

OUT IN THE OPEN

Volume 2 of 8

(Featuring works written from 1985-1994)

(246 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler

Featuring a Compilation

of

The Complete Written Works

of

Francis William Bessler

From 1963-2011

Compiled in May, 2011

**Featuring
Original essays, stories & songs
In
Chronological order.**

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Laramie, Wyoming
- 2011 -**

OUT IN THE OPEN

By Francis William Bessler

Written 4/8/2011

Refrain 1:

Out in the open – it's the best way to find God.

Out in the open – truth does not depend upon applause.

Out in the open – no devil can exist.

Out in the open – there's no room for sin.

Well, my friends, I'm no guru,
but I don't think I need to be.
When I simply look at life,
it's all I need to be free.
Let others read lots of books
if they believe that will help;
but I think that if that's all they know,
what they know will be more like Hell. **Refrain 1.**

I'm told I should fear Satan
and I say, why should I?
It's clear Satan can't exist
when I'm standing beneath a sky.
Just look out as far as you can see
and all devils disappear.
So just keep looking outward
and you'll never need to fear. **Refrain 1.**

I learned long time ago,
back when I was a child,
That the only truth anyone needs
is found in the wild.
To the degree, I can be
one with the deer and antelope
is the same degree I can find peace
and that wonderful thing called hope. **Refrain 1.**

I think it's good to know
that we're all the same.
I don't need you and you don't need me
to share a common fate.
The truth we both need
is out there in the universe.
Just become one with the All –
and let that be what we rehearse. **Refrain 1.**

And when I die what will happen
to this thing I call my soul?
It will just continue on
on the merry path I know.
Wherever my souls goes,
it will stay among the stars.
Freedom's only belonging to All
whether that All is near or far. **Refrain 1.**

Refrain 2 (several times):

Out in the open – it's my favorite phrase.
Out in the open – it lets my nights look to day.
Out in the open – it's the way I want to go.
Out in the open – it's the best way to know.

Introduction

Hello Again! Welcome to my continuing evolution of me in written terms. Of what worth is that evolution to anyone else? I do not know; but I do not mind sharing some things I wrote down through the years – as it were, trying to find my way. Is my way useful for anyone else? Again, I do not know that it is; however, I do strongly suspect it is. I strongly suspect some of my thoughts are valid for others because, in the final analysis, we are of the same ilk – so to speak. That which one of us observes to be true is quite likely the truth for others too. Thus, *what you have written may appeal to me and what I have written may appeal to you.*

I would like to repeat, though, that I do not consider myself infallible as I do not consider anyone infallible. **There is no such thing as infallible guidance** – as some would like to believe. *In the end, we are all guessing to some extent.* I think we can arrive at *probable truth*, but not *infallible truth*. As long as I am caught within life and existence in general, I cannot assume that my judgments about life and existence are without question, true. *Complete objectivity, I think, requires separation from what is viewed.* Since I cannot be separated from life, neither then can I be completely sure about it; but that should not stop me from thinking about life and having thoughts about it.

It is not my aim to impose my thoughts, however, but simply to share them. I am very glad I can do that; but take my ideas with that proverbial *grain of salt* if you will. I hope you are open to listening to them, but I also hope you are open to judging them for yourself.

And you will have a good deal to judge too. I start out offering a bit of an intended naturalist lyrical screen play of 60 pages or so about what I see as the ideal town. I call it *SUMMER TOWN*. It's not exactly **Typical Town**, but you may find the residents offering some worthwhile tidbits and observations about life. I will let the folks in *SUMMER TOWN* offer their own story soon. I wrote that story initially in 1986.

Conjecturing about morality is part of the agenda too. The result is a 20 page essay series I call simply, *MORALITY*, which I wrote originally in 1989. In that same year, 1989, I decided to write an essay series on the soul too. *It was (and is) a speculative work; but then all of my agenda is speculative.* Who do you know, though, who has sat down and analyzed various thoughts about the soul? Amazingly, though I think most of us believe in the soul in general, almost none of us have sat down to analyze various perceptions of it. We just accept what our folks told us – which isn't much because they never sat down to analyze it either. So look for an entry called *UNMASKING THE SOUL* – about 34 pages long. For what it's worth, I throw in a personal theory about the soul too.

And who hasn't thought about sex? I will offer a bit of a discussion on that one as well – including what I think is the *natural design* that should ideally govern sexual conduct. I wrote *NATURAL DESIGN & SEX* in 1992 – 28 pages long. Being a naturalist and believing as I do that *Nature* is actually *Divine*, I also offer a *NATURAL MANIFESTO FOR HUMAN REFORM* – a much shorter work of only 12 pages that I wrote in 1994.

Concluding this volume will be two brief *speculative* biographies – one a 39 page work on *William Penn* after whom the American state of *Pennsylvania* is named – and one 41 page work on one of my favorite saints – *Francis of Assisi*. I call them speculative biographies because of speculating about the wisdom of some of the conduct of these two favorite people of mine. Both of these works were originally written in 1994. I call one *IMPRESSIONS OF WILLIAM PENN* and the other *IMPRESSIONS OF FRANCIS OF ASSISI*.

Thinking is a lot of fun for me. I have often wondered why more people do not take pride in thinking for themselves. Perhaps many do not think they have a right to think for themselves, believing as they do that it has all been thought out before and that they must attend to *what has been written*. How many times have you heard someone argue that they know what they know because *it has been written*. It is like we all have to put our own minds away because someone else has already preceded us with the truth.

It should come as no surprise, but I do not take that approach. *I love to read what has been written by others, but I think it is pure folly to assume that all that has been written is true simply because some writer has claimed it is.* How do you know what you know? So many will answer – *because it has been written* – as if what has been written is somehow *scriptural* or of God.

Well, I can assure you that my writings are not of God – in terms of being inspired by God in a way different that any of life is inspired. I do believe that all life is inspired of God, but I do not believe that any one thing about life is more inspired of God than anything else. *Special inspiration, for me, is nonsense because you cannot be more than 100% inspired.* Special inspiration implies that before that inspiration I was not 100% inspired – or of God.

Writing, for me, is no more important or inspired than eating a meal or taking a bath. It is all the same thing for me because I see God as equally in all and in everything. But what a view that is – to be 100% inspired all the time – just as everyone else is 100% inspired all the time. If only we all believed that, huh? *If only we all believed that we are all equally inspired of God and that no one is more inspired of God than another.* I'd say that would be a **Recipe for Peace**. Wouldn't you?

With that, let us continue with my 100% inspired writings of the past. I am not claiming that my thinking is 100% right. I am only claiming that my thinking is 100% thinking. **I may be right. I may be wrong; but whatever I am, because I am 100% of God, I am 100% inspired. You too!**

Thanks for letting me share with you - some of my thoughts. I appreciate it.

Gently,

Francis William Bessler

4746 E. Skyline Drive, # 108

Laramie, Wyoming, U.S.A. 82070

May 4th, 2011

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SUMMER TOWN

(59 Pages)

By
Francis William Bessler

A Naturalist Musical Screenplay

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Francis William Bessler,
Laramie, Wyoming, U.S.A.
April, 2005

INTRODUCTION

It's only some thoughts about life – with a few songs thrown in. I intended it as a screenplay; but I suppose it could be adapted into a stage play. In any case, it is only a skeleton for a possible production. I wrote an initial version in 1986, but in April of 2005, I am retyping it and revising it somewhat as I do. I even wrote an additional song for this 2005 final version called **I Am Divine**. All other lyrics were written in the mid 1980s.

I believe quite strongly that we human beings are failing to embrace our divinity. Perhaps that is what this play is about. It's about a few people trying to get it right. They form a town called **SUMMER TOWN** that is supposed to reflect what one might call “summer time” values. In the summer we tend to let our hair down and take it off – our clothes – that is; but it's that theme of living with our hair down all year and without pretense or cover up that the name of the town – even in winter – is **SUMMER TOWN**.

It's the story of an idealistic citizenry, of course. Perhaps you could add to that – low key. These are folks who are not interested in living in the fast lane. They are folks who have decided that being close to God is being comfortable with all that God is making – especially themselves. These are folks who are intellectually based and spiritually motivated. They believe in the human mind and they believe that the human mind is entirely capable of working out its ideal destiny.

There is a lot of conversation in this play, which may make it slow moving. It is not one of those fast action thrillers whose only purpose is to fascinate and entertain. It was written to promote the concept of *Divine Naturism*, although there is only one brief reference to that title as such in the play. It comes in Scene 7 via a discussion between Grampa Owens and Julie and Terry. Julie and Terry are teenagers.

***Divine Naturism* is a concept that says that whatever God is, His (Her, Its) reality is in Nature or expressed through Nature. So we don't need to go outside of Nature to find God – or at least to appreciate God.**

The main characters of **SUMMER TOWN** are depicted as individualists who feel strongly about personally doing what they feel is right, but leaving it at that. None of them need to demand corresponding conduct from others.

SUMMER TOWN, however, is without major conflicts. There are no fist fights, no outrageous jealousies, no settling issues through violence. In the words of Julie in Scene 10, “*Summer Town is the way the world should be.*” Ideally, we should tolerate our differences, even as we try to adhere to our own personal beliefs. That is what **SUMMER TOWN** is all about.

This is a screenplay featuring a town that loves nakedness. It is assumed that all characters will be naked in scenes within the town itself. The only scenes featuring clothes or the lack of apparel will be in scenes outside the town itself.

I wrote the lyrics with accompanying melodies, though I am only providing the lyrics with this screenplay. If someone wants to produce this thing while I am available to supply my own melodies, that would be fine. It would also be fine for another of interest

to generate his or her own melodies for the various lyrics of this effort. I will leave it at that for now. **Hope you enjoy your visit to SUMMER TOWN. FWB.**

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The Characters:

David (near 50)
Linda (near 50)
Frank (near 50)
Marie (near 50)
Julie (17)
Jimmy (8, Julie's brother)
Grampa Owens (late 70s)
Steve Owens (mid 50s)
Janet Owens (mid 50s)
Terry Owens (12)
Becky Owens (8)
Tom (17)
Rick (17)
Gary (early 20s)

Rest of Atlanta Cycle Club (over 30):

Biggie & Nancy
John & Sue
Danny & Betty
Howard
Bob
Ruth
Russ
Tammy
Paul
Phil
Jenny
Jason
Judy

And a town of Naturalists

SUMMER TOWN

Scene 1: Introduction (Roller Skating)

With the instrumental music of the song, *Summer Town*, playing in the background, cameras will scan a midday **Summer Town** and come to focus on the tennis courts where adults and children will be roller skating. Focus should be directed to a sign which reads:

Roller Skating - Noon – 3 P.M.
Dancing - 7 P.M. – Midnight
Tennis - All other times.

