his mind and that his reverence for the Hindu gods and goddesses had weakened. Instead, he was filled with love for Jesus and for Christianity.

He cried to Kali, 'Oh Mother, what are these strange changes you are making in me?' but his appeal did not alter his condition. And now he began to see visions of Christian priests burning incense and waving lights before the images of Jesus in their churches, and he felt the fervour of their prayers.

Ramakrishna came back to Dakshineswar under the spell of these experiences, and for three days he did not even go into the temple to salute the Divine Mother. At length, on the evening of the third day, while he was walking in the Panchavati, he saw a tall, stately man with a fair complexion coming towards him, regarding him steadfastly as he did so.

Ramakrishna knew him at once to be a foreigner. He had large eyes of uncommon brilliance and his face was beautiful, despite the fact that his nose was slightly flattened at the tip.

At first, Ramakrishna wondered who this stranger could be. Then a voice from within told him, 'This is Jesus the Christ, the great yogi, the loving Son of God and one with his Father, who shed his heart's blood and suffered tortures for the salvation of mankind!' Jesus then embraced Ramakrishna and passed into his

body. Ramakrishna remained convinced, from that day onward,
that Jesus was truly a divine incarnation.

Christopher Isherwood. Ramakrishna and His Disciples (Kindle Locations 2016-2031).
Kindle Edition.

Hallaj Mansur

MANSUR HALLAJ (d 922 ad) “Mansur Hallaj ("the cotton-comber"), a Persian, of Zoroastrian lineage, was a pupil of Junaid of Bagdad, a more sober-minded Sufi than his contemporary Bayazid Bastami. Mansur himself however was of an enthusiastic temperament, and took no pains to guard his language. One of his extraordinary utterances, "I am the truth," led at last to his execution, "the Truth" being one of the recognised names of God in Muhammadan nomenclature. Notwithstanding this, even at the present day he passes among the Sufis for one of their greatest saints, while the more orthodox regard him as a daring blasphemer who received his deserts.”

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED] (Kindle Locations 910-915). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

Claud Field narrates the death of the Sufi Hallaj Mansur. Orthodox Islam of the day apparently would not abide Mansur’s apparent spiritual exaltation and transcendence of orthodoxy. Mansur’s death is inserted here because his spiritual stature allowed him to bear lovingly in the “cold hard light of day” the punishment exacted of him.

Mansur’s repeated “I am the truth; I am the way, I am God.” will be included in the discussion of doctrinal matters in Section III.

... He was taken to prison. The vizier despatched the sentence of death, signed by the maulvies, to the Caliph, who ordered

that Hallaj should be handed to the Chief of Police and receive a thousand strokes of the rod, and then another thousand if he did not die from the effects of the first scourging, and finally be decapitated.

The vizier, however, did not transmit the order accurately, but modified it as follows:

"If Hallaj does not die under the blows of the rod, let him first have a hand cut off, then a foot, then the other hand and foot. Lastly let his head be cut off, and his body burnt."

...Thus far the theologians' account. That given by Fariduddin Attar in his "Tazkirat-ul-Aulia" is as follows:

"This is he who was a martyr in the way of truth, whose rank has become exalted, whose outer and inner man were pure, who has been a pattern of loyalty in love, whom an irresistible longing drew towards the contemplation of the face of God; this is the enthusiast Mansur Hallaj, may the mercy of God be upon him! He was intoxicated with a love whose flames consumed him.

"Abd Allah Khafif used to say, "Mansur really possessed the knowledge of the truth." "I and Mansur," declared Shibli [a celebrated contemporary Sufi] "followed the same path; they regarded me as mad, and my life was saved thereby, while Mansur perished because he was sane."

"If Mansur had been really astray in error, the two learned men we have just quoted would not have spoken of him in such terms. Many wise men, however, have reproached him for revealing the mysteries of truth to the vulgar herd.

"Having left Bagdad, Mansur spent a year at Tashter, then he spent five years in travelling through Khorassan, Seistan and Turkestan. On his return to Bagdad, the number of his

followers largely increased, and he gave utterance to many strange sayings which excited the suspicions of the orthodox. At last he began to say, "I am the Truth." These words were repeated to the Caliph, and many persons renounced Mansur as a religious leader and appeared as witnesses against him. Among these was Junaid, to whom the Caliph said, "O Junaid, what is the meaning of this saying of Mansur?" "O Caliph," answered Junaid, "this man should be put to death, for such a saying cannot be reasonably explained."

"The Caliph then ordered him to be cast into prison. There for a whole year he continued to hold discussions with the learned. At the end of that time the Caliph forbade that anyone should have access to him; in consequence, no one went to see him for five months except Abd Allah Khafif.

"Another time Ibn Ata sent someone to say to him, "O Sheikh, withdraw what you said, so that you may escape death." "Nay, rather he who sent you to me should ask forgiveness," replied Mansur. Ibn Ata, hearing this, shed tears and said, "Alas, he is irreparably lost!"

"In order to force him to retract, he was first of all given three hundred blows with a rod, but in vain. He was then led to execution. A crowd of about a hundred thousand men followed him, and as he looked round on them, he cried, "True! True! True! I am the Truth!"

"It is said that among them was a dervish who asked him, "What is love?" "Thou shalt see," Mansur replied, "to-day and to-morrow and the day after." And, as it happened, that day he was put to death, the next day his body was burnt, and on the third his ashes were scattered to the winds. He meant that such would be the results of his love to God. On his son asking of him a last piece of advice, "While the people of the

world," he said, "spend their energies on earthly objects, do thou apply thyself to a study, the least portion of which is worth all that men and Jinn can produce—the study of truth."

“As he walked along lightly and alertly, though loaded with many chains, they asked him the reason of his confident bearing.

"It is," he said, "because I am going to the presence of the King." Then he added, "My Host, in whom there is no injustice, has presented me with the drink which is usually given to a guest; but when the cups have begun to circulate he has sent for the executioner with his sword and leathern carpet. Thus fares it with him who drinks with the Dragon [i.e., God] in July."

“When he reached the scaffold, he turned his face towards the western gate of Bagdad, and set his foot on the first rung of the ladder, "the first step heaven-ward," as he said. Then he girded himself with a girdle, and, lifting up his hands towards heaven, turned towards Mecca, and said exultantly, "Let it be as He has willed."

“When he reached the platform of the scaffold, a group of his disciples called out to him, "What do you say regarding us, thy disciples, and regarding those who deny thy claims and are about to stone thee?" "They will have a two-fold reward, and you only a single one," he answered, "for you limit yourselves to having a good opinion of me, while they are carried on by their zeal for the unity of God and for the written law. Now in the law the doctrine of God's unity is fundamental, while a good opinion is merely accessory."

“Shibli the Sufi stood in front of him and cried, "Did we not tell thee not to gather men together?" [Koran V, v 70.] Then

he added, "O Hallaj, what is Sufism?" "Thou seest," replied Hallaj, "the least part of it." "What is then the highest?" asked Shibli. "Thou canst not attain to it," he answered.

"Then they all began to stone him. Shibli making common cause with the others threw mud at him. Hallaj uttered a cry.

"What," said one, "you have not flinched under this hail of stones, and now you cry out because of a little mud! Why is that?"

"Ah!" he replied, "they do not know what they are doing, and are excusable; but he grieves me because he knows I ought not to be stoned at all."

"When they cut off his hands, he laughed and said, "To cut off the hands of a fettered man is easy, but to sever the links which bind me to the Divinity would be a task indeed."

"Then they cut off his two feet. He said smiling, "With these I used to accomplish my earthly journeys, but I have another pair of feet with which I can traverse both worlds. Hew these off if ye can!"

"Then, with his bleeding stumps, he rubbed his cheeks and arms. "Why do you do that?" he was asked. "I have lost much blood," he answered, "and lest you should think the pallor of my countenance betokens fear, I have reddened my cheeks." "But why your arms." "The ablutions of love must be made in blood," he replied.

"Then his eyes were torn out. At this a tumult arose in the crowd. Some burst into tears, others cast stones at him.

"When they were about to cut out his tongue, he exclaimed, "Wait a little; I have something to say."

"Then, lifting his face towards heaven, he said, "My God, for the sake of these sufferings, which they inflict on me because

of Thee, do not inflict loss upon them nor deprive them of their share of felicity. Behold, upon the scaffold of my torture I enjoy the contemplation of Thy glory."

"His last words were, "Help me, O Thou only One, to whom there is no second!" and he recited the following verse of the Koran, "Those who do not believe say, 'Why does not the day of judgment hasten?' Those who believe tremble at the mention of it, for they know that it is near."

"Then they cut out his tongue, and he smiled. Finally, at the time of evening prayer, his head was cut off.

"His body was burnt, and the ashes thrown into the 'Tigris."

The high opinion entertained of Mansur Hallaj by Fariduddin Attar, as seen in the above account, has been echoed by subsequent Sufi writers. Jalaluddin Rumi, the great mystic poet, says of him:

"Pharaoh said 'I am the Truth,' [According to the Koran, Pharaoh claimed divinity] and was laid low. Mansur Hallaj said 'I am the Truth,' and escaped free. Pharaoh's 'I' was followed by the curse of God. Mansur's 'I' was followed by the mercies of God. Because Pharaoh was a stone, Mansur a ruby, Pharaoh an enemy of light, Mansur a friend. Mansur's 'I am He,' was a deep mystic saying, Expressing union with the light, not mere incarnation." [Whinfield's *Masnavi* p. 248] Similarly Abdurrahman, the chief poet of the Afghans says:

"Every one who is crucified like Mansur, After death his cross becomes a fruitful tree."

Jalaluddin Rumi

“Jalaluddin Rumi has been called by Professor Ethé (in the Encyclopædia Britannica) "the greatest pantheistic writer of all ages." However that may be, he is certainly the greatest mystical poet of Persia, though not so well known in Europe as Saadi, Hafiz and Omar Khayyam.

“Saadi, Jalaluddin's contemporary, seems to have been conscious of this, for when asked by the Prince of Shiraz to send him the finest poem which had been published in Persia, he sent an ode from Jalaluddin's "Diwan."

“Jalaluddin ("the glory of religion") was born at Balkh, in Central Asia (1207 AD), where his father, Behaaddin, was a professor of theology under the Sultan Khwarezm Shah.”

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED] (Kindle Locations 1904-1909). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

Jalaluddin’s “The Elephant in the Dark” opens this book. The following poem is included here primarily because of the concluding lines.

I was, ere a name had been named upon earth,
Ere one trace yet existed of aught that has birth: When the locks
of the Loved One streamed forth for a sign
And Being was none, save the Presence Divine.
Named and name were alike emanations from Me, Ere aught that
was 'I' yet existed, or 'We';
Ere the veil of the flesh for Messiah was wrought,
To the Godhead I bowed in prostration of thought; I measured
intently, I pondered with heed
(But, ah, fruitless my labour!) the Cross and its Creed:

To the pagod I rushed and the Magian's shrine,
But my eye caught no glimpse of a glory divine;
The reins of research to the Kaaba I bent,
Whither hopefully thronging the old and young went;
Candahâr and Herat searched I wistfully through, Nor above
nor beneath came the Loved One to view. I toiled to the
summit, wild, pathless and lone,
Of the globe-girding Kâf [The mountain which encircles the world.], but
the Anka [The Eastern Phoenix] had flown! The seventh earth I
traversed, the seventh heaven explored, But in neither
discerned I the court of the Lord. I questioned the Pen and
the Tablet of Fate, But they whispered not where He
pavilions His state; My vision I strained, but my God-
scanning eye No trace that to Godhead belongs could descry.
My glance I bent inward: within my own breast
Lo, the vainly sought elsewhere! the Godhead confessed!

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY
ENHANCED] (Kindle Locations 1953-1965 ad passim). Classics-Unbound. Kindle
Edition.

Mullah Shah

“Mullah Shah was born a.d. 1584 (d 1661), in the village of Erkesa in Badakshan, a mountainous and inaccessible country to the north of the Indian Caucasus. His family, which was of Mongol origin, held a certain position, and his grandfather had been judge of the village.

“At the age of twenty-one the young man quitted his relatives and his country, and went back to Balkh, then a centre of learning in Central Asia. He made great progress there, especially in the knowledge of Arabic. After some time he left Balkh, and turning his steps southward, arrived at Kashmir, where he continued his studies, but an irresistible thirst after truth made him feel the necessity of seeking a spiritual guide, and he resolved to go to Lahore, where there lived a celebrated saint, Sheikh Mian Mir.”

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). *MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED]* (Kindle Locations 2253-2259). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

Mullah Shah...passed through all the stages of asceticism, but his spiritual guide would not lead him to the supreme goal of mystical science, which is termed "Union with God," or "knowledge of oneself." [note 62: According to the reported saying of Muhammad, "He who knows himself, knows God."]

Mian Mir [his spiritual guide] only spoke to him of it in an enigmatic way and said, "Do not cease to study thyself and thine own heart, for thy goal is in thyself." In the year 1636 a.d....one day, by the special favour of the Divinity, and without the assistance of any spiritual preceptor, "the desired image" revealed itself to him. By this expression is understood, in mystic phraseology, union with God, and the

conception of Absolute Being, which is equivalent to the knowledge of one's self. When Mullah Shah thus attained the goal of his mystical aspirations he was in his fortyseventh year, and had been engaged twenty-seven years in the spiritual exercises of the Sufis.

[Mullah Shah] informed his spiritual guide that he had attained union with God. The latter advised him not to divulge the fact, and not to give up his ascetic practices.

In Kashmir Mullah Shah had collected round him a little circle of devoted disciples. The strong emotional condition into which Mullah Shah's new spiritual experience had brought him did not prevent him from doing his best not to offend against the religious law, and he was in the habit of saying to his friends, "Whoso does not respect the precepts of the religious law is not one of us."