Among the roller skaters will be narrator, Frank, and his lady friend, Dawn Marie (Marie), and David and Linda. After a minute or so of capturing the roller skaters, Frank and Marie will move to a bench on the sidelines where a drink dispensary of some sort will be located. Frank will fill two glasses or receptacles and offer one to Marie. Marie will smile and say thanks and sit down on the bench. Frank will return her smile and take his drink and sit down next to Marie. Frank will then start talking to the camera (and the audience).

Frank: I'd like to tell you about my favorite town. Here's a toast to my favorite town. (Marie toasts with him, touching drinks together.) It's called SUMMER TOWN. It was started some 17 years ago by that couple you see there, skating so freely. (Cameras will focus on David and Linda.) They were just out of high school then, at least when they first got the idea. It would be 14 years later before they would realize their dream, though. But the idea sprouted in their mind just after graduation in 1956.

David was planning to go into the Army, but changed his mind – became a computer programmer for an outfit in Denver, Colorado. Linda had something to do with that. Linda and David were married in April of 1957. Linda convinced David that his energies were better spent makin peace, not defendin it.

Ah, David and Belinda – Linda for short – are committed to peace, makin it, that is. They figure that if people could spend their lives makin peace, then no time would be left to make war. You know I can't fault them there. Can you?

Oh, I suppose you're thinking it's not realistic. Peace is for dreamin, not livin. Right? If you would, why don't you kinda hold your judgment on that until I finish my story, or until we finish our story. OK? While your holdin your judgment and I'm figuring out what to say next, let's allow the good folks of SUMMER TOWN to tell you about their town in song. They love to sing the praises of their own town. So, let's let them do it. OK?

Song:
Summer Town

Refrain:

**Summer time is Summer Town. Winter time is Summer Town.
Spring time and fall time too – Summer Town lives the truth.**

**Life's majestic and that's the truth.
Life's fantastic and that's true too.
Life is splendid. Life is sweet.
Life should knock you off your feet. *Refrain.***

**Creation's a miracle and that's a truth.
They are satirical who otherwise accuse.
Satire and judgment make us frown.
They don't belong in Summer Town. *Refrain.***

**Nakedness inspires and that's a truth
for those who don't look at life as crude.
If you see life as crude, then don't come around
to our wonderful home called Summer Town. *Refrain (3).***

(The song will be sung with a variation of leads and choruses with all singing the refrains. Through it all, the roller skating will continue. At midway, there should be an interlude with maybe a little fancy skating going on.)

Scene 1B: (Focus back on Frank and Marie)

Frank: Oh, I forgot to tell you. Folks, my name is Frank. I'm a Judge in SUMMER TOWN. This is Dawn Marie. (Dawn Marie (Marie) looks into the cameras from looking at the action on the court and offers a smile and a wave.) How did you like their song? Mighty fine folks in SUMMER TOWN. I think there's more happiness in our town than in any town on the face of the earth – if not more, at least as much. Know what I mean?

Before I go further, I need to tell you how SUMMER TOWN got started. I told you before that David and Linda started it, but I didn't tell you how. You see, David and Linda graduated together in a little town in Wyoming, near the Montana state line. As I told you before, David was planning to go into the Army, but something happened to change his mind. That something was a someone named Linda. This incident occurred in the beautiful Big Horn Valley in Wyoming in 1956. Now, this ain't Wyoming. It's Georgia, but let's go back there and reminisce a bit.

Scene 2: Big Horn Valley in Wyoming

(With Frank still talking, the scene goes to the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming, to one of the big sloping mountains. David and Linda will be reaching the top of the sloping – as opposed to jagged – mountain. The cameras will scan the valley, coming to rest on David and Linda who will be sitting down at the top.)

Frank: It's June in Wyoming in 1956. David and Linda were serious about one another. David took Linda to the mountains for a picnic. He loved those mountains and went hiking there a lot as a kid, alone and with pals too. On this day when his hiking pal was Linda, he was planning to tell her about his decision to go into the Army. Let's let you see for yourself what happened.

David: Gosh, the mountains are beautiful, aren't they, Linda? Just listen! It's so quiet you can almost hear God.

Linda: You know how I feel about that, David. Wouldn't it be nice if we could stay here forever?

David: Yeah, I think it would be grand, alright, but it won't happen, will it? In just a little while, it will be off to the Army for me, as you know.

Linda: Do you really think that's for you, David? I know you've talked to the recruiter and all, but somehow I can't see you in a gray uniform, let alone carrying a gun. That's not the David I have been going to school with.

David: Oh yeah? Who's the David you think you know?

Linda: The David who was planning to be a priest – that's who.

David: Well, I figure I can be a priest and be in the Army too.

Linda: And what of me? Am I to become a nun? I am not even Catholic.

David: Linda, I wish you were. Maybe then you'd understand. I have to do what I have to do.

Linda: You're right! I don't understand! First you say you want to serve your God and then you want to defend your Country – and maybe a long way down the line, it's OK to think of me. Where do I fit in, David? I'm neither God, nor Country. Who wants third place?

David: Linda, you're not third. You're first.

Linda: Really! Then why haven't you asked me to be first?

David: Among mortals, you're first, Linda – but God is first, first.

Linda: And where is God?

David: He's here, right now! I wish people could see that.

Linda: Why don't you tell them that?

David: I want to. I really do. I want people to see themselves differently than they do now.

Linda: And how do we see ourselves that you don't like? What would you change?

David: Nakedness!

Linda: I should have known.

David: Can I help it if I love nakedness?

Linda: The Army or Seminary won't help you.

David: Will you?

Linda: Yes, David.

David: Really?

Linda: Yes, really, I will. I will admit that when you first suggested that people should go naked when we were Juniors, I almost freaked out. As fate would have it, I visited a cousin in Denver in the summer following my Junior year. They belonged to a nudist association outside of Denver and took me along. I was shy at first, but once the ice was broken, you couldn't keep clothes on me.

David: I know. You told me about that.

Linda: I think that's why I fell in love with you when we became Seniors, David. I began to share your love for nakedness.

David: I'm glad you did. And now we're here – sitting on top of the world in the Big Horn Mountains outside our home. And you are telling me you'll help me tell the world of nakedness.

Linda: Yes, I am. The Army doesn't need you. I do – and the world needs you, needs us. How are we going to tell the world, David? What are you going to do?

David: I don't know, Linda, talk to it, I guess – and maybe start a town and declare nakedness as part of the charter.

Linda: I'm now the world, David. Talk to me!

Song:
Let's Look at Each Other Differently

David:

Let's look at each other differently with a whole new respect.
Sure, we have genitals, but why should we object?
Genitals are only muscles – they're not so mysterious.
Touch them and they extend, but why make it serious?
We treat sex like a thrill and isolate ourselves with our act.
We don't stand with the world – belong only to the human pack.
And then we run away and hide and God we accuse.
You shouldn't have made us that way, we say, and His grace we refuse.

Let's look at each other differently with a whole new respect.
Let's join the stars and seas and with Creation, let's connect.
Let's enjoy what we are – genitals and all.
Then we won't be so weak and won't with Adam fall.
Come on, is it so hard to see each other differently?
I'm not alone. I'm like all men. Enjoy the world that's in me.

Linda:

Let's look at each other differently with a whole new respect.
It's time we had a new vision – and new values, let's select.
The old one isn't good, I agree – it divides the world in two
and puts on one side all that's good and on the other, evil crews.
As a lady, I am tired of being measured by my breasts.
Why can't I be a woman without passing a ratings test?
And as a man you shouldn't care about the size of your penis.
It's just a muscle, as you say, and it doesn't measure genius.

Let's look at each other differently with a whole new respect.
We could really fall in love because our natures we'd accept.
And then when we'd act together – sexually and otherwise,
we wouldn't be strangers to the world – we'd need no disguise.
Our ebbs and flows wouldn't be restricted within our flesh.
We'd truly be one with the world and with everything enmesh.

David: Let's look at each other differently

Linda: with a whole new respect.

David: I am ready.

Linda: I am too.

Both: Let's take the first step.

David: I'll take my clothes off, for good, my good.

Linda: And I'll do the same.

Both: We'll stand so proud with our eyes aloft
and we'll give our souls a raise.

David: Oh, birds, can you see? Come fly in real close.

Linda: We'd like to aspire on your wings to become holy ghosts.

David: Well, My Friend, I think that this is Paradise.

Linda: But only if we act as pure and welcome our own sight.

David: Let's look at each other differently – Oh, yes, let's do.

Linda: Feel free, My Love, to look at me – and I will look at you.

(Allow for an instrumental interlude here during which David & Linda will undress for each other. Should be a sensitive event with touching and kissing and hugging. Undressing does not have to be continuous. Can take off an article and then be affectionate. Whatever comes natural. Once interlude has been completed, repeat last verse.)

Scene 3: Residential scene in Summer Town

(After the song, the scene will return to SUMMER TOWN, with Frank walking in a residential scene. Again, he will be talking to the audience. The camera will capture him and various residential activities.)

Frank: Well, Friends, that's how it happened, according to David. Linda doesn't comment when David tells the story, but she nods now and then. She's not one to tell a lie or let a lie be told if she can help it. So, I suspect David is telling the truth.

I guess it's no secret that women change the courses of men every day, but Linda – she's some kind of woman. I suspect that if it wasn't for her love, David would have joined the Army, may have got shot over there in Vietnam, and, well, SUMMER TOWN would not be here today.

David and Linda married shortly after that session in the Big Horns and moved to Denver. David became a programmer in 1961 and worked for four years for a firm in Denver. Brian was born in 1959. He's gone now – livin in Atlanta, a happily married man. Of course, there's grandchildren, two of them – one is three and the other just turned one. Christy, their other child, was born in 1961. She's still single, but lives in Atlanta too. As a matter of fact, she went to school and became a computer analyst. David still works as a contract programmer and works mostly in Atlanta too.