... The spiritual power of Mullah Shah had become so great that every novice whom he caused to sit in front of him and to concentrate his mental faculties on his own heart, became clairvoyant to such a degree that his internal senses were unfolded, and the unseen world appeared to him.

[This is reminiscent of Krishna's remark to Arjuna, "Gaze, as thy lips have said, On GOD ETERNAL, VERY GOD! See Me! see what thou prayest! Thou canst not! -- nor, with human eyes, Arjuna! ever mayest! Therefore I give thee sense divine. Have other eyes, new light! And, look! This is My glory, unveiled to mortal sight!]

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Location 516). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

Mullah Shah expressed himself in very bold terms regarding the manner with which he conceived God and His relation to humanity. Thus he said, "Since I have arrived at

understanding the absolute Reality and that I know most positively that nothing exists besides God, existence and non-existence are in my eyes the same thing."

In one of his poems he says, "The sage who knows himself has become God, be sure of that, my friend."

In another poem...he said: "My heart by a thousand tongues cries to me 'I am God.' What reproach of heresy can they bring against me that this utterance comes to my lips? "Those who had attained union with God used to say, 'I am Absolute Being.'" ...

In the meantime the number of his adherents daily increased; persons of all classes in society became his adherents; even women became capable of mystical intuitions by the effect of his prayers and without having seen him.

... the doctrines of Mullah Shah regarding union with God began to make a great deal of sensation, and a large number of influential men who belonged to the Conservative party raised against him the accusation of heresy without really understanding his teaching. They quoted some of his verses against him, and said, "Mullah Shah is beginning to imitate Mansur Hellaj. [The great mystic poet of Persia (a.d. 1207-1272). He should be brought to trial and sentenced to death."

They unanimously drew up an indictment against him and affixed their seals; a large number of religious functionaries joined them, and they submitted their petition to the Emperor Shah-jehan, requesting him to pronounce sentence of death against Mullah Shah. The Emperor consented, and despatched a firman [an edict] to that effect to Zafer-Khan, governor of Kashmir.

Shah-jehan's son, the prince Dara-Shikoh [intervened, appealing to his father]. The Emperor accepted this appeal graciously, and ordered the execution to be deferred... the Emperor Shah-jehan went to Lahore, and in the company of Prince Dara-Shikoh paid a visit to the [Mullah Shah's preceptor] Sheikh Mian Mir, and questioned him concerning Mullah Shah.

Mian Mir told him that Mullah Shah was apt to be carried out of himself when in an ecstatic state, and that then he sometimes spoke without observing the reserve necessary on the doctrine of union with God; but he adjured the Emperor at the same time to take no steps against his old pupil, "For," he said, "this holy man is a consuming fire, and woe to you if he be irritated, for he could destroy the world. In any case prevent the orthodox party from persecuting him, otherwise some dreadful disaster may happen." ...

... Dara-Shikoh could not ... visit [Mullah Shah] during the day, from fear of arousing public curiosity, but as soon as night fell, he presented himself before the Sheikh, whom this time he found seated in his cell. Before crossing the threshold, the Prince saluted the holy man with profound respect, and the latter bade him enter and be seated. The cell was lighted by a single lamp, whose wick was smoking; in his eager desire to discern the venerable features of the Sheikh, the Prince dressed the wick with his own fingers. This simple action gained him the Sheikh's affection.

At the end of some days he bade him to blindfold himself, then he concentrated his attention upon him in such a way that the invisible world was revealed to the view of the Prince, who felt his heart filled with joy.

Dara-Shikoh had a sister, the Princess Fatimah, to whom he was deeply attached. ... At last [Mullah Shaw] accorded his sympathy to her also, and admitted her to the circle of the initiates. The Princess persevered ardently in these mystical studies, and received the instructions of her spiritual guide by correspondence. She attained to such perfection that she arrived at intuitive knowledge of God and union with Him. Although the Sheikh was full of affection for all his disciples, he had a particular regard for her, and was in the habit of saying that "she had attained to such an extraordinary degree of knowledge that she [is] fit to be [my] successor." ...

But when from time to time he had an access of mystical emotion he would speak of union with God without any reserve, in a loud voice, and without noticing who was present. One of his friends said to him one day, "We live in a strange time, and people are disquieted by your discourses on this matter; it would be more prudent to expound your doctrines with a little more reserve." The Sheikh answered him, "Up to the present I have never been afraid for my life; books containing such doctrine are known to all, and everyone has read them. What precautions, then, at my time of life, ought I to observe? I cannot abandon or change my habits of thinking and speaking now."

..... In 1661 he had an attack of fever which lasted about fifteen days. That year fever became epidemic at Lahore, and on the 11th of the month of Safar Mullah Shah had another attack, which carried him off on the night of the 15th of the same month. He was buried in a plot of ground which he had already acquired for the purpose. The Princess Fatimah bought the surrounding land, and erected a shrine of red stone over his tomb.

The foregoing sketch of Mullah Shah gives a general view of oriental spiritualism as it prevailed two and a half centuries ago over a great part of Asia. The first point worthy of notice in it is the immense popularity of mystical ideas at that time, and the wide influence which they exercised over all minds. Round Mullah Shah gathered persons of every condition; poor peasants as well as princes were seized with the same enthusiasm for his doctrines; the same ascetic training produced the same results in the most varying temperaments.

The Master seems to have exercised a kind of magnetic influence over his neophytes. He fixes his gaze upon them for a longer or shorter time, till their inward senses open and render them capable of seeing the wonders of the spiritual world. All the accounts are unanimous in this respect, and they carry such a stamp of sincerity that their veracity is indisputable.

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED] (Kindle Location 2270-2788 ad passim). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

Note about correspondence training

Princess Fatimah benefitted from the written lessons which Mullah Shah provided her. She became a saint as a result. From this account it isn't clear if she ever met Mullah Shah 'face to face,' Claud Field only stating that Shah 'admitted her to the circle of the initiates.'

Given his ability to transmit the spiritual 'vision of visions' to Princess Fatimah, her attunement to her preceptor is not surprising. I have read at least two accounts of Lahiri Mahasaya giving initiation to disciples through dreams rather than through 'face to face' meetings.

Paramahansa Yogananda has also set up a correspondence course for his Western disciples (in this book I call it the *Praecepta* but it is now call *Lessons* by the Self-Realization Fellowship). Though occasional resistance still is voiced over the efficacy of such a method, the truth is that the devotee who, like Princess Fatimah, develops attunement with the preceptor, finds the help of the guru always present. Such attunement produces the joy of the guru's presence, or sight of him in the spiritual eye, or awareness of his guidance during meditation (or in times of distress).

Teresa of Avila

There are thousands of excerpts from which to choose when studying the life of this Spanish saint. I chose this from the Prologue of her autobiography because it shows her inner sensitivity to the issue of ever being deceived in her visions, and the balancing act of obeying her superiors and obeying her Lord. Read on to find out to which she gave her obedience.

Many ignorant souls pick out Teresa's account of the transpiercing of her soul and try to make it into a poorly sublimated sensual act. There are several recordings of Yogananda's voice in which he details (from his intuitive perception of her life) how the Lord protected Teresa from such ignorance. These recordings are available from the SelfRealization Fellowship.

I have removed footnote references because they are so numerous and do not assist the point of this excerpt.

1. Since my confessors commanded me and gave me plenty of leeway to write about the favors and the kind of prayer the Lord has granted me, I wish they would also have allowed me to tell very clearly and minutely about my great sins and wretched life. This would be a consolation. But they didn't want me to. In fact I was very much restricted in those matters. And so I ask, for the love of God, whoever reads this account to bear in mind that my life has been so

wretched that I have not found a saint among those who were converted to God in whom I can find comfort. For I note that after the Lord called them, they did not turn back and offend Him. As for me, not only did I turn back and become worse, but it seems I made a study out of resisting the favors His Majesty was granting me. I was like someone who sees that he is obliged to serve more, yet understands that he can't even pay the smallest part of his debt.

2. May God be blessed forever, He who waited for me so long! I beseech Him with all my heart to give me the grace to present with complete clarity and truthfulness this account of my life which my confessors ordered me to write. And I know, too, that even the Lord has for some time wanted me to do this, although I have not dared. May this account render Him glory and praise. And from now on may my confessors knowing me better through this narration help me in my weakness to give the Lord something of the service I owe Him, whom all things praise forever. Amen.

Prologue [p. 32 The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila]

10. At the time of my initial conversations with him I immediately understood his style and saw that his soul was a pure and holy one and that he had a special gift from the Lord for discerning spirits. He consoled me very much. A little while after I had got to know him, the Lord began again to urge me to take up once more the matter of the monastery and to give my confessor and this rector many reasons and arguments why they shouldn't impede me from the work. Some of these reasons made them fear because this Father Rector never doubted the project was from the spirit of God, for through much study and care he considered all the consequences. After much reflection they didn't dare venture to hinder me from carrying out this work.

11. My confessor gave me permission again to dedicate myself entirely to this foundation. I saw clearly the toil it would bring upon me since I was very much alone and had hardly any means. We agreed to carry on in total secrecy, and so I got one of my sisters who lived outside this city to buy the house and fix it up, as though it were for herself, with money the Lord provided, in certain ways, for its purchase. It would take long to recount how the Lord was looking after it, for I took great care not to do anything against obedience. But I knew that if I said anything to my superiors, everything would be lost as happened the previous time, and things would even be worse. In procuring the money, acquiring the house, signing the contract for it, and fixing it up, I went through so many trials of so many kinds that now I'm amazed I was able to suffer them. In some of them I was completely alone; although my companion did what she could. But she could do little, and so little that it almost amounted to nothing more than to have everything done in her name and as her gift and all the rest of the trouble was mine. Sometimes in distress I said: "My Lord, how is it You command things that seem impossible? For if I were at least free, even though I am a woman! But bound on so many sides, without money or the means to raise it or to obtain the brief or anything, what can I do, Lord?"

12. Once when in need, for I didn't know what to do or how to pay some workmen, St. Joseph, my true father and lord, appeared to me and revealed to me that I would not be lacking, that I should hire them. And so I did, without so much as a penny, and the Lord in ways that amazed those who heard about it provided for me. The house struck me as being very small; so small that it didn't seem to be adequate for a monastery, and I wanted to buy another house next to it, which was also small, to serve as the church. I had no

means or way of buying this nor did I know what to do. And one day after Communion, the Lord said to me: "I've already told you to enter as best you can." And by way of exclamation He added: "Oh covetousness of the human race, that you think you will be lacking even ground! How many times did I sleep in the open because I had no place else!" I was astonished and saw that He was right. I went to the little house and drew up plans and found that although small it was perfect for a monastery, and I didn't bother about buying more property. But I arranged to have it fixed up so that it could be lived in--with everything left rough and unpolished -- and likewise so that it would not be harmful to health. And this is the way these things should be done always.

13. On her feast day, while I was going to Communion, St. Clare appeared to me with striking beauty. She told me to take courage and to continue on with what I had begun, that she would help me. I became very devoted to her; and what she said has indeed come true, for a nearby monastery of nuns of her order helps sustain us. What is more important is that little by little she brought this desire of mine to such perfection that the poverty the blessed saint practiced in her house is practiced in this one, and we are living on alms. For it had cost me no small amount of trouble that this observance of poverty would have all the backing and authority of the Holy Father behind it so that no one could change it and that there never be any income. And the Lord does more, and it must perhaps be through the prayers of this blessed saint, for without any request His Majesty fully provides what is necessary for us. May He be blessed forever, amen.

14. On one of these same days, the feast of the Assumption of our Lady while at a monastery of the order of

the glorious St. Dominic, I was reflecting upon the many sins I had in the past confessed in that house and many things about my wretched life. A rapture came upon me so great that it almost took me out of myself. I sat down; it still seems to me I couldn't see the elevation or hear Mass, and afterward I had a scruple about this. It seemed to me while in this state that I saw myself vested in a white robe of shining brightness, but at first I didn't see who was clothing me in it.

Afterward I saw our Lady at my right side and my father St. Joseph at the left, for they were putting that robe on me. I was given to understand that I was now cleansed of my sins. After being clothed and while experiencing the most marvelous delight and glory, it seemed to me then that our Lady took me by the hands. She told me I made her very happy in serving the glorious St. Joseph, that I should believe that what I was striving for in regard to the monastery would be accomplished, that the Lord and those two would be greatly served in it, that I shouldn't fear there would ever be any failure in this matter even though the obedience which was to be given was not to my liking, because they would watch over us, and that her Son had already promised us He would be with us, that as a sign that this was true she was giving me a jewel. It seemed to me she placed around my neck a very beautiful golden necklace to which was attached a highly valuable cross. This gold and these stones are incomparably different from earthly ones. Their beauty is very different from what is imaginable here below. And the intellect cannot attain to an understanding of the nature of the robe that the Lord desires to have represented, nor can one imagine its whiteness; everything here on earth in comparison is like a sketch made from soot, so to speak.

15. The beauty I saw in our Lady was extraordinary, although I didn't make out any particular details except the form of her face in general and that her garment was of the most brilliant white, not dazzling but soft. I didn't see the glorious St. Joseph so clearly, although I saw indeed that he was there, as in the visions I mentioned that are not seen. Our Lady seemed to me to be a very young girl. They were with me a little while; and I was in a state of wonderful glory and happiness, which in my opinion I had never experienced and which I did not want to see come to an end; then it seemed to me I saw them ascend to heaven with a great multitude of angels, I was left in deep loneliness, although so consoled and elevated and recollected in prayer and moved to love that I remained some time without being able to stir or speak, but almost outside myself. I was left with a great impulse to be dissolved for God and with similar effects. And everything happened in such a way that I could never doubt, no matter how much I tried, that the vision was from God. It left me very comforted and with great peace.