Forgive me for getting ahead of myself. As you know now, David and Linda and their two children moved to Atlanta from Denver. They did it in 1966. While living in Denver, they belonged to that nudist association Linda visited in her Junior year. As a

matter of fact, that's how they came to move to Atlanta. From a friend in the nudist association in Colorado, they heard that Georgia might be a great place to found a town for Nature loving people. Not that Colorado wouldn't be right for that, but Colorado is a might colder than Georgia, you know. For that reason, Georgia seemed more practical.

They founded the town you see here in 1970 – and yours truly was lucky enough to be around. That was only 17 years ago as I'm talking to you now. It's April of 1987 right now. A lot has happened since our start in 1970. We started out just a clearing in the woods. Actually, Linda was the real momentum behind the actual founding. She doesn't know what shame is. David kept talking of the ideal town that charters nakedness, but it was Linda who lifted the process and turned an idea into reality.

She told David, why just talk? Do something. David will agree he wasn't much for doing, but he sure did do a lot of talking about what needs to be done. But Linda? She did something. She did a lot of something. David loved to bicycle; and so she suggested that they join a bicycle club and then suggest to the members about riding naked.

Well, they did. Most of the club dissented to the naked part of it, just as most of the world would, I guess. But Linda was right. They found among the cyclists who agreed, the core of their town. A few of us were among that cycle club, Dawn Marie and me included.

That's another scene worth re-enacting, I think. Let me set the scene. We're in Atlanta in 1969 – and David and Linda are about to make their big promotion chat. A bicycle club of about 20, all of us over 30, have been riding for 20 miles or so. If you look, you can see us, resting on a grass knoll beside a deserted parking lot. It's a business offices complex and it's Saturday. That's why no one is working.

Scene 4: Grass Knoll in Atlanta

(The scene is a grass knoll on a slight incline outside a business office complex parking lot – save one or two lonely vehicles parked clearly away from the building, implying they do not belong to the office complex. All participants are on the grass knoll with their bicycles parked in the parking lot below. Some will be standing. Others, sitting.

Characters: David and Linda (married). John and Sue (married). Danny and Betty (living together). Biggie and Nancy (married). Singles: Frank, Dawn Marie, Paul, Phil, Bob, Russ, Howard, Jason, Jenny, Carla, Ruth, and Judy)

Bob: It's sure a nice day.

Ruth: It certainly is.

John: How long you been ridin, Ruth?

Ruth: Off and on, I guess, since I was a kid.

John: That must be all of 10 years, then, huh?

Ruth: Lookin for a tip, John?

John: A little flattery doesn't hurt.

Ruth: (Smiling) How long have you been riding?

John: 20 years or so.

Ruth: Just out of curiosity, what's your best ride? I mean, your longest ride?

John: About 60 miles, maybe, though it's been years since I did that.

Ruth: How about you, Lindy? What's your longest ride?

Linda: I really don't know – a couple of hours worth, maybe 20 miles. David did 108, though, just last summer.

David: I'd like to try for 140 sometime, but it better be under the clouds when I do it. That 108 miles was under a hundred degree sun. I had to constantly stop and ask for water.

Nancy: Where did you do that, David?

David: On some country roads off of I-20 between Atlanta and Augusta.

Nancy: Why did you pick such a hot day to do it?

David: I didn't really. I just chose a day – and it turned out to be hot.

Russ: I never thought riding a bicycle could be so much fun. I have really gotten into it. It's nice riding alone, but it's better with company. That I must admit.

Linda: How long has this club been going?

Russ: Ask Biggie and Nancy. They started it.

Biggie: About 12 years, I guess.

David: What was your reason for starting it?

Nancy: Mostly for something to do. It almost didn't get started, though.

Linda: Why?

Nancy: I didn't see a railroad track jutting above a pavement we were riding about 13 years ago – and boy, did I take a spill! Broke an arm and was in a cast for a couple of months. Bad break it was. I guess it's a lot like getting bucked off a horse. I didn't get back in the saddle for over a year. But I did get back into it – and Biggie and I started this club about a year after my spill.

David: And you say you started it for something to do?

Biggie: Mostly. Nancy and I don't have any children; and we tend to have a lot of time on our hands.

Ruth: It's a good way to spend time, alright. It's a lot of fun and great exercise.

David: It's more than fun or exercise for me. It's an expression of freedom. We're free right now, but you're really free when you are riding without a stitch separating you from glorious Nature.

Ruth: You mean naked?

David: Yeah, naked!

Ruth: You've ridden naked? Where?

Linda: David and I do it every chance we get – especially on country roads early in the morning. I mean, you talk about freedom! Riding a bike naked is for David and I what driving a Mercedes is for a sports car enthusiast.

John: I think I'd rather drive a Mercedes.

David: To each, his own, John.

John: The only place I have any desire to go naked is taking a shower. I don't even go from the bedroom to the bathroom naked. I figure I owe it to the kids and Sue to be modest.

David: Why, John?

Sue: Because I don't want him to – and I'll thank you not to give him any ideas.

Linda: Come on, Sue. Why don't you want John to go naked?

Sue: It just happens to be lacking in dignity.

Frank: At least you didn't say, it's sinful. Lots of people believe that. I have always resented such a notion.

Russ: Me too, Frank. I tell you, nothing irritates me more than all these fundamentalists acting holier than thou.

David: And they don't have the truth in the first place. That's the amazing thing to me. They are the ignorant ones and they think they are the wise ones. I doubt that their Christ would agree with them. They are always invoking his name – and I'll bet you the real Christ wasn't anything like what they think he is.

Nancy: Do you think that Christ would be against riding bicycles naked, for instance?

John: I do. I think he would find it disgusting.

David: What proof do you have for that, John?

John: What proof do you have he would approve it?

David: None, but I don't need any. I don't need Christ and he doesn't need me.

Sue: Oh, you don't, huh?

David: No, I don't. Christ taught self-reliance, using your own talents, not crying, Lord, Lord!

Linda: Don't get us wrong, Sue. We believe in Christ, but we believe he believed that we should believe in ourselves. And we believe in the freedom to follow the dictates of your own conscience.

David: And we resent fundamentalists who feel they are dirty and sinful telling us who have integrity that we are bound to Hell.

Frank: Nothing aggravates me more. I mean I believe it's great to be moral and all, but you have to understand, morality is a personal thing.

Marie: It sure is, Frank. There is absolutely nothing more personal than morality because morality or being moral is only doing what you feel is right.

Frank: I couldn't agree with you more. (After a brief pause.) Do you really go naked, David, on your bicycle? I think that's great! No, I think that's fantastic!

Sue: I think it's disgusting.

Linda: Do you want to know why we do it, Sue?

Sue: Not particularly, but I think you're gonna tell me anyway.

Linda: Not if you don't want to hear. That's your choice.

Sue: I don't. John, let's go.

John: See you guys some other time. It's getting too heavy – and we don't like heavy. (They leave.)

Marie: I'm intrigued, Linda. Why do you go naked?

Linda: Salvation – pure and simple – salvation. My soul is at stake. Our souls are at stake.

David: The way we see it, Dawn – that is your name, isn't it?

Marie: Yes, Dawn Marie Jackson, but you can call me Dawn or Marie or Dawn Marie. I like Dawn Marie the best. My mother's name is Marie and my father's name is Don. I like being named after both of them.

David: Lovely name – and names!

Marie: Thanks!

David: Alright, Dawn Marie, being civilized is dangerous to your health in a way.

Marie: Why?

David: Because someday we're going to die and we're going to have to face that great beyond.

Linda: And what better way to prepare for going past life than loving it, living it fully, not denying it.

David: It just doesn't make any sense to deny it like we shouldn't enjoy life. Someday we're gonna die and when our souls are outside our bodies, looking down or looking back, I think we'll really be sorry we denied life and nakedness when we had the chance to love it.

Linda: Think about it, like you are a star when you die. Are you going to be dressed in robes then? You wouldn't fit in the Universe. Nothing is clothed in the Universe. Why should we as human be different?

David: Anyway, we go naked to prepare for death as well as to enjoy life. And when we die, it will be an experience of tremendous degree. Think about it! Life is done and your soul is alone and free outside your body. You look down and see your naked body lying

there. Won't that be nice? Think of the peace. You're a part of the wonderful Universe! You're a sister to the stars!

Linda: Now, look at the opposite, Dawn Marie. You lived your life civilized and wore clothes from birth to death. You're looking down at your clothed body, lying in a morgue. And all you'll be able to think of is – I denied life. I had the gift of life and I denied it. I had the gift of life and I betrayed it. I listened to the deaf who could not hear the sounds of Nature's symphony tell me I had no right to hear. I believed in perverts. I exulted in condemnation. Not a pretty picture, huh? What kind of future will you have? You can only hope that memory won't play as much a part because you won't have much in your bank of memory worth remembering. How sad! How terribly, terribly sad!

Marie: But no one knows for sure what will come after.

David: That's true, Dawn Marie, no one knows for sure. No one – not one single person living now knows for sure, including all the blind believers of a hundred and one prophets.

Linda: But a wise person makes plans based on probability.

Marie: So what do you think life after death probably is?

Linda: In so many ways, living naked.

Tammy: Oh, really? Why do you think that way?

Linda: What's death, Tammy?

Tammy: Death? I don't know. It's just not living, I guess.

Linda: True, but what happens when you die. I mean, what probably happens, especially to the soul?

Tammy: It is said the soul is judged.

Linda: Forget about what is said, Tammy. Is it wise to believe something just because others say it is true?

Tammy: Hardly. You can get into a lot of trouble doing that kind of thing, being blind and following the blind and all that.

David: Well said, Tammy. Well said!

Linda: Forgive me for badgering, but this is important. What probably happens to the soul after death?

Tammy: You asked me before. Now, I ask you. What is death?

David: Is it not leaving something?

Linda: Yeah, Tammy, isn't that true? At its most primitive definition, death is a process whereby one thing leaves another. Not only life leaves the body upon death, but the soul leaves the body upon death.

David: Accordingly, then, upon death, the soul is stripped of its temporary clothing; and that temporary clothing is the body.

Linda: Death, then, probably leaves the soul naked. Can't you say that?

Jenny: But it's a different nakedness.

Linda: Perhaps, but it's still nakedness. It's going without cover, without disguise.

David: Now considering that, the wise soul will go naked in life in order to prepare for nakedness after death.

Linda: What person likes to be shocked, Jenny? Surprised, yes, but not shocked. By not going naked in life, you are probably setting yourself up for a shock after death.

Jenny: Sorry, I don't follow.

Linda: It's all bound with the idea of having something thrust upon you, Jenny. In life, we don't like that, do we? We can handle things if we prepare ourselves to handle them, but we don't like things being thrust upon us. It's very, very difficult to react with grace when something is thrust upon us; and almost inevitably, we react with fear.

David: So it only makes sense to avoid having nakedness and a sense of judgment thrust upon you, upon death. No one knows when they are going to die. Zap, you're there – very often totally out of the blue. It only makes sense to prepare for nakedness by accepting it in life, before death.

Tammy: That's a smart thought. I wonder if judgment is nothing more than having to face the truth?

Jenny: Nakedness is judgment?

Tammy: Don't you think?

Frank: I do. I think that's a good definition of it. People live their lives thinking judgment will come from someone else.

Tammy: And in reality, it may be the shock of having to face the truth, after living life desperately to avoid it. You live life terrified of nakedness and death strips you bare – or probably strips you bare, as you suggest, Linda. Then you have nowhere to run – nowhere to hide.

Linda: You're probably right, Tammy. Judgment is probably nothing more than not being able to hide or run from the truth. It's thrust upon you. It's there; and you have no way to deny it. What better way, then, to prepare for death and avoid a shocking judgment, your own judgment, than to go through life fully exposed and naked? It won't matter much if you are stripped naked in death if you live your life that way. And what a sense of continuity must accompany you if you can ease from one naked state to another.

Ruth: You're gambling with eternity on that one, kids.

Linda: Not at all, in comparison to you, Ruth. You are the one who is playing against the odds. Is it likely that a person who died rather than judge anyone is going to change and start judging? Is it likely that Jesus will judge anyone when he condemned the practice? And that's what you are counting on, isn't it? You are counting on Jesus judging me and putting me in my place, right?

Ruth: Oh, he'll judge you, alright. You can scoff at it, but you won't be able to escape it.

Linda: Judging others in terms of condemning them is for fools, Ruth. Was Christ a fool?

Frank: (mimicking) Look over there, Ruth! Can you see him? He's coming upon that big fluffy cloud. Can you see him now? Look there! What's that he has on? A white robe?

Ruth: A white robe of righteousness.

David: If he has a robe of righteousness on, Ruth, he has to be naked. You can't have one without the other. Why would Christ need to cover himself? Has he something to be ashamed of? If so, he ain't Christ because according to your own definition, Christ is sinless. Why, then, would he come covering himself? But as he stands there naked and sinless, Ruth, do you think he would have you do otherwise?

Ruth: I am not sinless.

Linda: Then you should go clothed. Indeed, if you feel that way, it's right for you; but David and I go naked because we, like Christ, are sinless – and like it would be for Christ, nakedness is right for us. Our nakedness is an expression of our integrity and, if you will, our righteousness.

Tammy: Is nakedness necessarily righteousness?

David: Only if it's chosen, Tammy, only if it's chosen. Somebody who goes naked because they are forced to go naked will do so in shame. Going naked without purpose is not being free. Nakedness by itself doesn't mean much. It's only if you choose it deliberately and choose to love it that it's good.

Ruth: So if it's so good, why aren't you naked now?

Linda: As a matter of fact, that's why we are here today. We would like you to try it with us. You can't judge what you haven't tried.

David: You have to experience nakedness, purposeful nakedness, to know it. You'll never know freedom, and we think, purpose, until you've gone naked and until you go naked consistently.

Ruth: You're crazy! I am getting away from you! I think you have a devil! Suggesting I get naked with you – you must be out of your mind!

David: You will find out if I have a devil after you die, but I will bet you probabilities, Ruth, that I'll be free and you won't be.

Ruth: I don't want to be free.

David: Congratulations, Sweetheart, you're not. You may take freedom lightly. I do not. And you who are not free when you die – who's to say that without the benefit of choice, the soul won't be forced into a kind of limbo, just hanging in there with no way to move about for lack of freedom – kind a like staring out into space and seeing nothing but a general gray mist.

Jenny: That's a gruesome thought – limbo forever. Surely not.

David: It's a possibility that I wouldn't dare risk myself.

Tammy: You mean you think we may lack the ability to adjust? I agree with Jenny. That is a gruesome thought.

Linda: Isn't it, though? That ought to be enough to scare us into living naked, and in a very real way, without sin.

Russ: I don't follow. Why wouldn't the soul be able to adjust?

David: Because the option to choose nakedness will be no more. Death makes us naked and there will be no choice to it. If you haven't chosen it before death, it may be too late to enjoy it after death because it will no longer be a matter of choice and freedom.

Linda: What experience have you had in life, Russ, where you really enjoyed something you did not choose?

David: Don't you think it's the freedom to choose it that makes it lovable? If you are given a delicious chocolate pie and commanded to eat it, do you think you will enjoy it near as much as you would have if you could have chosen between deserts?

Linda: Once again, if something is thrust upon you, normally you will lack an impulse to love it – even though it may be good for you.

David: Keep in mind, we're speaking probabilities. We have no reason to suspect that the conditions for freedom and enjoyment in this life are not also the conditions for freedom and enjoyment in the next life. Since being able to choose in this life is so important, it can be assumed it is in the next life as well. So, we should choose while we can. We can't choose nakedness in the next life because it won't be an option – or may not be an option. We will – or may – have to go naked. If you don't love nakedness before death, you won't be able to love it after death because you will lack the freedom to not have it – or again, may lack the freedom to not have it.

Linda: So, you see, it's greatly a matter of exercising your options now while you have options. If you choose it now because it is good and right and enjoy it now, in all likelihood, you will continue to enjoy it when you can no longer choose it. But if you don't choose it now and don't enjoy it now, in all likelihood, you will not be able to enjoy it later when it is thrust upon you. If it is a burden now, it will be so later as well.

David: That makes sense to us.

Ruth: What about Jesus?

David: What about him?

Ruth: Jesus will come for me.

Linda: That's the difference between us, Ruth. You will be waiting for Jesus to come and get you. David and I will be going with Christ – along with all of those who are willing to go naked while the choice is still theirs. So, now is a good time to pose it. Those of you who like the scenario of nakedness we have presented – we would like you to join us.

Tammy: And go naked?

Linda: Yes.

Tammy: Where and when?

Linda: Here and now. Let's ride naked for an hour or so and think about why we are doing it, give it purpose.

Nancy: Even if I were to agree with you philosophically, I am not sure it would be worth the risk.

Linda: What risk?

Nancy: Of getting arrested.

Linda: You're right, Nancy. If we thought we would be arrested, we probably wouldn't do it.

Ruth: Some principles. Sounds like you're nothing more than a couple of hypocrites to me. You think it's right, yet you wouldn't do it if you thought you'd get arrested.

Linda: Freedom is relative, Ruth. We would not be free to go naked at all in prison. At least in our homes, we are free to go naked. Some freedom is better than none at all.

Nancy: Why, then, do you suggest we go naked here and now? Why take the risk in an unfriendly world?

Linda: Because it's worth the risk, Nancy. The chances of our getting arrested are only as good as our chances of being seen. It's Saturday and it's not likely anyone will show up at this office complex. David and I have been reviewing this area for just that reason for several months. We used to live just a few blocks from here. So we know the area pretty well. We have ridden our bikes naked a good deal in this parking lot. If we thought we were taking much of a chance, we wouldn't suggest it.

Jenny: It's broad daylight.

Linda: No guarantees, Jenny. We could get caught. We could be seen, but from our review of the area in past weeks, it's not likely. Therefore, because the risk of being seen is low, the opportunities of freedom are high. It is unlikely anyone will see us.

Jenny: If you are so certain, Linda, I guess I'll take a chance.

Biggie: I'm not even sure I'd go naked if I knew no one was around. I'm not even sure I have a soul to worry about securing freedom for an afterlife. Na. I think this ole lad will be pushing on.

Nancy: I do believe I have a soul, but I'm with my Hubby. I'll be leaving with him, but, Linda, I am curious. I'd like to stay in touch – and maybe, later.

Linda: Anytime, Nancy, Anytime.

Biggie: OK, Nancy and I are going. Anyone else coming with us?

Ruth: Are you kidding? If I stay, I'll be burned from the Hell fire these lunatics are lighting.

Jason: I have no objection on moral grounds, but I'll be leaving too.

Phil: It's a bunch of nonsense to me. Ain't no way I'll be sticking around.

Judy: Me too.

Tammy: I'm not going to strip, but I'd like to stay and ride. You don't have to strip to stay, do you?

Linda: Of course not. We'd be delighted to have you ride with us, naked or otherwise.

Tammy: Then I'm staying.

Russ: So am I.

Howard: Me too.

Frank: This is the first opportunity I've had in a long time to do something truly sensible. I have a feeling the angels are getting out their harps. (Looking upwards.) Hello, Heaven, you can finally tap the wine you've been saving for this day!

Ruth: Yeah, the wine of wrath – God's wrath.

Nancy: (Impatiently) Come on, Ruth, let's go.

(All leave except David, Linda, Frank, Marie, Tammy, Jenny, Russ, and Howard)

Linda: Joining us, Dawn Marie?

Marie: With clothes, yes. I'm kind a shy. I am not sure I could ride naked, but I do like the idea. Give me a little time to get used to it. OK?

Linda: Of course.

David: (Undressing) Freedom is the first name for a full name that ends in Love. You can't have love without freedom; and chosen nakedness is the ultimate of freedom. Being a child of the Universe and liking it – loving it. That's real sanctity, I think. That's the only real gratitude too. Anything less is a mockery of acceptance. Freedom is the first name. Gratitude is the second name. And Love or Belonging is the last name. Is not love and belonging the objective of a happy soul?

Frank: I'm a believer, David! You bet, I am! I think I have always been a believer, but I have a feeling that today I'm beginning a ride that will take me to the stars!

Song: *Freedom*

(David, Linda, Frank, Jenny, and Howard undress while Tammy, Marie, and Russ begin riding around the parking lot fully clothed. David and Linda will sing the song. Linda will start while she is undressing. David will repeat the song once the ride has begun. After David finishes, there will be a musical interlude, during which Marie, first, and then, Tammy, will overcome their reluctance to strip. Marie will stop riding, as if considering the action, then ride again, then stop again and undress. Tammy will follow Marie's lead without hesitation once Marie is riding naked. Frank and Dawn Marie will each take a verse, but David will sing the conclusion alone. No hard and fast, here, though – actors should be free to follow their hearts and sing along as they wish.)