16. As for what the Queen of Angels said concerning obedience, it pertained to the fact that it distressed me not to give obedience to the order, but the Lord had told me it wasn't suitable to give it to my superiors. He gave me the reasons why it would in no way be fitting that I do so. But He told me I should petition Rome in a certain way, which He also indicated to me, and that He would take care that we get our request. And so it came about, for the petition was made the way the Lord told me and it was granted easily, whereas we had been unable to obtain it. Because of some things that happened afterward it was very fortunate the obedience was given to the bishop. But at that time I wasn't acquainted with the prelate, nor did I know who he would be. The Lord willed that he be an excellent one and that he

be strongly in favor of this house, as was necessary because of the great opposition there was to it, as I shall say afterward, and in order that it be established in its present state. May He be blessed who in this way did everything, amen.

[pp. 224 through 227 The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila volume one.]

Father Merton

Father Thomas Merton was a Trappist Monk and ordained to the Catholic Priesthood in 1949. He was given the name Father Louis. Earlier in his life he had fathered a child out of wedlock.

His libertine ways were finally overcome. He (as well as St. Augustine) struggled early on with his sexual proclivities, but both men (who had fathered children out of wedlock prior to following their religious vocation) overcame through the grace of the Lord, and went on to high ecstatic union with the Lord. Neither man placed blame on women for their proclivities.

I was in the Church of St. Francis at Havana. It was a Sunday. I had been to Communion at some other church, I think at El Cristo, and now I had come here to hear another Mass. The building was crowded. Up in front, before the altar, there were rows and rows of children, crowded together. I forget whether they were First Communicants or not: but they were children around that age . I was far in the back of the church, but I could see the heads of all those children. It came time for the Consecration . The priest raised the Host , then he raised the chalice. When he put the chalice down on the altar, suddenly a Friar in his brown robe and white cord stood up in front of the children, and all at once the voices of the children burst out: “Creo en Dios...” “I believe in God the Father Almighty, the creator of heaven and earth...” The Creed . But that cry, “Creo en Dios!” It was loud, and bright, and sudden and glad and triumphant; it was a good big shout, that came from all those Cuban children, a joyous affirmation

of faith. Then, as sudden as the shout and as definite, and a thousand times more bright, there formed in my mind an awareness, an understanding, a realization of what had just taken place on the altar, at the Consecration: a realization of God made present by the words of Consecration in a way that made Him belong to me. But what a thing it was, this awareness: it was so intangible, and yet it struck me like a thunderclap. It was a light that was so bright that it had no relation to any visible light and so profound and so intimate that it seemed like a neutralization of every lesser experience. And yet the thing that struck me most of all was that this light was in a certain sense “ordinary”— it was a light (and this most of all was what took my breath away) that was offered to all, to everybody, and there was nothing fancy or strange about it. It was the light of faith deepened and reduced to an extreme and sudden obviousness. It was as if I had been suddenly illuminated by being blinded by the manifestation of God’s presence.

The reason why this light was blinding and neutralizing was that there was and could be simply nothing in it of sense or imagination. When I call it a light that is a metaphor which I am using, long after the fact. But at the moment, another overwhelming thing about this awareness was that it disarmed all images, all metaphors, and cut through the whole skein of species and phantasms with which we naturally do our thinking. It ignored all sense experience in order to strike directly at the heart of truth, as if a sudden and immediate contact had been established between my intellect and the Truth Who was now physically really and substantially before me on the altar. But this contact was not something speculative and abstract: it was concrete and experimental and belonged to the order of knowledge, yes, but more still to the order of love. Another thing about it was that this light

was something far above and beyond the level of any desire or any appetite I had ever yet been aware of. It was purified of all emotion and cleansed of everything that savored of sensible yearnings. It was love as clean and direct as vision: and it flew straight to the possession of the Truth it loved. And the first articulate thought that came to my mind was: "Heaven is right here in front of me: Heaven, Heaven!" It lasted only a moment: but it left a breathless joy and a clean peace and happiness that stayed for hours and it was something I have never forgotten. The strange thing about this light was that although it seemed so "ordinary" in the sense I have mentioned, and so accessible, there was no way of recapturing it. In fact, I did not even know how to start trying to reconstruct the experience or bring it back if I wanted to, except to make acts of faith and love. But it was easy to see that there was nothing I could do to give any act of faith that peculiar quality of sudden obviousness: that was a gift and had to come from somewhere else, beyond and above myself.

Merton, Thomas (1998-10-04). *The Seven Storey Mountain: Fiftieth-Anniversary Edition* (pp. 310-312 ad passim). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Kindle Edition.

Brother Lawrence

Brother Lawrence is legendary as a man of simple faith and practices. His sayings were gathered together in a book extolling the power of practicing the presence of God.

THE first time I saw Brother Lawrence was upon the 3rd of August, 1666.

He told me that GOD had done him a singular favor, in his conversion at the age of eighteen.

That in the winter, seeing a tree stripped of its leaves, and considering that within a little time, the leaves would be renewed, and after that the flowers and fruit appear, he received a high view of the Providence and Power of GOD, which has never since been effaced from his soul.

That this view had perfectly set him loose from the world, and kindled in him such a love for GOD, that he could not tell whether it had increased in above forty years that he had lived since.

That he had been footman to M. Fieubert, the treasurer, and that he was a great awkward fellow who broke everything. That he had desired to be received into a monastery, thinking that he would there be made to smart for his awkwardness and the faults he should commit, and so he should sacrifice to GOD his life, with its pleasures: but that GOD had disappointed him, he having met with nothing but satisfaction in that state.

That we should establish ourselves in a sense of GOD's Presence, by continually conversing with Him. That it was a shameful thing to quit His conversation, to think of trifles and fooleries. That we should feed and nourish our souls with high notions of GOD; which would yield us great joy in being devoted to Him.

That we ought to quicken, i.e., to enliven, our faith. That it was lamentable we had so little; and that instead of taking faith for the rule of their conduct, men amused themselves with trivial devotions, which changed daily. That the way of Faith was the spirit of the Church, and that it was sufficient to bring us to a high degree of perfection.

That we ought to give ourselves up to GOD, with regard both to things temporal and spiritual, and seek our satisfaction only in the fulfilling His will, whether He lead us by suffering or by consolation, for all would be equal to a soul truly resigned. That there needed fidelity in those drynesses, or insensibilities and irksomenesses in prayer, by which GOD tries our love to Him; that then was the time for us to make good and effectual acts of resignation, whereof one alone would oftentimes very much promote our spiritual advancement.

That as for the miseries and sins he heard of daily in the world, he was so far from wondering at them, that, on the contrary, he was surprised there were not more, considering the malice sinners were capable of: that for his part, he prayed for them; but knowing that GOD could remedy the mischief they did, when He pleased, he gave himself no farther trouble.

That to arrive at such resignation as GOD requires, we should watch attentively over all the passions which mingle as well in spiritual things as those of a grosser nature: that GOD would give light concerning those passions to those who truly desire to serve Him. That if this was my design, viz., sincerely to serve GOD, I might come to him (Bro. Lawrence) as often as I pleased, without any fear of being troublesome; but if not, that I ought no more to visit him.

Practicing the Presence of God

Isaiah

Isaiah the prophet is legendary for his role in proclaiming the coming of a messiah. This excerpt shows his humility in his dedication to the Lord.

6 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

12 And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

13 But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

Isaiah 6, King James Version (KJV)

Ezekiel

This excerpt from Ezekiel is usually interpreted as a description of the fall of Satan. Later in the book I give an analysis of the true purport of this passage (page 171). This excerpt is given because it showcases the interior life of the prophet (and not that of King Tyrus).

The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord God; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God:

10 Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.

11 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: 3 Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee:

4 With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures:

5 By thy great wisdom and by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches:

6 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God;

7 Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness.

8 They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas.

9 Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee.

therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

19 All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

Ezekial 28

Section III: Scriptural Accounts of Doctrinal Import

Metaphorical Living

Linguistics 101

Concept of Sin -- "Missing the Point"

Virgin Births

Bible and the Word

The True Pastor

The 'I am' Scriptures

The 'Technique' Scriptures

A Few Specific Techniques

-- dhikr

-- Yogananda's "hong sau"

-- Psalm 46:10

-- Meditate Then Act

Karma and Reincarnation

Metaphorical Living

In the discussion that follows the advice of the old Proverb “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; lean not on your own understanding but in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5,6) comes to mind. Many of the excerpts rendered earlier are followed by their respective book editors attempting to “make sense” of the glimpses gleaned. It is a necessary evil, perhaps, to attempt to give a logical or theological rationale for the saints declamation.

But in this part of the discussion let us attempt a different path, one of good will and devotion, that allows us to acknowledge that we are all children of the Lord, and that we are grateful to have come in our lives and situations to that part of the Elephant which confronts us -- and allow that our fellow seekers of Truth are looking at what to each of them is an equally valid picture of the Elephant.

Paul’s observation that love rejoices in the truth is an excellent procedural maxim:

9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away...

12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

The ultimate Reality ('the Real,' according to many Moslem brothers, Hindus, and Hellenists) is in various scriptures asserted to be that which is both personal and impersonal, knowable and beyond knowledge, Creator and non-Creator, etc. Some of these scriptures have been cited earlier in the book.

Several doctrinal matters remain to be discussed, but let us always discuss them with the thirst always to "know for real," to know the various aspects of Truth until we attain the "farther Truth" -- so that we are 'true to the farthest Truth.'

The Bhagavad-Gita, Kindle edition, Location 418

And why all these preparatory words and logical fences? Because the best any discussion can do is use logic and words and meanings and 'pointing toward,' the Truth, using metaphors to point to the reality. Even the communist leader Mao Tse Tung got it right when he said

If you want to know the taste of a pear, you must ... eat ... it yourself.

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/maozedong146717.html#r8JQhYiIFwMGpzc8.99>

With that much of his statement I can agree. Obviously I don't quote the whole thing because it's irrelevant to our point. And

besides I think the old saint got it ‘righter’ when he says, “O, taste and see that the Lord is good.” (Psalm 34:8)

How we taste is, of course, quite important. Mere recitation of belief won’t “get it done” [on the other hand I’ve lived long enough to know never to say ‘never’ when it comes to spiritual matters]. What is important is the promise implicit within the old saint’s observation.

When we as worship communities recite our creeds, we do so devotionally. But every word of the creed points to a reality beyond itself. Merely reciting it does not command the Lord’s presence nor our devotional involvement. Don’t get me wrong: I have been there when the Lord has announced His presence during the recitation.

I’ve been there when the believer “struck fire” and mystical phenomena occur; I’ve been in the camp meeting fervor of Pasadena College when worshippers were moved to dance down to and across the front of the auditorium.

My Muslim friends establish a distinction that may be helpful, and it’s one I note in the writings of Teresa of Avila. That is, that spiritual discipline will lift the disciple to a stage of spiritual development quite identifiable by those acquainted with such matters. On the other hand the Lord’s grace is that which places an

ardent devotee into ecstatic communion, far beyond the utility and power of words, and, to make my point, far beyond the ability of theology to describe or command.

What I am asking my readers to allow is that the Lord "is over all and rich unto all that call upon Him." [Paraphrasing Paul of Tarsus]. My Muslim friends seem to "get it right" when they say such things as this:

"Those who adore God in the sun" (says Ibn al-'Arabî) "behold the sun, and those who adore Him in living things see a living thing, and those who adore Him in lifeless things see a lifeless thing, and those who adore Him as a Being unique and unparalleled see that which has no like. Do not attach yourself" (he continues) "to any particular creed exclusively, so that you disbelieve in all the rest; otherwise, you will lose much good, nay, you will fail to recognise the real truth of the matter. God, the omnipresent and omnipotent, is not limited by any one creed, for He says (Kor. 2.109), 'Wheresoever ye turn, there is the face of Allah.' Every one praises what he believes; his god is his own creature, and in praising it he praises himself. Consequently he blames the beliefs of others, which he would not do if he were just, but his dislike is based on ignorance. If he knew Junayd's saying, 'The water takes its colour from the vessel containing it,' he would not interfere with other men's beliefs, but would perceive God in every form of belief." And Hafiz sings, more in the spirit of the freethinker, perhaps, than of the mystic:

"Love is where the glory falls

Of Thy face--on convent walls Or
on tavern floors, the same
Unextinguishable flame.
Where the turbaned anchorite
Chanteth Allah day and night,
Church bells ring the call to prayer
And the Cross of Christ is there."

Nicholson, Reynold A. (2010-09-22). The Mystics of Islam (Kindle Locations 781-790). . Kindle Edition.

Linguistics 101

One of the amazing experiences in our doctoral studies in Biblical Hebrew at UT-Austin back in the late '60's was the insightful reaction of Professor Aaron Bar-Adon. As a group in the Fall of 1968 we complained just one too many times about how tough Hebrew is, e.g. why are there broken plurals and funny possessive forms, why are there no tense indicators other than context, and on and on.

I remember one day Dr. Bar-Adon turning towards us from the chalkboard, emphatically placing the chalk in the tray, shaking his graying locks, and lamenting that he would now have to teach English to English speakers so that then we would understand that our difficulty with Hebrew was our lack of training (for want of a more polite way of putting it) in the structure of the English language.

We found that broken plurals exist in English such as 'man' to 'men,' 'mouse' to 'mice,' 'child' to 'children,' 'woman' to 'women.'

We found that majestic plurals are used in English so that 'from the mountain to the prairie to the ocean white with foam' are each plural from the heightened and sweeping awareness of the lyric

painting. When Catholics pray the ‘Prayer of the Faithful’ the refrain is “Lord, hear our prayer” not “prayers.”

Likewise the priest intones, “Lord, give us peace in our day,” (though occasionally I hear priests use the plural, but these usually are priests for whom English is a second language).

Conversely there are times when plurals are used to express the grandeur of the One, ‘let us make man in our image.’

Dr. Bar-Adon claims he made his point although it took him six weeks and 18 hours of lecture. Since we all passed our qualifying exams, I have to agree with him. At the time it was an embarrassing experience to learn English language structure especially from someone for whom English was a second language.

Two of his children, who were in the Hebrew language classes I taught at McCallum High School during this time, explained to me that their dad had a photographic memory and that “nothing escaped his attention.” They further explained that he had obtained his Ph.D. in Linguistics by the age of 21.

That being said I can attest that I have never again taken anything about English or linguistics (nor any other language that I’ve studied) “for granted.” It wasn’t about my emotional reaction,

it was about accepting that I had to get acquainted with my own language before I could hope to make sense of any other.

So, for what follows, I ask that you “put emotion aside” and dispassionately consider the following doctrinal issues in a new light. It will always be easy to “yes, but” your way through the rest of your spiritual life. But then again what you don’t learn now may require further instruction by “the One” who called you into this earthly sphere to begin with.

Concept of Sin

Let us use this lesson here to explore the common conception of sin, and see if perhaps there is a higher level of understanding than that to which our various creeds point.

Missing the Point

The Christian scriptures use the Greek word for sin that literally paints a picture of “missing the point,” such as throwing darts at a bull’s eye. Paul’s writing intones this when he says (Romans 3:23) ‘that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.’ He bases his statement on the 14th Psalm.

Likewise Ecclesiastes 7:20, “Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins.”

And yet in the midst of all this (historically speaking) we find the Lord saying in Isaiah (Isaiah 45:7, KJV) - "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things."

Arjuna refuses to fight in the great war; his charioteer, King Krishna tells him he must, saying

this is better, that one do His own task as he may, even though he fail, Than take tasks not his own, though they seem good. To die performing duty is no ill; But who seeks other roads shall wander still.

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 206-207). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

But Krishna has prefaced all of this action on this principle:

action is of Brahma, who is One, The Only, All-pervading...

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 186-187). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

Much dialogue in the Gita attend to the questions raised in Arjuna's mind on how to act without acting, or if you will, how to act without sinning. Krishna's reconciliation is surrender to the only God there is:

Yea, the world is strong, But what discerns it stronger, and
the mind Strongest; and high o'er all the ruling Soul.
Wherefore, perceiving Him who reigns supreme, Put forth
full force of Soul in thy own soul! Fight! vanquish foes and
doubts, dear Hero! slay What haunts thee in fond shapes, and
would betray!

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 213-216). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

So is action to be forgiven because in some cultures it is considered sin? Certainly not in this context, for the Lord points out,

But, Arjun! Abstaining from attachment to the work,
Abstaining from rewardment in the work, While yet one
doeth it full faithfully, Saying, "Tis right to do!" that is "true"
" act And abstinence! Who doeth duties so, Unvexed if his
work fail, if it succeed Unflattered, in his own heart justified,
Quit of debates and doubts, his is "true" act: For, being in

the body, none may stand Wholly aloof from act; yet, who abstains From profit of his acts is abstinent.

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 799-802). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

In Islam is this story,

Hasan Basri had a neighbour named Shamaun, who was an infidel and a fire-worshipper. He fell ill, and his last hour approached. Someone said to Hasan, "Shamaun is your neighbour, and his last hour is come; why don't you go to see him?" Hasan having come to see him, saw that by reason of his assiduous fire-worship, his hair and beard were quite blackened by smoke. Hoping that he would become a Moslem, he said to him, "Come, Shamaun, fear the punishment which the Lord prepares for thee who hast passed thy life of seventy years in infidelity and fireworship."

"As for me," answered Shamaun, "I see on the part of you Moslems three characteristics which I cannot explain, and which hinder me from becoming a Moslem:—(1) You never cease repeating that the world is perishable and impure, and yet day and night, without interval or repose, you heap up its treasures; (2) You say that death is certain and inevitable, and yet you put the thought of it aside, and practise none of the works which should fit you for another world; (3) You assert your belief that in that world it will be possible to contemplate the face of the Most High, and yet you commit acts which He abhors."

"Thou speakest like one of the initiated," said Hasan, "but although the faithful commit sins, none the less they confess the unity and the existence of the Most High, whilst thou hast spent thy life in worshipping the fire. At the day of judgment, if they cast us both into hell, the fire will carry thee away at

once, but if the grace of the Lord is accorded to me, it will not be able to scorch one of my eyebrows; this shows that it is only a creature. And, moreover, you have worshipped it for seventy years, and I have never worshipped it."

These words made such an impression on Shamaun that he made a profession of the faith of Islam, dying soon afterwards. On the night of his death, Hasan in a dream saw Shamaun wearing a crown of gold, clothed in raiment of resplendent beauty, and walking in Paradise. "My God," he cried when he awoke, "Thou hast had mercy on him who spent seventy years in infidelity; is it strange that Thou shouldest show mercy to the faithful?"

Field, Claud (2012-05-12). *Mystics and Saints of Islam* (p. 18). . Kindle Edition.

Certainly in Islam there is concern for those bound for hell.

Hatim Assam used to say to his disciples, "If, on the Day of Judgment you do not intercede for those who will be conducted to hell, you are not my disciples." Bayazid, having heard this, said in his turn, "Those only are my disciples who, on the Day of Judgment, will stand on the brink of hell, in order to seize and save the wretches cast down thither, even were it necessary to enter hell themselves for the salvation of the others."

Field, Claud (2012-05-12). *Mystics and Saints of Islam* (p. 36). . Kindle Edition.

But among followers of Islam is the acknowledgement that God alone is the goal. Consider these words of the woman Islamic saint,

Other sayings of Rabia were these ... "O Lord, give all Thou destinst for me of the goods of this world to Thy

enemies, and all that Thou reservest for me in Paradise to Thy friends, for it is Thou only Whom I seek."

"My God, if it is from fear of hell that I serve Thee, condemn me to burn in hell; and if it is for the hope of Paradise, forbid me entrance there; but if it is for Thy sake only, deny me not the sight of Thy face."

Rabia died a.d. 752, and was buried near Jerusalem. Her tomb was a centre of pilgrimage during the Middle Ages.

Field, Claud (2012-05-12). *Mystics and Saints of Islam* (p. 25). . Kindle Edition.

My preacher Mom used to declaim, "O son, there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun!"

Of course I rarely argued with her about such matters. There is certainly a new wave of books published these days that talk about going to heaven and returning. These, of course, extol the 'rightness' of the Christian conception of hell, not too different from Dante's assertions.

In Christian scripture (let alone theology) I find little if any reference to love for God as the sole motivating factor in religious orientation.

But for sure Hindu and Muslim literature abound in such motive. I recall a story retold by Yogananda about Krishna and the gopis (milkmaids). Krishna complained of a headache and

instructed these devotees that someone standing on his head would relieve his headache.

No one dared do such a thing for fear of lawful retribution. When his chief female disciple Radha heard of Krishna's distress and instructions, she quickly went to him and stood on his head.

Shocked, the other gopis scolded Radha for such a breach of righteousness.

Radha calmly responded, saying to them, "Even so the deepest hell would be a blessing for me, if my action has cured my Lord's pain for even a second."

Sin to be forgiven, actions that are righteous, a God who does evil, willingness to go to hell!

What should we make of all this? The elder scripture amongst all the 'books,' would be the Bhagavad-Gita; in it this intriguing exchange between Arjuna and Lord Krishna occurs.

Arjuna asks what is the best way of faith and life, whether the saints to whom the Lord reveals himself or those to whom the Lord is unrevealed?

The Lord, through Krishna’s mouth, gives the most loving of answers. Because of its length I will summarize it then give the citation.

Those who serve the Lord *in whatever way the Lord reveals himself* are holy and well loved. But those who love the Lord whom they can’t see, “they come unto me.” Those who can’t conquer their minds to meditate but serve the Lord anyway, “him I swiftly lift ... from distress and death.” But if you’re too weak to serve or to meditate, give me lower service through worship.

“... if thou canst not worship steadfastly, Work for Me, toil in works pleasing to Me! For he that laboureth right for love of Me Shall finally attain! But, if in this Thy faint heart fails, *bring Me thy failure!* find Refuge in Me! [emphasis added]

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 613-615). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

“Bring me thy failure!” What love and compassion are manifest in these words! Then “find refuge in me.”

Earlier in the Gita dialogue Krishna has established that

There be those, too, whose knowledge, turned aside By this desire or that, gives them to serve Some lower gods, with various rites, constrained By that which mouldeth them.

Unto all such -- Worship what shrine they will, what shapes, in faith -- 'Tis I who give them faith! I am content!

The heart thus asking favour from its God, Darkened but ardent, hath the end it craves, The lesser blessing -- but 'tis I who give! Yet soon is withered what small fruit they reap:

Those men of little minds, who worship so, Go where they worship, passing with their gods.

But Mine come unto me!

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 373-377). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

Here is enunciated what will later be heralded in the scriptures of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims: “The Lord our God is One.”

Contradictions in concepts? That is for philosophic fools. These religions say to seek the One to find the truth.

Virgin Births

In my experience most Christians have no idea that there are literary accounts of other immaculate conceptions or virgin births.

In fact one of my supervisors used to “get nervous” if our discussions bordered on these territories. She never quite got around to telling me why she got nervous. Perhaps she considered herself on the way to hell, if she explored any other truth. I don’t know, nor am I attempting to be sarcastic. God knows, being raised as a preacher’s kid pretty well narrowed my own views for me, until thankfully I started having my own mystic experiences (starting around age of 2) in which these doctrinal issues were contradicted by the truth.

From the Christian perspective the Jewish prophets are quoted about a virgin giving birth.

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

This is reflected in Matthew:

[1:20] But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

[1:21] And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

[1:22] Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

[1:23] Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

[1:24] Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

[1:25] And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 30855-30862). . Kindle Edition.

My Catholic friends maintain as an article of faith that Mary had to be conceived immaculately so that she would be holy enough to bear her child while a virgin.

I have seen many discussions of the issue of virgin births; ‘long story short’ many virgin births listed are actually the result of immaculate conception.

Lord Krishna’s birth had been foretold, and at his birth he was the eighth child born to his mother Devaki (while she was in prison, no less).

Here is a short list of immaculate conceptions and/or virgin births:

Lord Buddha (India), Codom (Siamese, i.e., Taiwan) , Lao Tsze (of China), Horus of Isis (Egypt), Ra (Egypt), Plato of the virgin Perictione (Greece).

Yogananda reflects in his *Praecepta* that birth of a virgin is usually a sign that a holy person, a saint, is being born; such would be the case with Lord Jesus. However he emphasizes that there are times when it's merely the consequence of karma and not of holiness.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa

The story of the immaculate conception of Ramakrishna is interesting , if for no other reason than that it occurred recently. Ramakrishna and his influence live on not only through the Vedanta Organization; he still lives and blesses people today. Though not a disciple of his, on two occasions I have been blessed with his blissful presence here at my San Antonio home.

Christopher Isherwood relates the story around Ramakrishna's birth.

[Chandra was] standing before a temple of Shiva - it is actually a small domed shrine, only large enough to contain half a dozen worshippers - right opposite Khudiram's home. (The temple is still there, today.) 'All of a sudden,' Chandra told Khudiram [these two are Ramakrishna's mother and father], 'I saw that the holy image of Lord Shiva inside the shrine was alive ! It began to send forth waves of the most beautiful light. Slowly at first, then quicker and quicker. They filled up the inside of the temple, and then they came pouring out - it was like one of those huge floodwaves in the river - right towards me ! I was going to tell Dhani [her companion outside the temple] - but then the waves washed over me and swallowed me up, and I felt that marvellous light enter into my body. I fell down on the ground, unconscious. When I came to myself, I told Dhani what had happened. But she didn't believe me; she said I'd had an epileptic fit. That can't be so, because, since then, I've been full of joy and my health is better than ever. Only - I feel that light is still inside me; and I believe that I'm with child.'

Khudiram now told his wife about his vision at Gaya, and assured her that her own visions were no fancies, but revelations of the great grace which they were soon to receive. So the two rejoiced together.

Chandra's labour pains began shortly before dawn, on February 18, 1836. The delivery was easy. Chandra had barely time to reach the shed, with Dhani's assistance, before the child was born.

Dhani later described a strange circumstance of the birth. Having done what was needful for Chandra, she turned to the baby and found that he had somehow rolled across the floor. He was lying among the ashes of the fireplace, still bloody and unwashed, without uttering a sound.

As Dhani took him up and washed him, she marvelled at his beauty and size; he might well, she said, have been a child six months old.

Mindful of his vision after visiting the Vishnu temple at Gaya, Khudiram decided to call this third son of his Gadadhar - for Gadadhar, meaning 'Bearer of the Mace', is one of the epithets applied to Sri Vishnu. It was as Gadadhar that the boy grew into adolescence. Not until he was a young man at Dakshineswar was he first given the name by which the world was later to know him: Ramakrishna.

Christopher Isherwood. *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (Kindle Locations 303-349 ad passim). Kindle Edition.

Bible and the Word

Most Christian theologians identify the Bible as the revealed word of God, and likewise identify Lord Jesus with the Word, or creative principle.

Thus when they quote Jesus, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6), they take it literally. And use it as proof that Jesus is the only savior, lord, son of God, etc.

These same Christians are quite unaware that Mohammed, too, considered Jesus the incarnation of the Word of God.

When the fresh breath of Jesus shall touch the heart's core, It
will live, it will breathe, it will blossom once more.'
[Jalaluddin]

The last couplet is a good illustration of the different ways in which Christ is regarded by the Sufi poets and by Mohammed in the Koran. In the latter, it is true, He is acknowledged as the Word of God and the Spirit of God, but His work among men is done, having been entirely superseded by the coming of Mohammed, the last and greatest of the prophets. Jalaluddin on the other hand, as in the above couplet, speaks of Christ as still exercising healing influences.