**I want freedom in my life – freedom in my soul.
Freedom to be right – freedom to be a fool.
There's no way that I can be what it is that you call free
if I have to wear the garb of your society.
I want freedom for you, Dear, freedom for you, Sir.
And if you're not free to be, then none of us are free.**

**I want the freedom to ride my bike without any clothes,
without the charge of indecency directed at my soul.
I want the freedom to do what I feel my soul should do,
and you ain't got the right to tell me I can't lose.
I want freedom for you, Sir, freedom for you, Dear.
And if you're not free to be, then none of us are free.**

Scene 5: Front of Courthouse in SUMMER TOWN

(Following the bike ride scene in Atlanta, the scene will go back to SUMMER TOWN. Frank will be sitting in a rustic type chair, tilted against a wall. Bike riders will be seen on a street in front, as well as other traffic and a few pedestrians, including an old man and woman crossing the street. One will have the use of a cane and the other will assist with an arm hold. Frank will be talking to the camera from his leaned back position.)

Frank: Well, Friends, that's how I first came to know David and Linda. The police never showed either. Biggie and Nancy worried for nothing – at least on that day. David tells of an earlier experience, however, when he was riding without clothes when the police did show and David was hoisted off to the Atlanta City Jail in the city's finest paddy wagon. He was charged with public indecency. David says it was really a RWC charge – riding without clothes. There was no indecency to it, but then that's the crux of the misunderstanding about public nakedness, isn't it? Unnatural is decent. Natural is

indecent. Rather shameful, huh? It would seem like the world has got things turned around.

Anyway, at his hearing the following Monday, no witnesses showed and Judge Barbara Harrold dismissed the charge. On the day he was caught and charged with a RWC charge, as David would call it, David was riding in an empty parking lot, too, but someone did notice and evidently complained. So, Biggie and Nancy had a right to be concerned. It just didn't happen the day that we rode.

All of us who rode naked that day, except Russ, later joined David and Linda in founding our town. Here we are, 17 years later, a thriving democracy of several thousand. And we're kind of a pure democracy too. From the very start, we agreed to a real democracy. A majority vote is required on any vote that affects us all. We do not leave it up to representatives to vote. We vote collectively on every issue, from an issue like – should we put in a lavatory at the city park – to how should our town delegates vote on any issue outside the rule of our democracy where delegate voting is the process. Our delegates don't represent themselves – they represent us. So we vote as to how they should vote, then send them off to do it.

We'd like to see the day that counties and states and the entire nation – and eventually maybe even the world – would require a democratic vote on every issue before the various legislatures. Wouldn't it be grand to say that no law can be made without the specific approval of a majority of constituents. If every issue had to be put to a vote, then, number 1, fewer issues would come before the legislatures and waste our time on nit picky type issues, and, number 2, resulting decisions would truly be democratic. Isn't that what a grand ole democracy should strive for?

The way it is, the people governed by law often have no protection against ridiculous laws made by a handful who very easily could actually represent a minority of constituents. That's tragic in a so called democracy. We have stayed fairly free as a country in America so far, in spite of legislators not being bound to vote the will of their constituency, but can we continue to be free? Will someday a bright, devious, band of thieves gain control and shut down our right to be a democracy? Then our only recourse would be submission to a new dictatorship or another revolution to recover what we lost. It seems to me we can prevent that only if we wake up and live as a true democracy now and not just lazily resort to let a select few decide our destinies. With the advent of computers, there's no reason why every law can't be the actual decision of an enlightened majority. Maybe that's something to think about, huh?

But enough of that. Let's go shopping.

Scene 6: Clothing store on main street in SUMMER TOWN

(The scene will be in a clothing store. Frank will be browsing suits. Julie (17) will pass by, briefly exchanging conversation with Frank at the suit rack. Frank will follow her to the next aisle at her request to help her pick out a dress from a dress rack.)

Frank: (to the camera) Sometime I have to go outside the city where clothes are still required. Do you think I'd look good in blue? Outside of the wonderful color of flesh, I guess it's my favorite color. (Julie appears) Why, Julie, it's good to see you. Looking for something to wear?

Julie: Yes, Judge Frank, I am. Tom and I are planning to go to a dance in Atlanta tonight.

Frank: There's a dance here, nightly, you know.

Julie: Yes, I know, but I'd like to see what it's like to go dancing where everyone is clothed.

Frank: I can understand that.

Julie: Actually, there's a band playing at a place called "Juniper's Triangle" in Atlanta that's the rage. That's really why we're going, although I am sincerely curious about attending a dance where everyone is dressed.

Frank: Well, enjoy it, Julie.

Julie: I intend to, but what dress should I buy? What color do you think fits me, Judge?

Frank: I'm afraid I can't help you there, Julie. You're on your own, Little Lady.

Julie: Oh, come on, Judge, you can help a little, can't you?

Song:

I'll Put on a Dress Tonight

I'll put on a dress tonight – and Tom and I will go to town.

I'll put on a dress tonight – but why do men have to act like clowns?

**They say we're living in a land that's free – but if I were to go without
they'd point their fingers, cry insanity – but the real insane are among their crowd.**

**I'll put on a dress tonight – and I'll try to enjoy,
but no one will know my true life – and many will tease like I am their toy.**

**Oh, what dress should I put on – the red one or maybe the green?
It won't matter to my friend, Tom – he'd prefer to see the one who is me.**

**But I'll put on a dress tonight – and I'll go in a disguise.
I'll put on a dress tonight – and go a stranger in the night.**

**Why, I wonder, don't people want to know – who they really are?
Why must they hide in shadows – and compete in darkness and in war?**

**I'll put on a dress tonight – because the world is afraid
of all that's good and lovely – and of all that God has made.**

**I'll put on a dress tonight – and Tom and I will go to town,
but I can't help but cry a little – why must men act like clowns?**

Scene 6B: Cashier and store front

(After the song, sung by Julie, Julie pays for the dress. There should be an extemporaneous exchange between Julie and the cashier. Frank will be seen chatting with another person in the store. After paying the cashier, Julie takes her selection and leaves the store, bumping into Terry (12), her next door neighbor. Terry will be going into the pet store next door.)

Terry: Excuse me, Julie. Sorry.

Julie: That's alright, Terry. Hey, I'm heading home to leave off this dress. You heading home too?

Terry: Not yet, but in a minute, I will. Mom asked me to pick up some bird seed at the pet store. Will you wait for me?

Julie: Sure, Terry, go ahead. I'll wait for you.

Terry: OK. Don't go.

Julie: I won't.

(Terry goes into the pet store and Julie fingers her new dress. A boy, her age, Rick, happens by and starts to chat.)

Rick: Hi, Julie.

Julie: Hi, Rick.

Rick: See you at the dance tonight?

Julie: No, not tonight, but I'll be there tomorrow night.

Rick: (Eyeing the dress) Pretty dress.

Julie: Do you think so? Tom and I are going to a dance in Atlanta tonight. The Jason Trio are playing – and you know how I feel about Johnny Jason. He makes that sax sing, doesn't he?

Rick: I'm more a guitar man myself, but I guess he's alright. Hey, how come you're going with Tom?

Julie: Cause he offered and I like him. Why not?

Rick: Would you go with me sometime?

Julie: Maybe.

Rick: Well, then maybe I'll ask you sometime. I have to be going. See you at tomorrow night's dance.

Julie: OK, Rick. Bye!

(Julie waits for awhile for Terry, waving to several girls walking by on the opposite side of the street. Terry comes out with a bag of seed.)

Terry: Got it. Thanks for waiting.

Julie: That's OK. Was glad to.

(They walk. Scene ends.)

Scene 7: Julie's Neighborhood

(Julie and Terry will be approaching home.)

Terry: Julie, can I ask you something?

Julie: Sure.

Terry: You've changed.

Julie: It's growing up, Terry. You'll be there soon.

Terry: Do you like it?

Julie: Are you kidding? I love it!

Terry: (Looking at Julie's pubic area) Why does the hair grow there? How come adults have hair and kids don't? What makes it grow?

Julie: I don't know. I'm not sure anybody does. It's just the way it is. (They approach Terry's house. Grampa Owens is weeding out front in a marigold patch) There's your Grampa, Terry. Why don't you ask him? Hi, Mr. Owens!

Grampa: Hi, Julie. Nice day for a walk, huh?

Julie: Absolutely great, Sir. Terry and I were just talking.

Grampa: I'm sure of that. What about? Or is it personal?

Julie: No, not personal. Terry wanted to know why I've changed.

Terry: Yeah, Grampa. How come she grew hair around her vagina? How come she got bigger?

Grampa: Well, Terry, that's the biggie now, huh? Why the hair? Why did her breasts get bigger? Her breasts are getting bigger because it is Nature's way of preparing a lady for nursing a baby. About the hair, who knows? Certainly not me. But, son, you should thank your lucky stars you live in a world where you can notice such things. Isn't that right, Julie?

Julie: Yes Sir, that's right.

Grampa: Terry, my boy, lots of kids your age aren't allowed to notice such things. Natural growth is kept from the eyes of most kids – most adults too, for that matter.

Terry: Why, Grampa?

Grampa: Because some folks think it's sinful to go naked.

Terry: But we don't, do we, Grampa?

Grampa: No, we don't. Your Gramma and I went naked the whole 40 years of our marriage. I think I can honestly say, we never knew sin in all that time. Sin is not the consequent of going naked. Sin is the result of misuse. It's violating design. It's going against the sacred pattern of Nature, my boy. It's planting seeds where you don't want them to grow. It's uprooting seeds that have started to grow. That's true sin, my boy. Going naked is no sin, but doing things without respect for Natural Design is. Your Gramma and I, God bless her soul, never played gardener to later rip up what we planted.

We played a lot and played with each other a lot, but for 40 years we were good gardeners and not unfaithful to the Grand Design. I'm mighty proud of that. Do you understand what I am talking about, Terry? Do you, Julie?

Terry: I understand, Grampa.

Grampa: What do you understand?

Terry: I shouldn't rip out the marigolds, Grampa. I should let them grow.

Grampa: And if you don't want any marigolds?

Terry: Then I shouldn't plant them in the first place.

Grampa: That's right, my boy, that's right. And what if you were to plant too many marigolds by mistake? What would you do then?

Terry: I don't know, Grampa.

Grampa: Maybe you could let them grow and later dig them up and give them to someone who doesn't have any marigolds. Do you suppose?

Terry: I think so, Grampa. I think that's what I would do.

Grampa: How about you, Julie?

Julie: May I talk frankly in front of Terry.