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED] (Kindle Locations 2048-2053). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

On the other hand,

An interesting parallel might be drawn here between the Christian and Sufi doctrines. The same expressions are applied to the

founder of Islam which are used by St. John, St. Paul, and later mystical theologians concerning Christ. Thus, Mohammed is called the Light of God, he is said to have existed before the creation of the world, he is adored as the source of all life, actual and possible, he is the Perfect Man in whom all the divine attributes are manifested, and a Sufi tradition ascribes to him the saying, "He that hath seen me hath seen Allah."

In the Moslem scheme, however, the Logos doctrine occupies a subordinate place, as it obviously must when the whole duty of man is believed to consist in realising the unity of God.

Nicholson, Reynold A. (2010-09-22). The Mystics of Islam (Kindle Locations 739-744). . Kindle Edition.

The Koran seems to maintain [using my own words now] that God is ‘all in all’ and apparently does not emphasize as much as Hindu thought or the new teaching of Jesus of the reality of a higher consciousness (called “the only begotten son of God) [more about this is discussed shortly] that is the reflection of God in creation. Consider this excerpt from the Koran:

"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His light is like a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp encased in glass—the glass as it were a glistening star. From a blessed tree is it lighted, the olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would well nigh shine out even though fire touched it not! It is light upon light!" (Koran Sura 24).

Field, Claud (2012-05-12). Mystics and Saints of Islam (p. 5). . Kindle Edition.

Yogananda recounts his guru’s teaching about Lord Jesus.

Master expounded the Christian Bible with a beautiful clarity. It was from my Hindu guru, unknown to the roll call of Christian membership, that I learned to perceive the deathless essence of the Bible, and to understand the truth in Christ's assertion—surely the most thrillingly intransigent ever uttered: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." [Matthew 24:35] The great masters of India mold their lives by the same godly ideals which animated Jesus; these men are his proclaimed kin: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister,

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (p. 109). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

But in a footnote in the 3rd edition of his *Autobiography* (Yogananda approved it in 1951) he adds further remarks by Swami Sriyukteswar (Yogananda's guru) on these words of Jesus:

Never in East or West have I heard anyone else expound the Christian scriptures with so deep a spiritual insight as Sriyukteswar's. "Theologians have misinterpreted Christ's words," Master said, "in such passages as 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me' (John 14:6). Jesus meant, never that he was the sole Son of God, but that no man can attain the unqualified Absolute, the transcendent Father *beyond* creation, until he has first manifested the 'Son' or activating Christ Consciousness *within* creation. Jesus, who had achieved entire oneness with that Christ Consciousness, identified himself with it inasmuch as his own ego had long since been dissolved." (See page 144 n.) Yogananda adds further,

When Paul wrote: "God . . . created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9), and when Jesus said: "Before Abraham was,

I am" (John 8:58), the *sheer essence of the words is impersonality*.
[emphasis added]

A form of spiritual cowardice leads many worldly people to believe comfortably that only one man was the Son of God. "Christ was uniquely created," they reason, "so how can I, a mere mortal, emulate Him?" But all men have been divinely created, and must someday obey Christ's command: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (I John 3: 1).

The True Pastor

My Christian brethren cite Jesus' words regarding true believers:

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

(Mark 16,KJV)

And, of course, Jesus had given his disciples powers to heal the sick in his name (cited earlier). Certainly modern day Padre Pio has world-wide fame for (among other spiritual gifts) of speaking and understanding the language of every one of the thousands of penitents who came to him for confession.

I give here literary examples of signs from both Muslim and Hindu saints.

Claud Field relates what happened to Rabia, the woman Muslim saint,

Having kept a strict fast for seven days and nights in order to give herself to prayer, on the eighth night she seemed to hear her emaciated body say, "O Rabia, how long wilt thou torture me without mercy?"

Whilst she was holding this soliloquy with herself, suddenly someone knocked at the door, and a man brought in some food in a bowl. Rabia took it and set it down; then while she went to light the lamp, a cat came and ate the food.

No sooner had Rabia returned and seen what had happened than she said to herself, "I will break my fast on water."

As she went to draw water her lamp went out. She then uttered a deep sigh, and said, "Lord, why dost thou make me wretched?"

Whereupon she heard a voice saying, "O Rabia, if thou desirest it, I will give thee the whole world for thine own; but I shall have to take away the love which thou hast for Me from thy heart, for the love of Me and of the world cannot exist together."

"Hearing myself thus addressed," said Rabia, "I entirely expelled from my heart the love of earthly things, and resolutely turned my gaze away from them.

For thirty years I have not prayed without saying to myself, 'This prayer, perhaps, is the last which I shall pray,' and I have never been tired of saying, 'My God, let me be so absorbed in Thy love that no other affection may find room in my heart.'"

One day some men of learning and piety came to her and said, "The Most High has crowned His chosen saints with the gift of performing miracles, but such privileges have never been granted to a woman. How didst thou attain to such a high degree?"

"What you say is true," she answered, "but, on the other hand, women have never been so infatuated with themselves as men, nor have they ever claimed divinity."

Hasan Basri relates, "One day when I had been to Rabia who had fallen sick, to ask after her, I saw seated at her gate a merchant who wept. 'Why are you weeping?' I asked him. 'I have just brought for Rabia,' he answered, 'this purse of gold, and I am troubled in mind, not knowing whether she will accept it or not. Go in Hasan, and ask whether she will.' Then I went in, and no sooner had I reported to her the words of this merchant than she said to me, 'Thou knowest well, O Hasan, that the Most High gives daily bread even to those who do not worship Him; how then will He not give it to those whose hearts are aglow with love to Him? Besides, *ever since I have known God, I have turned my eyes away from all except Him.* How can I accept anyone's money when I know not whether it has been gained by lawful or unlawful means? Present then my excuses to this merchant, and let him go.'" [emphasis added]

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED] (Kindle Locations 454-474 ad passim). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

Arjuna asks Krishna to tell him the signs of the person who has overcome the influences of this world.

Arjuna [asks]. Oh, my Lord! Which be the signs to know him that hath gone Past the Three Modes? How liveth he? What way Leadeth him safe beyond the threefold Modes?

Krishna [responds].

He who with equanimity surveys
Lustre of goodness, strife of passion, sloth
Of ignorance, not angry if they are,
Not wishful when they are not: he who sits
A sojourner and stranger in their midst
Unruffled, standing off, saying -- serene -- When
troubles break, "These be the Qualities!"

He unto whom -- self-centred -- grief and joy
Sound as one word; to whose deep-seeing eyes
The clod, the marble, and the gold are one;
Whose equal heart holds the same gentleness

For lovely and unlovely things, firm-set, Well-
pleased in praise and dispraise; satisfied With
honour or dishonour ...

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata)
(mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 690-695).
MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

To my ears Krishna's depiction sounds like an archetype to Paul's
later delineation of the qualities of love in II Corinthians 13!

But Krishna isn't done yet.

Krishna:

Fearlessness, singleness of soul, the will
Always to strive for wisdom; opened hand
And governed appetites; and piety,
And love of lonely study; humbleness,
Uprightness, heed to injure nought which lives,
Truthfulness, slowness unto wrath, a mind
That lightly letteth go what others prize;
And equanimity, and charity
Which spieth no man's faults; and tenderness
Towards all that suffer; a contented heart,
Fluttered by no desires; a bearing mild,
Modest, and grave, with manhood nobly mixed,
With patience, fortitude, and purity;
An unrevengeful spirit, never given

To rate itself too high; -- such be the signs, O
Indian Prince! of him whose feet are set On
that fair path which leads to heavenly birth!

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 729-734 ad passim). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

I include here some additional signs of a saint, the label by which this section is designated, “The True Pastor.” These are culled from my reading of and hearing remarks by my own guru, Paramahansa Yogananda.

Earlier in the book I had partially quoted these remarks by Yogananda:

"Many teachers will tell you to believe; then they put out your eyes of reason and instruct you to follow only their logic. But I want you to keep your eyes of reason open; in addition, *I will open in you another eye, the eye of wisdom.*" [emphasis added]
Paramahansa Yogananda, "Journey to Self-Realization", pg 178.

“I will open another eye, the eye of wisdom.” That is the role of the one who has been designated or called to remove the darkness of spiritual ignorance from those who are seeking truth, and in so doing to introduce those disciples to truth, or good, or the One, or to God. Actually ‘guru’ is made of two Sanskrit words, as I understand, meaning ‘one who removes darkness.’

Earlier in the book I equated for didactic purposes, the terms guru, savior, preceptor, saint, sage, etc. If you have come this far

then I would assume you haven't 'thrown a tantrum' theologically speaking. My point, which you have perceived, is that each religious orientation has scriptural authority, tradition, and history that identifies the name assigned to one who has experienced the divine and has the calling from the Lord as well as the spiritual power and authority to assist willing devotees in successful pursuit of the Lord's presence.

Mullah Shah's preceptor, Mian Mar, refused to grant the vision to him [at least on the surface of things].

He led this life for several years, till he had passed through all the stages of asceticism, but his spiritual guide would not lead him to the supreme goal of mystical science, which is termed "Union with God," or "knowledge of oneself."

Mian Mir only spoke to him of it in an enigmatic way and said, "Do not cease to study thyself and thine own heart, for thy goal is in thyself."

In the year 1636 a.d. he [Mullah Shah] returned again, as usual, from Lahore to Kashmir, and practised his austerities without relaxation, when one day, by the special favour of the Divinity, and without the assistance of any spiritual preceptor, "the desired image" revealed itself to him. By this expression is understood, in mystic phraseology, union with God, and the conception of Absolute Being, which is equivalent to the knowledge of one's self. When Mullah Shah thus attained the goal of his mystical aspirations he was in his forty-seventh year, and had been engaged twentyseven years in the spiritual exercises of the Sufis. When he returned to Lahore, he

informed his spiritual guide that he had attained union with God. The latter advised him not to divulge the fact, and not to give up his ascetic practices.

Field, Claud (2012-05-12). *Mystics and Saints of Islam* (pp. 98,99). . Kindle Edition.

Swami Sriyuktswar lovingly granted the experience of union with the divine to Yogananda at Yogananda's age of 17 (excerpted earlier). Prior to that Yogananda was not ready; and Sriyuktswar had bluntly informed him:

“So long as you breathe the free air of earth, you are under obligation to render grateful service. He alone who has fully mastered the breathless state* [*Samadhi: perfect union of the individualized soul with the Infinite Spirit] is freed from cosmic imperatives. *I will not fail to let you know when you have attained the final perfection.*” [emphasis added]

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (p. 77). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

The author of the ‘Letter to the Hebrews’ speaks of “laying on of hands” [Hebrews Ch. 6:2 and 4] for conveying enlightenment and tasting of the heavenly gift.

(2010-07-19). *Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle* (Kindle Locations 39036-39043). . Kindle Edition.

I had planned to include in this book an exposition showing how this Hebrews epistle is a scriptural model for *Sanatana Dharma*, and the epitome of yoga wisdom and devotion. I am not prepared at this time to include such observations in this book. I invite your

attention, nonetheless, to the possibility that this might be the epistle's main intent and thrust.

The saint ordained by the Lord to assist others in their search for God has powers over life and death. Sriyukteswar lists eight such powers possessed by the Son of God:

Thus man , being the Son of God, overcomes all bondage of Darkness, Maya, and becomes possessed of all aiswaryas, the ascetic majesties.

These aiswaryas are of eight sorts:

1. Anima, the power of making one's body or anything else as small as he likes, even as tiny as an atom, anu.
2. Mahima, the power of magnifying or making one's body or anything else mahat, as large as he likes.
3. Laghima, the power of making one's body or anything else laghu, as light in weight as he likes.
4. Garima, the power of making one's body or anything else guru, as heavy as he likes.
5. Prapti, the power of apti, obtaining anything he likes.
6. Vasitwa, the power of vasa, bringing anything under control.
7. Prakamya, the power of satisfying all desires, kama, by irresistible will force.
8. Isitxva, the power of becoming Isa, Lord, over everything.

Sriyukteswar concludes with reference to John 14:12.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

In the book, *How I Found Out About Heaven*, author M. R. Keith gives a detailed account of Yogananda visiting his office and demonstrating his ability to lay his life down and to take it up again.

Before giving that excerpt it should be mentioned that at youtube.com is a short film of Yogananda doing this for an English audience in London, 1936.

[<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIXNgQ-CwPo>]. Don't be misled by the title, "How to Sleep," because Yogananda is talking about entering the true rest of ecstasy.

In the section on "Suicide" in my police training classes in Texas I often show this film along with a video of the 20th century Catholic saint Padre Pio entering into a breathless state. Most officers have never seen spiritual examples of what Jesus has said,

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

[John 10:17,18]

I extracted that brief Padre Pio clip from the Daughters of St. Paul production on the life of that holy man. I have posted it on youtube.com at <http://youtu.be/2RkEufYnFDk>.

Here is Keith's observations of Yogananda's stopping his heartbeat and respirations while lying on a couch in Keith's office.

I remember one incident which may be of interest. I was ... an executive for a company ... in St. Paul. ... As Yogananda had expressed a desire to see the office where I worked, I invited him to visit it.

Among the employees was a young man named Stiles... He was very much interested in my explanation as to what I had found in the lectures on Yoga... [and he had not attended any of Yogananda's public lectures]

It made quite a stir when the swami came through the outer office ... He looked magnificent in his abounding health, his erect posture and his utter ease. His dark skin was ... radiant with health and had a vibrant glow. It is hard to describe the kingliness of the man without giving the wrong impression. His face was, as a general rule, smiling; ... there was a most definite sense of power about him.

Stiles had told me before the swami's appearance that he was very much interested in talking to him. I ... explained to Yogananda how much Stiles had wished to see him. He was very friendly and they were friends almost instantly.

... Stiles asked a few questions. I had been rather discreet in some of my answers to Stiles and while I had admitted that I was beginning to believe that this man had the secret of disassociating his soul or inner spirit from his body in order to, as the Masonic ritual had it, "travel in foreign countries," I did not become too certain in my statements.

... Without any preliminary evidences of coyness or show talk calling attention to his great powers, he said that it was perfectly possible for him to demonstrate the ability of his

spirit to leave his physical body right there and within a few minutes time. [emphasis added]

I was surprised, as nothing as concrete and evidential had been more than hinted at in the classes ... I was curious myself and I could see that Stiles was even more desirous than I.

I stopped all incoming telephone calls on the ground that I was in conference. As yet we had no lock on the office door...

I had a large davenport. ... Swami said that would do very nicely. He laid himself down on it, on his back, placed his hands at his sides and closed his eyes. He began to breathe long slow breaths, holding and exhaling as he had tried to teach his class. In a matter of less than five minutes, the blood began to drain out of his face, and before my eyes I saw him become as apparently *lifeless as a corpse*. [emphasis added] I had much more than an uncomfortable feeling. *It was awful*. [emphasis added]

I had such little confidence in the things which I had heard and suspected but was beginning to think possible that I was frightened Stiles became more frightened than I. He began appealing to me to get him back ...

It was some moments before the color began to creep back into his face, but by that time I was so thoroughly panicstricken that I began to call the swami's name aloud. I begged him to come back. I said the demonstration was successful. I have never undergone much more tension in my life than I had for several minutes while I felt that there was a corpse on my hands. I was very much in earnest about my supplications for him to return.

It was some moments before the color began to creep back into his face, but by that time I was so thoroughly panicstricken that I continued my calling until he finally opened his eyes and sat up.

He said that it was not difficult to do when once one had the power. He talked so matter-of-factly about the whole matter that I could not help but give credence to his statements. *I had seen.* [emphasis added]

While the word "miracle" had ceased to have much of its usual meaning to me, I had to admit to myself that I had witnessed what any non-scientifically trained individual would very probably regard as something very much akin to a miracle. *I would certainly agree to one thing. It was awesome.* [emphasis added]

MR Keith, How I Found Out About Heaven, Palmer Publications, Inc., Ocala, Fl., 1970, "Control Over Life and Death," pp. 103-107 ad passim

The Bhagavad-Gita teaches that the saint has mastery of his heart and respiration:

Good is the steadfastness whereby a man
Masters his beats of heart, his very breath
Of life, the action of his senses; fixed In
never-shaken faith and piety: That is of
Sattwan [holy, uplifting], Prince!
"soothfast" and fair!

Anonymous (2011-03-24). The Song celestial; or, Bhagabad-gītā (from the Mahābhārata) being a discourse between Arjuna, prince of India, and the Supreme Being under the form of Krishna (Kindle Locations 1052-1053). Kindle Edition.

There is a recording of Yogananda (Collector's Series #8, "One Life vs. Reincarnation") in the introduction to which he laments the

unnecessary death of a female disciple who had fallen asleep while smoking in bed and had died as a result of the ensuing fire. “Such a soul, so good and so wonderful! *I saw her off on the other side,*” Yogananda remarks, “she is safe in the arms of the Infinite.” Yogananda pronounces her name quaintly, or perhaps mispronounces it. He was speaking of the Russian-born movie star Maria Ouspenskaya. [emphasis added]

He also reports in the same talk that another female disciple (from La Jolla, California) was recuperating in a local hospital from a similar preventable accident, and he urges his disciples to give up such a deleterious habit.

In one of his poems or prayers I recall Yogananda referring to the change that occurs in a person with just a “gentle significant glance” from the Lord (or the spiritual preceptor). Certainly I have read similar accounts from his disciples, Kamala Silva (*The Flawless Mirror*), Sister Durga Ma (*A Paramhansa Trilogy of Divine Love*), Swami Kriyananda (he published over 70 books in his lifetime) affirming the changes in them due to that glance of his.

Although he never became a disciple of Yogananda, M. R. Keith gives an interesting account of how Yogananda conveyed to him and other seekers the ability to see the spiritual eye.

Since I wished to learn more about the hereafter, I asked several questions of [Yogananda during attendance at the public meetings] as to its appearance and what type of scenery could be expected and so forth. The answers in class were very general . . .

. . . we were told that anyone who had attended all of the three courses and desired to do so could attend an extra evening session at which time he would be enabled to "see the light."

. . . I had read somewhere that one of the methods by which the early Christians were discovered was their habit of sitting in the darkness trying to "see the light." . . .

When, however, the statement was made that we would be shown "the wings of the dove," I immediately signified my desire to obtain admission to this extra session. . . .

When the evening came . . . [Yogananda] stated that he wanted no one to say that he or she had seen the light unless such person was definitely certain that the light had actually been seen by him or her. . . .[emphasis added]

When my turn came, Yogananda placed the tips of his little fingers over my ears and his thumbs near but not touching my closed eyes. . . .

Suddenly I sensed a great wave of power flowing down from Yogananda, who was standing over me. A great scintillating light appeared and there were the "wings of the dove." I did not lose my perception.

I gazed directly at the center of the light. There was no "dove." I realized that the arcs of force which I saw were shaped like the wings with the curve above and the straight line or radius beneath. It was a most beautiful and inspiring

sight. A feeling of utter and absolute peace and well being filled me with ecstasy.

. . . It was probably a quarter of an hour before the light commenced to fade gradually. In fact, for some two or three days after that, I could still see a spark of light there when I closed my eyes.

MR Keith, *How I Found Out About Heaven*, Palmer Publications, Inc., Ocala, FL, 1970, Cp. 12
“The Wings of the Dove,” pp. 108-114,

In another chapter (Cp 13, “I Discover Heaven”) he describes being able to look (several months later in the privacy of his home)

through the white star into the astral world, which he designates as 'heaven.'

Claud Field recalls the fame of Mullah Shah for just such a power as a 'significant glance.'

Round Mullah Shah gathered persons of every condition; poor peasants as well as princes were seized with the same enthusiasm for his doctrines; the same ascetic training produced the same results in the most varying temperaments. The Master seems to have exercised a kind of magnetic influence over his neophytes. *He fixes his gaze upon them for a longer or shorter time, till their inward senses open and render them capable of seeing the wonders of the spiritual world.* All the accounts are unanimous in this respect, and they carry such a stamp of sincerity that their veracity is indisputable. [emphasis added]
Field, Claud (2012-05-12). *Mystics and Saints of Islam* (p. 105). . Kindle Edition.

The importance of a spiritual preceptor cannot be overemphasized. Isaiah observes, "though your sins be as scarlet, yet shall they be white as snow." (Is 1:18). But to the 'sinner' unable to quit sinning, stuck as a backsliding cow of Bashan, there may seem no chance of being 'white as snow.'

Then along comes the Bhagavad-Gita and assures such a person,

... him will I swiftly lift
Forth from life's ocean of distress and death,

Whose soul clings fast to Me.
Cling thou to Me!

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 610-611). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

Jalaluddin emphasizes the need for a *pir*, a spiritual guide:

He must choose a "pir," or spiritual guide who may represent the Unseen God for him; this guide he must obey and imitate not from slavish compulsion, but from an inward and spontaneous attraction, for though it may be logically inconsistent with Pantheism, Jalaluddin is a thorough believer in free-will. Love is the keynote of all his teaching, and without free-will love is impossible.

Field, Claud (2012-05-12). Mystics and Saints of Islam (p. 92). . Kindle Edition.

I found this most amazing account of a disciple of Ramakrishna who loved Ramakrishna but just couldn't quit drinking. Christopher Isherwood tells the story:

Meanwhile, Ramakrishna's influence was steadily gaining its hold upon Girish. One night, Girish drank himself into unconsciousness at the house of a prostitute. In the morning, he hastened to visit Ramakrishna. He was full of remorse, but had not neglected to bring a bottle of wine with him in the carriage. On arriving at Dakshineswar, he wept repentantly and embraced Ramakrishna's feet. Then, suddenly, he felt an urgent need of a drink, and discovered, to his dismay, that the carriage had already driven off.

But now Ramakrishna smilingly produced not only the bottle, but Girish's shoes and scarf as well; he had privately told a devotee to bring them from the carriage, before it left. Girish could not control himself; he drank shamelessly before them

all - and, having done so, was again repentant. 'Drink to your heart's content,' Ramakrishna told him, it won't be for much longer.'

Girish said later that this was the beginning of his abstention from intoxicating drinks. But the abstention was gradual; and this was certainly not the last time that Girish was drunk in Ramakrishna's presence.

Christopher Isherwood. Ramakrishna and His Disciples (Kindle Locations 3448-3454). Kindle Edition.

Some time later Ramakrishna speaks to Girish granting his desire for liberation.

Girish Ghosh was sitting under a tree in conversation with some friends. As Ramakrishna approached, they rose and came to meet him. 'Well, Girish,' said Ramakrishna, without any preliminary salutation, 'I hear you're saying all these things about me to everyone, wherever you go. What is it you see in me, that you can say such things?'

Falling to his knees on the ground and folding his palms, Girish answered in a voice choking with emotion, 'Who am I to speak of him? The sages Vyasa and Valmiki could have found no words to measure his glory !'

Ramakrishna seemed delighted. He blessed Girish and the assembled devotees, exclaiming, 'What more need I tell you? Be illumined!' Then he went into samadhi.

Christopher Isherwood. Ramakrishna and His Disciples (Kindle Locations 4043-4047). Kindle Edition.

Back in 2003 news staff writer Gary Warth writes of the life of black movie star and long-time famed jazz musician Herb Jeffries.

Warth finds out that Jeffries is a longtime disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda. I edit the story as follows:

[Playing in Duke] Ellington[’s band] ... His career was on a roll, but his life was about to take a dramatic turn. In 1948, Jeffries was seriously injured in a crash while flying from Las Vegas to the San Fernando Valley in a plane borrowed from Mickey Rooney.

Doctors recommended surgery to fuse damaged vertebrae in his back, but Jeffries said no one would take the responsibility for the risky surgery...

His aunt thought he might find help elsewhere and gave him a book she had read: "Autobiography of a Yogi." ...

Jeffries flew from Detroit to Los Angeles to meet Yogananda, naively thinking that the man who had written the book would have time to see him.

Turned away in the lobby by a receptionist who explained that there was a long waiting list to see the yogi, Jeffries threw a fit.

"Then I heard this voice from upstairs," Jeffries said, imitating a gentle Indian accent. "Sister! Sister! It's all right. Send him up." He began studying yoga under the master, and in eight months the excruciating pain was gone.

"When I went out to see him, he said, 'I can't heal you, but I can teach you how to heal yourself.'"

Doctors later X-rayed his back and found that the damaged vertebrae had been fused, although they could find no scars, he said.

Jeffries still practices yoga each morning and evening, and he credits the exercises with keeping him youthful and fit. He

also has kept his mind active, earning a doctorate in psychology in 1973 and a doctorate in divinity from the Church of Gospel Ministry in Chula Vista in 1979.

UT-San Diego News, Sept. 20, 2003

What Jeffries apparently didn't tell reporter Warth was the manner in which Yogananda 'disciplined' him as a disciple. As I recall the story from Jeffries his guru instructed him to continue with his life -- the parties, the lifestyle--and to come see Yogananda whenever he could.

My recollection is that Jeffries found himself transformed over the years of association with Yogananda but without taking on the usual *kriya diksha*.

On the other hand I just read Swami Kriyananda's role in Jeffries *kriya* initiation.

From May, 1949, when Kriyananda gave his first Sunday service in the Master's stead and his first Kriya initiation, he often gave Kriya initiations—usually in private, at first. During this time he gave initiation to several well-known persons, including Dick Haymes (a former vocalist for Harry James's band) and *Herb Jeffries (the vocalist for Duke Ellington's band)*, both of whom also acted in Hollywood movies. Later, Kriyananda gave initiations publicly also. (Few ministers were ordained to give it, and all of them were senior ministers in the organization.) [emphasis added]

Rescuing Yogananda, Publisher: Crystal Clarity Publishers (November 16, 2010) ISBN 9781565892606 citation leads to this title, rather than to "Yogananda for the World" which is listed on the Crystal Clarity Publisher website.

Such is the power and grace of one who knows God intimately.

The “I am” Scriptures

Earlier Yogananda’s clarification about Jesus’ ‘I am’ assertions was given. Throughout his written discourses Yogananda constantly reminds his disciples never to say, “I am God” but rather [paraphrasing] “God has revealed himself within me.” Of course the other reason Yogananda gives is the same one that Muslim and Catholic saints have run into, and that is that the general population will not only misunderstand “I am God” but as easily can kill you for your perceived blasphemy.

However Paul admonishes the believers at Philippi regarding Jesus’ claim.

Philippians

[2:5] Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

[2:6] Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

[2:7] But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

[2:8] And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross... [emphasis added]

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 38263-38275). . Kindle Edition.

Muslim disapproval of the theology of the Persian seer Jalaluddin is similar to the condemnation or controversy Jesus provoked with his various “I am” pronouncements. Claud Field gives this statement regarding Rumi’s remarks:

With Jalaluddin God is far more immanent than transcendent
... Soul becomes pregnant by the Soul of souls And *brings forth*
Christ; Not that Christ Who walked on land and sea, But that Christ
Who is above space. [emphasis added]

Field, Claud (2012-05-12). *Mystics and Saints of Islam* (p. 91). . Kindle Edition.

In India amongst the ashrams it is not uncommon to call this state of God-awareness ‘Krishna consciousness,’ and certainly millions of Indian devotees take the designation literally.

Today the term is more commonly call “super-consciousness” and is entirely divorced from identifying it with one personality. When Yogananda calls its use ‘sheer impersonality’ he is referring to the immanent presence of God within creation; reunion of each person with that presence is the spiritual goal of all humankind.