Grampa: Of course, my dear. Terry knows all that marigold stuff is about sex. He can handle whatever he hears as any kid can; and what he can't hear, it's no big deal, he doesn't have to handle it either.

Julie: Mr. Owens, I must admit I'm a little confused about sex right now. I mean I want to have a baby, but not now. But then I don't want to hold back my emotions either. How do you control it? What's a girl to do? It's all so confusing.

Grampa: What's a guy to do, too, Julie? It's just as confusing for him. You will just have to talk to your fellow and work it out with him.

(During this conversation between Julie and Mr. Owens, Terry should stay, working the marigold patch of his Grampa and offering appropriate curiosity glances now and then at Grampa and Julie.)

Julie: Can I ask you a personal question, Sir?

Grampa: Of course, my dear. I encourage it. That's how we can work things out – by asking those who already have.

Julie: Were you and Mrs. Owens very active? I mean, did you enjoy sex?

Grampa: You bet we did, Julie. Maggie and I were like two violins playing together. We just weren't all that different. We never had a quarrel about sex because we saw things so much alike.

Julie: And how was that?

Grampa: I'd say, for the most part, we both respected Nature and Natural Design. If we had any question about what we should do in sexual things, we just looked at the great teacher, Nature, for the answers. Julie, Nature is a fabulous teacher. Just look at how she handles sex through other animal species and follow the pattern. That's what Maggie and I believed.

Julie: So, what does Nature say about when to and when not to – have intercourse, I mean?

Grampa: Look for yourself, Julie. Watch the animals and see for yourself. You may see them differently than Maggie and I.

Julie: But how did you see them?

Grampa: We saw them as having intercourse only when conception is intended. We saw them as having intercourse only to procreate.

Julie: And so you only had sex when you wanted kids?

Grampa: No. But we never had sex and flushed away our seeds after we did either. There were times we had intercourse without intending conception, but not many – until after Maggie went through her change of life. Then we had intercourse a lot. That's one thing about life, Julie. You can have it all in time. When we were young, Maggie and I chose to be more reserved, working with Nature and never against it. We had a wonderful time, being a partner with Nature. We wanted sex a little more than we had it – in terms of intercourse – but we respected intercourse too much to have to prevent or ignore its natural conclusions. For us, it was simple. Don't plant seeds that can grow if you don't want them to grow. I guess we're back to the marigold patch again.

(Let Terry smile at Grampa here.)

Julie: Didn't you ever use rubbers – or other contraceptives?

Grampa: Are you kidding? A rubber suit on my penis? No thanks! You can understand that, Julie. Our kind here in SUMMER TOWN enjoy life without clothes. If I'm not

wearing any other kind of clothes, I'm certainly not going to clothe my penis. That's for those who think clothes in the first place – not me – and not my Maggie. I want your nakedness, she would tell me, and I don't want to put up with an awkward rubber suit.

Julie: When you put it that way, I can understand. I don't think I will allow them either.

Grampa: For what reason? To keep from getting pregnant? You can control that with your mind like Maggie and I did. A little respect will go a long way. And without respect, life is not worth a plug nickel anyway.

Julie: So when you weren't having kids, Mr. Owens, what did you and Mrs. Owens do for sex?

Grampa: We caressed each other a lot, kissed each other a lot, without reservation. It was great between my lady and I, Julie. She'd caress me to orgasm one time – then I'd do it for her another time. Then there would be times – many of them – that we would caress each other to orgasm. And then we would fall asleep in each others arms.

Julie: I think I want it that way for me too.

Grampa: And you will have it, my dear. I'm quite sure of that.

Julie: Really? Why?

Grampa: Because you're wise enough to experiment and ask questions – as you are proving with this little chit chat about sex. You are already showing great promise. I know because I recognize maturity and sensibility when I see it. And you, Julie, are as sensible a 17 year old as I have ever known. Go for the wisdom, my dear. Go for the wisdom.

Julie: What do you think is the ultimate wisdom, Mr. Owens?

Grampa: That's easy, Julie – gratitude.

Julie: Gratitude?

Grampa: It's been my experience in life that nothing really counts in the end but gratitude. I don't care if you massage yourself on a subway – or have intercourse on a ferris wheel – or make passionate love in your bedroom – nothing really matters but gratitude, being thankful for what you do and for what you have. If you do something with gratitude, it will be meaningful. If you are without gratitude, then I don't care if you have just cured a thousand people of cancer, it's worthless.

Julie: Worthless?

Grampa: That's right, Julie, worthless. It's not what you do. It's the attitude with which you do it that counts. Gratitude is the single rule for sanctity. Nothing else matters. Being grateful is what happiness and peace of soul are all about.

Terry: I'm grateful, Grampa.

Grampa: You think you understand gratitude, Son?

Terry: Is it more than saying thanks?

Grampa: No.

Julie: And you believe gratitude is also equivalent to peace of soul?

Grampa: Yes.

Julie: I think you're right, Sir. When I'm unhappy, it's when I'm ungrateful. And it's also true that when I'm happy, I'm also feeling thankful. Being at peace with the Universe is really just being happy with yourself, isn't it?

Grampa: Without question, my girl, without question. But I would like to put prime importance on being at peace with the Universe, being thankful for the Universe; and then because I'm part of the Universe, I'm at peace with myself. And if I am at peace with the Universe, I'm also at peace with God – or the Divine or the Eternal or the Infinite or whatever you want to call it. Whatever God is, Julie – and Terry – He or She or It is in it. God's in everything – bar nothing. Everything, then, is Divine and worthy. How can it be otherwise?

Julie: I guess it can't.

Grampa: It's pretty basic, isn't it, Julie? People go to war to fight for God, thinking He is out there to be fought for – and they will be rewarded by a kind old man who is strictly outside themselves. It's a pity. God is not outside them in the first place. He can't be because He's inside of everything because He's everywhere. They waste their lives looking to be redeemed, when all the time, they were never lost. But if a man thinks he's lost, in effect, he is. It's a pity. How can you take God out of Nature? But there are billions who have it in their minds. God is not outside of Nature. He's inside of Naturalings and outside of Naturalings. Because God is in Nature, Nature is Divine. Live like Nature is Divine, Julie and Terry, with an attitude of Divine Naturism, and you will always be at peace with the Universe and be grateful and happy.

Song:
Be at Peace with the Universe

(Grampa will sing with either Julie or Terry or both. During the interlude, Grampa and Julie, then Julie and Terry, will dance.)

Grampa:

**Be at peace with the universe, and everything within.
Be at peace with the universe, and you'll not know sin.
To be at peace with the universe, accept this as a clue,
Peace can only be if you're free – and peace depends on you.
Peace can only be if you're free – and peace depends on you.**

**Be happy with the universe, and everything within.
Be happy with the universe, and you'll always win.
To be happy with the universe, listen to this advice.
Happy can only be if you're free – and you see with your own eyes.
Happy can only be if you're free – and you see with your own eyes.**

**So, open your eyes, My Friend, and look
Life should be an open book – just sit back and read.
The pages of Nature are there for you.
Be in awe and you'll find truth in the grass – the sand and the sea.**

Student:

**I'll be at peace with the universe, and everything within.
I'll be at peace with the universe, and I'll not know sin.
I'll be at peace with the universe, the path I clearly see.
Peace can only be if I'm free – and peace depends on me.
Peace can only be if I'm free – and peace depends on me.**

**I'll be happy with the universe, and everything within.
I'll be happy with the universe, and I'll always win.
I'll be happy with the universe, thanks for your advice.
Happy can only be if I'm free – and I see with my own eyes.
Happy can only be if I'm free – and I see with my own eyes.**

(Instrumental interlude – with dancing)

***Grampa:* Repeat third verse.**

***Student:* Repeat both your verses.**

Scene 7B: Julie's neighborhood – continued

(Following the song, Grampa, Julie, and Terry will come together for a hug. Then while all three are standing, looking at one another, Terry will begin the next sequence of conversation.)

Terry: Grampa, tell me about Gramma. Where do you suppose she is?

Grampa: It's hard to say, my boy – out there some place, although maybe she's here right now. I think I can say for sure, though, she's not rocking away in some heavenly rocking chair some place. She's probably riding the wings of a bird. There, that bird (pointing to a bird). Maybe she's riding its wings. Who knows?

Terry: How come you're always visiting the cemetery then, Grampa, if she's not out there?

Grampa: Well, my boy, the way I figure it, she might visit there too from time to time. I don't suppose her soul stays at the cemetery, like a lot of folks act, but I do think she may stop by to pay respects to her bodily remains.

Julie: Why, Mr. Owens, would you think she would do that?

Grampa: Maggie was a person who loved her body a lot, Julie. She loved living as she didn't mind dying. Just out of pure gratitude I think she'd be one to come back and visit her old temple – leastwise the bones of that temple. Maybe that's why I go to the stone so often. Maybe I think she'll be visiting sometime the same time I'm there.

Julie: How will you know she's there, Sir?

Grampa: I won't.

Julie: Then why keep going?

Grampa: To keep the love going, I guess. Some day I'll die too and be buried beside her. Maybe we'll rendezvous there with our souls and we can both go riding the wings of a bird together.

Julie: That's sweet, Sir.

Grampa: Julie, after I have joined Maggie, maybe sometime you'll look up and see two birds, chirping on a nearby branch. Maybe Maggie and I will be riding their wings – and we've just come to say hello.

Julie: You sure did love her a lot, didn't you, Sir?

Grampa: I love her a lot, Julie. You don't stop loving somebody just because they die if you loved them before. Maggie and I have a pact. I expected to go before she did, but life is full of surprises – including death. It's OK. She caught the bird wing express before I. Like a bird in the heavens, she used to say. Love is like a bird in the heavens. Maggie, my love, I can hear you singing.

(The prerecorded song of *Like a Bird in the Heavens* plays while the cameras capture a whole array of bird scenes, mixed with shots of Grampa, Julie, and Terry.)

Song:
Like a Bird in the Heavens

Refrain:

**Like a bird in the heavens, I'm free to be.
Like a bird in the heavens, I can fly to thee.
Like a bird in the heavens, I'm in love, you see
For love is just being me.**

**Look at the little birds. See how they fall? In seconds, they learn about flight.
There's a lesson so clear. It should bring a tear.
Man's still at war with his fears of the night. Refrain.**

Bridge:

**Oh, how I love all the birds of the air – no less than I love ole sister Moon.
So, please don't blame me if I follow their lead –
and act like the whole world is my living room.**

**I don't need a servant - tending my needs.
I don't need the world feeling sorry for me.
I don't need your glasses - to let me see.
Just set me free – to be little me. *Refrain, followed by Bridge.***

(Then repeat “**I don't need a servant**” verse, concluding with *Refrain* twice)

(Following the song, the cameras will focus on the three watching the birds. Then Julie will turn to Grampa.)

Julie: Mr. Owens, do you believe in Heaven?

Grampa: Do you mean, do I believe in happiness? Of course, but let me put it this way. I believe that if you're happy one place, you'll be happy in another too. In that way, yes, I do believe in Heaven – but there can be Heaven after death only if there is Heaven before it. If you're not happy with life – and with life in the body – then why should you think you can be happy after life? It doesn't make sense – least not to me.

(Terry's dad calls out that it's time for dinner. Grampa signals with a wave that they heard his call. Then he returns attention to Julie.)

Grampa: Heaven is happiness. Hell is unhappiness, Julie. That's all there is to it. My Maggie! You can bet she's in Heaven. She was a very happy lady. (Grampa pauses, then continues). Well, my friends, we have been summoned for dinner. We better go and eat. Would you like to join us, Julie?

Julie: Thanks! I think maybe I will. Let me go tell Mom and Dad and take this dress to the house.

(Julie goes to her house. Grampa and Terry go into Terry's.)

Scene 8: Dinner with the Owens

(The scene will be a living room and dining room with the Owens family.)

Terry: Grampa asked Julie to join us, Dad.

Steve: That's good. Is she going to?

Terry: She wanted to take something to her house first – and tell her parents.

Steve: Mom, we need to set a place for Julie. She'll be joining us.

Janet: Yes, I know, Steve. I heard. I'll get a place setting for her while you make room for her at the table.

Becky: I get to sit next to her.

Steve: Alright, Becky. (They maneuver the setting to fit Julie in. Then Steve directs a question to Grampa Owens.) Dad, what do you think of the amendment limiting a man to two terms?

Grampa: Under the current two-party system, I think it's a good idea.

Steve: What's a good idea – the amendment or the attempt to repeal?

Grampa: The amendment, Son. Now, if this country would truly be a democracy, it wouldn't be a good idea. But we're no democracy. We're a republic; and there's a lot of difference. The American Republic sold out democracy a long time ago when it approved a two-party system.

(Julie joins them at the table with usual welcomes)

Steve: Yeah, I know how you feel about that, Dad. I also know how you'd change things.

Julie: How would you change things, Mr. Owens?

Grampa: I'd make it a democracy, that's what – not a republic. That's what it should have been in the first place. That fellow, Frank. He's got the right idea.

Julie: What's his idea?

Grampa: All elections should be determined by three rounds of voting and determined entirely by popular vote. The first round would be open to anyone who wants to be a candidate. In fact, with computers as an aid, we could make the first round entirely a write in round. Each voter could submit a choice for an office, with the top four vote getters competing in a round 2 vote, which would elect a final two for a final runoff. If we would do that, it would be more democratic and then we shouldn't limit a person to two terms. The people should decide such things. But under the current system, a party can be too powerful and opposing candidates might not have a fair chance. The Country should ban the two-party system and let it be each man for himself.

Julie: Or each woman for herself.

Grampa: I stand corrected. Pass the vegetables, please.

Becky: Julie, you going to the dance tonight?

Julie: Not the one here, Becky, but I will be going to a dance.

Janet: Oh, really, Julie, where at?

Julie: Atlanta. Tom and I are going to dance to a fantastic sax player.

Janet: You're going to dance to a saxophone?

Julie: Oh, he's not alone. He's part of a band.

Janet: I see. It's getting so I don't care to go to Atlanta anymore. There's too much crime. A woman's not safe on the streets. You be careful, Julie.

Julie: I will, Mrs. Owens. I mean, we will.

Grampa: That's another thing I'd change if I had the say – the way we handle criminals. If a man willingly murders another, he should have to take his own life too.

Julie: Take his own life? You mean, commit suicide?

Grampa: Call it what you wish, but it's justice without turning the rest of us into murderers ourselves. We shouldn't have to kill a killer. He should have to kill himself.

Janet: Now, Dad, how would you do that?

Grampa: I'd give a convicted killer an orange and an apple, maybe a steak, twenty gallons of water, and a cyanide pill. Then I'd lock him in a comfortable room for 40 days. That would be justice with mercy.

Janet: What if he survived the 40 days?

Grampa: Then, I'd set him free. But if he's convicted again of another murder after his release, I'd shut him up in a room with an orange, an apple, and a cyanide pill forever. There would be no third chance.

Steve: Wouldn't that be kind of cruel, Dad?

Grampa: More justice than cruelty, Son. Maybe Julie and Becky could walk the streets of Atlanta after dark and not have to fear for their lives. I mean if a man knows he will have to slit his own throat, he'd be less likely to slit someone else's.

Steve: Maybe.

Becky: Why do people have to kill one another anyway?

Janet: I don't know, Becky. Some people just have killing in their souls, I guess. Who knows what makes them tick?

Steve: Grampa, maybe you do have the right idea, but with a little twist. Instead of shutting up a killer with an easy way to die, shut him up with whatever weapon he used to kill his victim. That would be even more effective, I think. You suggested it. If a man slits another's throat, then shut him in a room with a knife. If a man strangles another, shut him in a room with a rope and let him hang himself. If he shoots another, shut him in a room with a gun. They could kill themselves, starve to death, or try to survive - if as you suggest they be shut up for some period of time for a first offense. At least, they would have a choice - something they denied their victims.

Julie: Kind a gruesome, Sir!

Steve: Killing is gruesome business, Julie. And what's more, falsely accusing another of a crime is equally gruesome. I mean if a man is convicted of falsely accusing another, he should have to undergo the same penalty that a falsely convicted man would have to suffer, or perhaps did suffer.

Grampa: I agree, Son.

Janet: How did we get off on this subject anyway?

Julie: Going to a dance in Atlanta is what brought it up.

Janet: I wonder why the whole world can't be as safe as SUMMER TOWN? Going to a dance here is a wonderfully free thing.

Becky: Julie, is Jimmy going to be at the dance tonight?

Julie: I think so. Do you like my brother, Becky?

Becky: Ah, he's kind a cute, I guess.

Julie: He thinks you're cute too.

Becky: Really? Did he say that?

Julie: Not outright, but he has hinted.

Becky: How? What did he say?

Julie: He said he thinks your mom makes a great peanut butter cookie.

Terry: What's that got to do with thinking Becky's cute?

Julie: Oh, it's just an indirect way of saying it. You'll find out.

Terry: You mean if some girl tells me that my mom bakes a great pie, she saying that she likes me?

Julie: Maybe.

(Of course, there are smiles where proper - and serious looks where proper - in any of this conversation. Let this scene end with a camera drawback while the diners are continuing to chatter amidst a lot of good hearted laughter. It matters not what is said, as long as it's light hearted and gay.)

Scene 9: The Park in SUMMER TOWN

(The scene will start with Frank walking his dogs by a park with a baseball game going on. The camera should show that it's late in the game. Frank will talk while the cameras switch among him, the dogs, the game, and other activity. A couple of boys will be wrestling; and maybe a couple of girls too. That would be refreshing. An older boy and girl should be sitting close to each other, watching the game too. If it can be worked in tactfully – and it can – there should be a scene of a couple engaging in affection on a

blanket. There should also be several bike riders going by. At the end of the scene, after Frank leaves, following his brief comments, cameras should focus again on the various activities. The scene should end with a fade out.)

Frank: That Grampa Owens is something else, isn't he? He and Maggie used to come here and watch the kids play a lot. Have you ever played baseball? I guess it was my favorite game as a kid, although I wasn't so lucky as these guys as to play it in the buff. What do you think? Do you suppose it would be more fun to play in the buff? Of course, if a ball hits you in the groin, it may not be so much fun, right? But personally, I think it's worth the risk.

Dawn Marie and I often come and watch the kids play. Sometimes we join them; and sometimes we play a little friendly tackle football too. And sometimes we will just sit here and hug and kiss a bit. Dawn Marie is really special to me. She's been after me to get married, but I've been reluctant until now. I don't want our wonderful relationship to get sour by getting too serious, if you know what I mean. To me, marriage should be playful, not serious. The last thing I want to do is to stand in front of some somber magistrate – like myself – (with a chuckle) and agree to be serious for the rest of my life.

But I have an idea that might work. I told Dawn Marie last night that I'd consent to get married, but only if it could be a playful type ceremony. So, I figure that maybe we can keep marriage playful if we let the playful bind it. You will see what I mean tomorrow.

Speaking of Dawn Marie, I'm already late. I'm supposed to be helping her set up tonight's dance. Most everyone you've met will be there tonight, including Julie and Tom. Maybe they will have something to say about last night's dance in Atlanta. So, I'll get over there and let you watch the frolics at the town park a bit. Go on now. Get down there with those kids and imagine what it must be like – frolicking in complete freedom. I'll see you later.

(He chuckles lightly, then calls his dogs and departs. The scene will end as earlier specified.)

Scene 10: The Dance

(The scene will be the tennis courts which serves for roller skating and dancing activities as well. The band will be comprised of male and female members, naked along with everyone else of course. Outside the tennis courts will be a barbecue area; and there will be considerable eating going on. Following a little extemporaneous activity, David will announce the beginning of the dance with the standard song used to start all their dances – *Let's Get Started*.)

David: Hey, everybody, it's time to get started with our jubilation exercises for the evening. Come on, Linda, my Wyoming Wonder, let's go!

Song:
Let's Get Started

1st Refrain:

**Let's get started to see a new world.
Let us look each other in the eye.
Let's get started to be a new world.
Let's find God. He's not so high – He's only sublime.**

**If God is in everything, then He's not just above us.
He's inside and outside the ring – So please tell me, what's the fuss?**

1st Refrain.

**If God is in everyone, why listen to a preacher
who sees a daughter less than a son – and claims he is a teacher?**

1st Refrain.

**If God is in the sand and leaves, why look for Him in a book,
a book that claims to part the seas – and drown like rats ones claimed as crooks?**

2nd Refrain:

**Let's get started to see a new world.
Let us look each other in the eye.
Let's get started to be a new world.
Let's find God. He's not so high. He's only sublime.
 He's not so high. He's only sublime.
 He's not so high. He's only sublime.**

(Instrumental interlude with dancing)

Repeat *2nd Refrain* – **End strong.**

(Lots of participation needs to be worked out in this song. David will lead it, but everyone will participate, including the children. Following the song, the dance will continue. Sometime within the dancing, the following brief discussions and other extemporaneous chatter should fit in.)