For saints who have achieved this re-union, call it samadhi or bliss or self-realization, it is not unusual in any religion for that heretofore silent presence of God to speak through the reunited soul. “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” “I am the way and you know the way” spoken by Jesus, Lord Krishna, Mullah Shah is the Lord speaking through those egoless souls to a wondering world. Uttered

in ecstasy of soul, intended as promise by the Lord, all too often it is perceived as blasphemy.

Jesus and Mansur gave their lives for uttering it. St. Teresa of Avila and Mullah Shah escaped death through timely associations with political connections.

But all these saints, to a person, would say clearly, “Lord, you are the doer; you save me or take me; I belong to you.”

For them life and death are the same; only God is real.

Jewish scriptures abound with assertions of this identity with God. Consider the progression of the following revelations:

Exodus 3:13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *I AM* hath sent me unto you. [emphasis added]

Unknown. The Bible, Old and New Testaments, King James Version (Kindle Locations 1567-1569).

Exodus 6:2 And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD:

Unknown. The Bible, Old and New Testaments, King James Version (Kindle Locations 1636-1637).

11:44 For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: ...

11:45 ... ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

Psalm 82

5 ... all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

6 I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.

7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations. [Return, my own image, and regain the spiritual heritage you have forsaken]

MobileReference (2009-12-03). The Holy Bible (King James Version, KJV) for Kindle: The Old & New Testaments, Deuterocanonical literature, Glossary & Suggested Reading List. ILLUSTRATED by Gustave Dore (Mobi Spiritual) (Kindle Locations 16804-16809). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

Verses 6 and 7 could have been lifted right out of the hoary *Vedas* of India. Certainly the pattern of (1.) divine identity followed by (2.) dying like men fits right in with the metaphysics of the Bhagavad-Gita and, of course, Patanjali's *Yoga Aphorisms*.

Nowhere does the scripture writer suggest that it's blasphemy to be holy (which is our real nature) nor to become what we are, divine.

Consider the revelation given to Ezekiel (Chapter 28, excerpted earlier). In the first part of the revelation prince Tyrus is told that he must die 'as a man' and in verse 9 "Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee."

No clear indication is given here why Tyrus is to die ‘as a man’ rather than live in his divine nature. But in a further word, the Lord clarifies to Ezekiel how his son King Tyrus has left his spiritually lofty position. I edit it to illustrate the metaphysics of raja yoga.

13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God [the *sahasrara*, the highest point in the head where Self-realization resides]

14 ... thou wast upon the holy mountain of God [in raja yoga metaphysics the ‘sahasrara,’ the very top of the head]; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire [the six lower points of energy and stages of consciousness located in the spine].

15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created [he was made in the image of God, i.e., with a divine nature], till iniquity was found in thee. [Tyrus chose the lowest chakras for his abode rather than remaining in constant communion with the Lord in the *sahasrara*].

16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: [Tyrus loved the contact of his senses through the lowest *chakras*, i.e., “stones of fire,” that he sinned, i.e., ‘missed the point’ of the divine entertainment and identified himself with his lower nature] therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the *midst of the stones of fire* [emphasis added; Tyrus is no longer able to return easily to *sahasrara*, and, like Adam, he is kicked out with a guard of restlessness keeping him from peering back into that pristine state].

17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness ...

[The Lord gives Tyrus what Tyrus desired]

MobileReference (2009-12-03). The Holy Bible (King James Version, KJV) for Kindle: The Old & New Testaments, Deuterocanonical literature, Glossary & Suggested Reading List. ILLUSTRATED by Gustave Dore (Mobi Spiritual) (Kindle Locations 22977-22985). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

Yes, I am aware that many theologians consider this passage to be a description of the fall of Satan. I recently suffered through a radio evangelist's declamation including all the usual scriptural quotations, including Revelation 12 etc. But this scripture is more modelled as the mirror to the Genesis' account of Adam's expulsion from the Garden.

Brother Anandamoy, minister with the Self-Realization Fellowship, has spoken extensively on this scripture. And I recently came across this most interesting analysis of the yogic metaphysics of Ezekiel, *Yoga and Ezeikieal* [sic] by Nicolas Alexander Braeseke. It's available for download from scribd.com; I haven't found it for sale anywhere, nor does it appear to be copyrighted. But it is an amazing analysis and I invite your attention to it.

These two biblical scriptures relate the downward (or outward) working of man's consciousness from divine unity to dark ignorance.

On the other hand consider this Muslim account of the opposite -- the upward (or inwardly) working of man's consciousness from dark ignorance as a sinner to ecstatic (yet normal) state of God-awareness.

The disciple of the spiritual life continues to rise from one station to another, till he arrives at the knowledge of the Divine Unity and of God, the necessary condition for obtaining felicity, conformably to the saying of the Prophet: "Whosoever dies while confessing that there is no god but God, shall enter Paradise."

Progress through these different stages is gradual. They have as their common foundation obedience and sincerity of intention; faith precedes and accompanies them, and from them proceed the emotions and qualities, the transient and permanent modifications of the soul; these emotions and qualities go on producing others in a perpetual progression which finally arrives at the station of the knowledge of the Unity of God.

The disciple of the spiritual life needs to demand an account of his soul in all its actions, and to keep an attentive eye on the most hidden recesses of his heart; for actions must necessarily produce results, and whatever evil is in results betokens a corresponding evil in actions.

Field, Claud (2011-05-28). MYSTICS AND SAINTS OF ISLAM [DIGITALLY ENHANCED] (Kindle Locations 2545-2552). Classics-Unbound. Kindle Edition.

But let's take this discussion in another direction. Earlier we quoted Krishna as saying

Four sorts of mortals know me: he who weeps, Arjuna! and the man who yearns to know; And he who toils to help; and

he who sits Certain of me, enlightened. Of these four, O
Prince of India! highest, nearest, best That last is, the devout
soul, wise, intent Upon "The One."

Dear, above all, am I To him; and he is dearest unto me! All
four are good, and seek me; but mine own, The true of heart,
the faithful -- stayed on me, Taking me as their utmost
blessedness, *They are not "mine," but I -- even I myself!*

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata)
(mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 368-372). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

Here as with Jesus' remarks ("I am the way...") is sheer
impersonality. The silent Lord speaks through the egoless Krishna
words of promise and love. Jesus had prayed that his disciples
become one "as we are one, Father, thou in me and I in thee;" and
here is a more ancient scripture that accomplishes the same thing.

Here is evidence that the Lord sees all of us as His children,
made in his image; there is no "only begotten son" in the physical
sense, except that when any saint (whether Jesus, Krishna,
Mohammad, or Padre Pio) reestablishes his oneness with the Lord,
then his consciousness becomes one with "the only begotten son,"
the Christ or Krishna or Kutastha consciousness.

This "sheer impersonality" idea implies then that no man, nor
saint, can come unto the Father again, except through this
consciousness. Therein lies salvation; union with one's source "in
whom we live and move and have our being."

When Jesus says,

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, *believe also in me.* [emphasis added]

MobileReference (2009-12-03). The Holy Bible (King James Version, KJV) for Kindle: The Old & New Testaments, Deuterocanonical literature, Glossary & Suggested Reading List. ILLUSTRATED by Gustave Dore (Mobi Spiritual) (Kindle Locations 28718-28719). MobileReference. Kindle Edition. John 18:1

he is adding a new metaphysic to Jewish thought, or if you wish, a new (yet old Hindu) metaphysical insight into their thinking. *Believe also in me.*

His admonition “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” (John 18:12, 13) seals the deal for the disciples, for he is telling them that they are on the same par spiritually.

The process of ‘growing up’ spiritually requires that the physical presence of the Master (i.e., savior, or *guru*, or *pir*) be removed, so that the disciples stop identifying the Christ consciousness with the physical presence of their Lord.

Once the disciple is spiritually mature enough to realize that the guru is never “just physical” then the disciple is ready for his or her own ‘apotheosis,’ so to speak, becoming “one with God.”

Jesus prays,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one...

MobileReference (2009-12-03). The Holy Bible (King James Version, KJV) for Kindle: The Old & New Testaments, Deuterocanonical literature, Glossary & Suggested Reading List. ILLUSTRATED by Gustave Dore (Mobi Spiritual) (Kindle Locations 28819-28822). MobileReference. Kindle Edition. John 17:20-23

The “technique” Scriptures

The ‘sheer impersonality’ of the “I am” scriptures pointed out by Yogananda leads to a new understanding of related scriptures, i.e., scriptures loaded with ‘how to find God’ hints, but otherwise ignored or misunderstood by the devotee

Only one of those will be explored here in order to keep the book at a reasonable length.

Here is St. Paul’s iteration of the commemoration of the Lord’s body and blood shed for forgiveness of sins. I will give bracketed explanation after each salient point that expands our understanding of what Jesus was doing in this ‘last supper’ which he intended his disciples to continue doing.

From I Corinthians:

[11:23] For I have received of the Lord [perhaps while in Arabia during those three years of exile in which the Lord taught him directly] that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread [in this world of duality, every act is balanced by its opposite; Jesus is about to give the sacred kriya meditation key (or one closely allied to it) to his disciples to accelerate their spiritual growth during his physical absence; Jesus will pay a physical price for giving the priceless key to the disciples]:

[11:24] And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you [the life

forces in the body must be mastered by the spiritually adept in order to transform one's consciousness]: this do in remembrance of me [the purpose of using this kriya key is to 'bring all things to their remembrance', and insodoing bring them back to the abode of God, i.e., the sahasrara mentioned above].

[11:25] After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped [many devotees never realize that the Divine is working from the other (still unseen) side, so to speak, assisting the devotee in his or her single-hearted search for the Divine. Hence Jesus supped first, i.e., went into ecstasy as an example for the disciples using the technique he had just given them], saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood [having already introduced the concept of the impersonality of the 'Son of God' (i.e. superconsciousness or Christ or Krishna consciousness), he says]: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. [as a technique to remembering your divine origin.]

[11:26] For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. [The preceptor usually gives a routine, or form of discipline to assist the devotee in their seeking; they must follow the discipline while still in darkness to move into 'light,' for once attaining the light, the death (ignorance or darkness) is overthrown in resurrection of life for each devotee.]

[11:27] Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. [Another statement of *karma*; inattention to one's spiritual discipline or mixing the discipline of another preceptor into their practices dilutes the

devotee's efforts, detunes him or her from the Lord's guiding presence, and, if not corrected, ends in spiritual disaster].

[11:28] But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. [Having taken the disciplinary yoke, the disciple must continue in the discipline of spiritual practices, whether kriya or prayer or whatever practice has been given for the devotee's good].

[11:29] For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. [The 'Lord's body' is perceived within; Yogananda gives a unique description of this in his pamphlet, "*How You Can Talk With God.*" One of my more unique moments came when I perceived the Lord's body both while I was in the process of getting seated in my meditation and it remained for several moments afterward to my great delight and edification.]

[11:30] For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. ['Disastrous results' mentioned above for those who are disloyal to the Preceptor (or, if you wish, the Savior) ordained for their resurrection (or, if you wish, their salvation).]

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 37364-37377). . Kindle Edition.

All-in-all the Lord's Supper is usually understood to be a mystery, with the physical presence of Jesus transubstantiated into the bread and wine. My Muslim friends consider the opposite, that the saint is transubstantiated in the mystical union with God:

From illumination of gradually increasing splendour, the mystic rises to contemplation of the divine attributes, and ultimately, when his consciousness is wholly melted away, he becomes transubstantiated (*tajawhara*) in the radiance of the divine essence. This is the 'station' of well-doing (ihsan)-for "God is with the well-doers" (Kor. 29.69), and we have Prophetic authority for the statement that "well-doing consists in worshipping God as though thou wert seeing Him."

Nicholson, Reynold A. (2010-09-22). *The Mystics of Islam* (Kindle Locations 488-492). . Kindle Edition.

A Few Specific Techniques Useful in the Spiritual Search

Here are some variations of techniques to talk to God.

dhikr

Ghazali describes the method and effects of *dhikr* in a passage which Macdonald has summarised as follows:

"Let him reduce his heart to a state in which the existence of anything and its non-existence are the same to him. Then let him sit alone in some corner, limiting his religious duties to what is absolutely necessary, and not occupying himself either with reciting the Koran or considering its meaning or with books of religious traditions or with anything of the sort. And let him see to it that nothing save God most High enters his mind.

Then, as he sits in solitude, let him not cease saying continuously with his tongue, 'Allah, Allah,' keeping his thought on it. At last he will reach a state when the motion of his tongue will cease, and it will seem as though the word flowed from it. Let him persevere in this until all trace of motion is removed from his tongue, and he finds his heart persevering in the thought. Let him still persevere until the form of the word, its letters and shape, is removed from his heart, and there remains the idea alone, as though clinging to his heart, inseparable from it.

So far, all is dependent on his will and choice; but to bring the mercy of God does not stand in his will or choice. He has now laid himself bare to the breathings of that mercy, and nothing remains but to await what God will open to him, as God has done after this manner to prophets and saints.

If he follows the above course, he may be sure that the light of the Real will shine out in his heart. At first unstable, like a flash of lightning, it turns and returns; though sometimes it hangs back. And if it returns, sometimes it abides and sometimes it is momentary. And if it abides, sometimes its abiding is long, and sometimes short."

Nicholson, Reynold A. (2010-09-22). *The Mystics of Islam* (Kindle Location 428-440). . Kindle Edition.

Yogananda's 'hong sau' technique

Breath is life. If you can do without breath you can control life, prolong it and rise above it — to Soul, while living (“I die daily.” I Cor.1: 31: Rev. 2: 10, 11;9: 6; 14: 13; John II: 23-26). In order to be without breath you can not start by forcing or suppressing it the lungs — you have to watch it. This is the preliminary method.

You can practice this lesson any time . Sit erect wherever you are with a little forward chest and relax. Close your eyes (or direct both of your half-opened eyes toward the center of the eyebrows). With the GREATEST CALMNESS feel your breath NATURALLY going in and coming out. As it goes in move the index finger of your right hand toward the thumb and mentally chant (without moving your tongue) “Hong.” As it goes out move the index finger away from the thumb and mentally chant “Saw.”

Do not IN ANY WAY USE MENTAL WILLINGNESS or FORCE to let the breath in or out. While practicing this have the calm attitude that you are a SILENT OBSERVER of your natural breath coming in and going out, of which you are not generally conscious. The movement of the index finger is only to differentiate inhalation from exhalation.

With the greatest reverence and attention practice this at least ten minutes each time... The longer, the better . You can do it at leisure time (during day or night). You will feel the greatest calmness in you and by and by realize yourself as Soul, superior to and existing independently of this material body.

“Hong” means Soul. “Saw” means The Great Spirit. Always sit on a straight chair with a woolen blanket placed over it and running down under the feet. Face the East and sit erect without touching the back of the chair with your back. You

ought to practice this method during your leisure periods, too, when you are on the bus or the trolley car or sitting anywhere doing nothing. Just watch the breath and mentally chant “Hong,”“Saw” without moving the finger or closing the eyes or directing them toward the centre of the eyebrows, which might attract attention of people around you. Just keep your eyes open without winking, looking straight ahead at some specific point.

Yogananda, Swami (1925-04-12). YOGODA OR TISSUE-WILL SYSTEM OF PHYSICAL PERFECTION (Kindle Locations 765-785). . Kindle Edition.

Psalm 46:10

I realize, in reviewing this manuscript, that I had mentioned Psalm 46:10 as a ‘technique’ script.

Be still and know that I am God.

I have yet to see any modern day psychologist take this proposition seriously. But the entire verse is a model for spiritual discipline

10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. [when the devotee attains utter quietness, the Lord’s presence is revealed, and all sensations of the body, ‘the heathen,’ will be converted and the Lord’s presence (re)installed over the kingdom of one’s consciousness.]

MobileReference (2009-12-03). The Holy Bible (King James Version, KJV) for Kindle: The Old & New Testaments, Deuterocanonical literature, Glossary & Suggested Reading List. ILLUSTRATED by Gustave Dore (Mobi Spiritual) (Kindle Locations 16312-16313). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

Remember this scripture?:

15 For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and *ye would not*. [emphasis added]

MobileReference (2009-12-03). The Holy Bible (King James Version, KJV) for Kindle: The Old & New Testaments, Deuterocanonical literature, Glossary & Suggested Reading List. ILLUSTRATED by Gustave Dore (Mobi Spiritual) (Kindle Locations 19375-19377). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

This scripture is part and parcel with the psalmist. Note that the Lord will not force anyone to practice his presence in quietness, “and ye would not.”

But here is more from Isaiah (cp 26):

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

MobileReference (2009-12-03). The Holy Bible (King James Version, KJV) for Kindle: The Old & New Testaments, Deuterocanonical literature, Glossary & Suggested Reading List. ILLUSTRATED by Gustave Dore (Mobi Spiritual) (Kindle Location 19260). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

“Perfect peace” in Hebrew is “shalom shalom!” Powerful!

Isaiah is one who knows the value of being still and knowing God.

Meditate then act

Then comes Krishna and admonishes Arjuna with the technique of all techniques:

Meditate! And -- as thou wilt -- then act!

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 859-860). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

In the 17 years that I ran the mobile crisis team for the mental health authority here in Bexar County (San Antonio, Texas area), I made it my religious and social work *duty* to meditate first in the morning before leaving for the day's interventions.

Never did I nor my associates get hurt. I learned much from the one time I was taken hostage; but with Paul I knew "to live is Christ, to die is gain."

Meditate then act. That gets your priorities in order!

Karma and Reincarnation

My mother and I had several heated disputations over the Christian teaching of reincarnation. She always quoted the one scripture, "it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment," (Hebrews 9:27) as proof that Jesus and the Bible teach "only one life to live."

As an adult and biblical scholar (back in the day) I never did find anything in scripture that backed her position. Nonetheless “one life” teaching is doctrinal bedrock for ‘The Church.’

Of course, ‘truth will out.’ Here are some considerations. For instance, Yogananda gives further explanation about karma in the 3rd edition of his *Autobiography*.

Understanding of the law of karma and of its corollary, reincarnation (see pp.266n., 827-8, and Chap. 43), is displayed in numerous Biblical passages; e.g., “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed” (Gen. 9:6). If every murderer must himself be killed “by man,” the reactive process obviously requires, in many cases, more than one lifetime. The contemporary police are just not quick enough!

The early Christian church accepted the doctrine of reincarnation, which was expounded by the Gnostics and by numerous church fathers, including Clement of Alexandria, the celebrated Origen (both 3rd century), and St. Jerome (5th century). The doctrine was first declared a heresy in

A.D. 558 by the Second Council of Constantinople. At that time many Christians thought the doctrine of reincarnation afforded man too ample a stage of time and space to encourage him to strive for immediate salvation. *But truths suppressed lead disconcertingly to a host of errors.* The millions have not utilized their “one lifetime” to seek God, but to enjoy this world — so uniquely won, and so shortly to be forever lost! *The truth is that man reincarnates on earth until he has consciously regained his status as a son of God.* [emphasis added]

Yogananda's guru often spoke of overcoming karma, that mathematical equation by which, usually, as Jesus remarks,

Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Location 30962). . Kindle Edition.

Here Sriyukteswar is explaining to his young disciple:

“Man is a soul, and has a body. *When he properly places his sense of identity, he leaves behind all compulsive patterns.* So long as he remains confused in his ordinary state of spiritual amnesia, he will know the subtle fetters of environmental law. [emphasis added]

“God is harmony; the devotee who attunes himself will never perform any action amiss. His activities will be correctly and naturally timed to accord with astrological law. After deep prayer and meditation he is in touch with his divine consciousness; there is no greater power than that inward protection.”

“Then, dear Master, why do you want me to wear an astrological bangle?” I ventured this question after a long silence, during which I had tried to assimilate Sriyukteswar's noble exposition.

“It is only when a traveler has reached his goal that he is justified in discarding his maps. During the journey, he takes advantage of any convenient short cut. The ancient rishis discovered many ways to curtail the period of man's exile in delusion. There are certain mechanical features in the law of karma which can be *skillfully adjusted by the fingers of wisdom.* [emphasis added]

“All human ills arise from some transgression of universal law. The scriptures point out that man must satisfy the laws of nature, while not discrediting the divine omnipotence. He should say: ‘Lord, I trust in Thee, and know Thou canst help me, but I too will do my best to undo any wrong I have done.’ By a number of means—by prayer, by will power, by yoga meditation, by consultation with saints, by use of astrological bangles—the adverse effects of past wrongs can be minimized or nullified.

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (pp. 105-106). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

Here are some thoughts from two sources in Islamic tradition regarding reincarnation.

Jalaluddin Rumi

Strange as it may seem to our Western egoism, the prospect of sharing in the general, impersonal immortality of the human soul kindles in the Sufi an enthusiasm as deep and triumphant as that of the most ardent believer in a personal life continuing beyond the grave.

Jalaluddin, after describing the evolution of man in the material world and anticipating his further growth in the spiritual universe, utters a heartfelt prayer--for what?--for self-annihilation in the ocean of the Godhead.

"I died as mineral and became a plant, I died as plant and rose to animal, I died as animal and I was man. Why should I fear? When was I less by dying? Yet once more I shall die as man, to soar With angels blest; but even from angelhood I must pass on: all except God doth perish. When I have sacrificed my angel soul, I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.

Oh, let me not exist! for Non-existence Proclaims in organ tones, "To Him we shall return."

Nicholson, Reynold A. (2010-09-22). *The Mystics of Islam* (Kindle Locations 1471-1478). . Kindle Edition.

Mansur al-Hallaj

Editor Jagbir Singh offers the following selection from Mansur.

Another great mystic, Mansur al-Hallaj, famous for his formulation, *Anal Haq* (I am the truth: *Abam Brabmo Asmi*) wrote:

Like the herbage
I have sprung up many a time On
the banks of flowing rivers.
For a hundred thousand years
I have lived and worked In
every sort of body.

http://www.adishakti.org/_/reincarnation_in_islam.htm

Lord Krishna

Here are some thoughts through the lips of Jadava Krishna from Aryan (i.e., Hindu) tradition regarding reincarnation.

Nay, but as when one layeth
His worn-out robes away,
And taking new ones, sayeth,
"These will I wear to-day!"
So putteth by the spirit
Lightly its garb of flesh,
And passeth to inherit
A residence afresh.

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 107-109). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

SECTION IV: CONCLUSION

So ends this literary review. If you needed validation of your spiritual experiences, hopefully you have found it in these pages. No, you are neither crazy nor unusual to have had glimpses of the divine.

If you needed no such validation then my hope is that you finish this recitation with a stronger hold than ever on the path that most holds you.

Yogananda points out,

Sometimes it is a test by God to delay the fulfillment of prayers. But He eventually appears to the persistent devotee in whatever form he holds dear. A devout Christian sees Jesus; a Hindu beholds Krishna, or the Goddess Kali, or an expanding Light if his worship takes an impersonal turn.

Yogananda, Paramhansa (2003-01-25). Autobiography of a Yogi (Reprint of Original 1946 Edition) (p. 132). Crystal Clarity Publishers - A. Kindle Edition.

When interviewing for my post as counselor in the Texas prison system several years ago I mentioned that I always watch a person's eyes for signs of hope. When hope is present, any negotiation is possible.

Nothing in this book should have moved you to switch religions. If you needed a push to move from drinking spiritual milk to eating spiritual meat, I hope this book has helped provide it.

I love it about the spiritual lineage of Lahiri Mahasaya and his guru, Babaji, that the sacred kriya key could be given to anyone of any faith. There was no expectation that a new religion was being introduced nor that the practitioner of the technique forsake his religion. The only thing that changes is one's spiritual understanding, not loyalties. I also found the same common understanding and expectation amongst the spiritual children of the Vedanta Society.

In the Bhagavad-Gita is this concluding command:

Hide, the holy Krishna saith, This [teaching of the Gita] from him that hath no faith, Him that worships not, nor seeks Wisdom's teaching when she speaks: Hide it from all men who mock;

Anonymous (2009-07-16). Bhagavad-Gita or, The Song Celestial (From the Mahabharata) (mobi) (Penguin Classics) (Kindle Locations 863-864). MobileReference. Kindle Edition.

The gospel writers likewise record that Jesus spoke deep truth in parables because 'commoners' were neither able nor prepared to act on them.

[13:10] And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? [13:11] He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

(2010-07-19). Kindle Bible: KJV. Authorized King James Holy Bible Formatted for the Amazon Kindle (Kindle Locations 31315-31317). . Kindle Edition.

Let this be the concluding word on the issue of doctrine versus experience,

The Moslem mystics enjoyed greater freedom of speech than their Christian brethren who owed allegiance to the medieval Catholic Church, and if they went too far the plea of ecstasy was generally accepted as a sufficient excuse. Whether they emphasise the outward or the inward aspect of unification, the transcendence or the immanence of God, their expressions are bold and uncompromising.

Thus Abu Sa'ïd: "In my heart Thou dwellest--else with blood I'll drench it; In mine eye Thou glowest--else with tears I'll quench it. Only to be one with Thee my soul desireth-- Else from out my body, by hook or crook, I'll wrench it!"

Jalaluddin Rumi proclaims that the soul's love of God is God's love of the soul, and that in loving the soul God loves Himself, for He draws home to Himself that which in its essence is divine.

"Our copper," says the poet, "has been transmuted by this rare alchemy," meaning that the base alloy of self has been purified and spiritualised.

In another ode he says: "O my soul, I searched from end to end: I saw in thee naught save the Beloved; Call me not infidel, O my soul, if I say that thou thyself art He."

Nicholson, Reynold A. (2010-09-22). *The Mystics of Islam* (Kindle Locations 1050-1058). Kindle Edition.

SECTION V: POST-SCRIPT INVITATION

This book started with consideration of the existential question, “what do you want?”

On a less esoteric level I would like to hear from those of you who have had ‘glimpses of divine glory,’ and are willing to share it with the world. In a follow up volume the secondary title for this new material would be “personal glimpses of divine glory.” Members of all religions and all persuasions, believer, nonbeliever, theist, atheist, agnostic, gnostic, *etc.*, are welcome.

Feel free to submit material to my email address at dcastellano.hoyt@gmail.com. Citation of your name will be included in any material used, unless you request anonymity. Please do not submit material on behalf of someone else. Let these be your own experiences.

There will be no financial or other compensation for use of your material. Years ago I pointed out to my friend, Robert Lane, that "I ain't nobody's guru." He concurred wholeheartedly (with a knowing

laugh, no less!) and reminded me that having glimpses of divine glory doesn't 'make one a saint,' but it's surely wondrous to experience. He asked me to consider writing this book that others may be encouraged to 'taste and see that the Lord is good.'

So, Robert, here it is. I hope others around the world will share their stories as you and I have with one another.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Donald Castellano-Hoyt has studied and taught Israeli and Biblical Hebrew as well as New Testament Greek in educational institutions of the Church of the Nazarene, at the University of Texas at Austin, as well as in Austin High School and McCallum High School in Austin.

He has edited and published four other authors' public domain works on religion and meditation; this is his first book on such topics.

His first published book is the textbook, *Enhancing Police Response to Persons In Mental Health Crisis*, Charles Thomas, Publisher, Springfield, Illinois, 2003; Endorsed by the FBI (*Law Enforcement Journal*, Dr. Dan Phillips, December, 2005) and the TCLEOSE (Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education), Dr. Jim Dozier, Chief, Spring, 2004.