(Between Julie & Tom:)

Julie: Tom, this is a lot more fun than the one last night, isn't it?

Tom: I'll say. I like your natural look much better than your dressy look.

Julie: And I prefer to see the one I'm dancing with too. Did you tell that pretty brunette you were dancing with last night about our town?

Tom: No. I didn't want to.

Julie: You didn't want to?

Tom: I guess I was feeling a little protective.

Julie: I can understand that, Tom, but don't you think we owe it to others to tell of our lives? They are pretty wonderful, you know.

Tom: I'm not so sure.

Julie: That our lives here are wonderful?

Tom: No – that we should share it with others.

Julie: I see I'm gonna have to work on you.

Tom: Did you tell anyone?

Julie: Yes, I told several. One of the guys I told was really interested. He said he'd like to visit.

Tom: I'll bet he would.

Julie: His name is Gary. He told me his biggest hang-up is that he doesn't think he will be able to control what hangs down, as he described his masculinity.

Tom: That's a common notion. What did you tell him?

Julie: That he shouldn't visit if he felt that way, that we don't want him if he can't control himself. But I added that he shouldn't cut himself short. He probably would have no problem. He just thinks he would.

Tom: With an invitation like that, when do you expect him?

Julie: Maybe tonight, Tom. I hope he comes tonight. I mean SUMMER TOWN is the way the world should be. Why keep it a secret? Gary is only a beginning.

Tom: Why? Why do you have to tell? I don't understand.

Julie: To keep something to yourself, something precious, is wrong, Tom. It's like love. Love is not love until you have given it away. We have to give SUMMER TOWN away for it to survive. Don't you see?

Tom: But in giving it away, Julie, maybe we're killing it by giving it to the unworthy. How would you like SUMMER TOWN ravaged by giving it to the wrong people?

Julie: It can't be ravaged, Tom. It's unravageable. The unworthy will not be able to ravage it because it's fiction.

Tom: What do you mean it's fiction? It's real. We are here and now – you and I. This is not fiction.

Julie: But the story we tell of it is like fiction to others who don't know it. Once they get that fiction into their blood, they can make it real. It's unreal until it's experienced. We're giving them fiction, but they have to make it real.

Tom: I'm beginning to follow, Julie. I'm beginning to see.

Julie: SUMMER TOWN can never die, Tom, because it's fiction and fiction doesn't die because it has never lived. You cannot kill that which has not lived. That's the wonder of it! SUMMER TOWN is a story that can be lived out in every household throughout the world. There is no power that can stop it. People don't need a real SUMMER TOWN. Don't you see? Tonight, if he comes, I'll begin with Gary. I'll share the story of SUMMER TOWN with Gary. And next week I'm going back to Juniper's Triangle with Rick – and I'm going to tell another guy.

Tom: And I'll take Brenda there and I'll tell a girl. I mean we can really get the ball rolling. I think I see! SUMMER TOWN is a screen play that can lift a lot of hearts and give eyesight to the blind!

Julie: Oh, Tom, I love you! I love SUMMER TOWN! Here's a toast to the fiction of SUMMER TOWN, a fiction that can become the hope of the real world!

(They toast, with imaginary glasses of something and tears of joy.)

(Between David and Linda:)

David: My Dear, you look radiant tonight!

Linda: Thanks, Sweetheart. Oh, I forgot to tell you, Joyce stopped by today. Somebody's getting married tomorrow. Can you guess who?

David: Phil and Jane have been acting rather affectionate.

Linda: No, not them.

David: Let's see – not Howie and Jenny?

Linda: No. Let me give you a clue. The two of them were with us on our first bike ride with the club – and not Howie and Jenny.

David: Frank and Dawn Marie?

Linda: Dawn Marie and Frank.

David: Well, I'll be. It's about time – 17 years and they are finally going to tie the knot.

Linda: Marie's ecstatic. Even though they have been living together for over 16 years, she's looking forward to the wedding like a Senior just out of high school.

David: I wonder why they took so long?

Linda: You know, David. Frank's been of the mind it won't make any difference.

David: No, Linda. I don't think that's right. Frank's really been afraid.

Linda: That's right too.

David: He thinks that too many people let marriage kill their spiritual unions and he hasn't wanted to take a chance on destroying the spiritual union he and Marie have.

Linda: That's worth caring about.

David: It sure is.

Linda: David, I think you'll be impressed with the ceremony tomorrow. Frank and Marie may have the answer for all time for all future weddings. Wait till you see what they are going to do.

David: It will be different?

Linda: That's an understatement.

David: I take it you're not going to tell me.

Linda: Do you want me to?

David: No. I can use a surprise.

(Between Becky and Jimmy:)

Jimmy: Becky, your Grampa helped me fix the wheel on my wagon this morning. He's sure a nice Grampa.

Becky: I'm glad. Jimmy, do you really like Mom's peanut butter cookies?

Jimmy: Huh? What's that got to do with my wagon?

Becky: Nothing.

Jimmy: Then why did you bring it up?

Becky: Cause I think you're cute too.

Jimmy: Huh?

Becky: Ah, shut up and dance!

(Between Julie and Gary:)

Julie: Gary, I hoped you'd come. Welcome to SUMMER TOWN!

Gary: I couldn't resist. The picture you painted of SUMMER TOWN last night was too good to be true.

Julie: But it is true.

Gary: I can see. And you know, Julie, I never thought I'd believe it, but what hangs down is really not important, is it? It's like in all this sea of nakedness, it melts into insignificance.

Julie: You're wrong, Gary. It's important! It's very important! And it's very significant! It's just not an obstruction. It's all a miracle, Gary! Enjoy and be aware!

(Between Jenny and Howard:)

(Jenny and Howard from the initial bike ride will be known as living together in SUMMER TOWN. Previous to this scene, they should be shown riding their bikes; and during this scene, they should be shown dancing, prior to this little sub scene.)

Jenny: Howie, Sweetheart, I enjoy dancing with you as much as I enjoy our bike rides.

Howard: Life in the fast lane sure can't compare to what we have. What a life we have, Darling?

Jenny: A life Divine, for sure. It feels so good to feel so close to God.

(Then Jenny and Howard sing the following song.)

Song:
I Am Divine

Jenny:

I'm like a star in the heavens. I'm like a sun in the sky.

I'm like a star in the heavens – because I am Divine.

Howard:

You're like a star in the heavens. You're like a sun in the sky.

You're like a star in the heavens – because you are Divine.

Both:

Who knows what the life of mystery is – who knows, who knows?

**Who knows what the mystery of life is – who knows, who knows,
who knows, who knows – who knows, who knows?**

Howard:

I'm like a deer in a meadow. I'm like an eagle flying high.

I'm like a deer in a meadow – because I am Divine.

Jenny:

You're like a deer in a meadow. You're like an eagle flying high.

You're like a deer in the meadow – because you are Divine.

Both: (Repeat Who knows series)

Jenny:

I'm like a horse on the prairie. I'm like an angel riding high.

I'm like a horse on the prairie – because I am Divine.

Howard:

You're like a horse on the prairie. You're like an angel riding high.

You're like a horse on the prairie – because you are Divine.

Both: (Repeat Who knows series)

Howard:

**I'm like a man in a garden. I'm like a lady in Paradise.
I'm like a man in a garden – because I am Divine.**

Jenny:

**You're like a man in a garden. You're like a lady in Paradise.
You're like a man in a garden – because you are Divine.**

***Both:* (Repeat Who knows series)**

Jenny:

**I'm like a parent holding hands. I'm like a child running wild.
I'm like a parent holding hands – because I am Divine.**

Howard:

**You're like a parent holding hands. You're like a child running wild.
You're like a parent holding hands – because you are Divine.**

***Both:* (Repeat Who knows series)**

Both:

**I'm like a star in the heavens. I'm like a sun in the sky.
I'm like a star in the heavens – because I am Divine.
I'm like a star in the heavens. I'm like a sun in the sky.
I'm like a star in the heavens – because I am Divine.
I'm like a star in the heavens – because I am Divine.
I'm like a star in the heavens – because I am Divine.**

(The scene should end with a focus upon the heavens – or the sky – as the song is finishing. It should be later in the evening by now and at least at the end of this song, night time should have arrived.)

Scene 11: The Wedding of Frank and Dawn Marie

(The scene will capture a rising sun. Soft music will be playing as the cameras will capture the entire town, landscape and sky. After a minute or so of browsing about, the cameras will focus on the town park once again. Gathered will be much of the town for this special sunrise wedding. All the principals of this story will be there, including the newest resident, Gary.

Standing in front of Frank and Marie will be Becky. As the cameras go full on the trio, Becky, the minister, and Frank and Marie will sing *The Wedding Song*. The interlude should feature a dance among the trio.

Song:
The Wedding Song

Refrain: Minister Becky:

**We are gathered today for a wedding – a wedding that all of us should see.
We are gathered today for a wedding – a wedding so blessed and so free.**

Minister Becky: Refrain – then:

**Will you take this man to be a husband? Will you take this woman to be your wife?
Will you take each other in marriage – and promise to love all your life?**

Marie: I'll take this man to be my husband.

Frank: I'll take this woman to be my wife.

Both: We will take each other in marriage – and promise to love all our life.

Minister Becky: Refrain – then:

**Will you love this man forever? Will you take him for your own?
Will you love this woman forever – and make her a happy home?**

Marie: I will love this man forever. I will take him for my own.

Frank: I will love this woman forever – and make her a happy home.

Refrain. (sung by all)

(Instrumental interlude with dancing)

Minister Becky:

**Will you search for the natural - and love the natural in your man?
Will you stand beneath the stars – and find equality in her hand?**

Marie: I will search for the natural – and love the natural in my man.

Frank: I will stand beneath the stars – and find equality in her hand.

Minister Becky: Refrain – then:

**Will you realize God in her life – while embracing all her charms?
Will you realize God in his life – while he holds you in his arms?**

Frank: I will realize God in her life – while embracing all her charms.

Marie: I will realize God in his life – while he holds me in his arms.

Repeat *Refrain* several times. (sung by all)

Scene 12: The Finale

(Following the wedding, it would be anticlimactic to do anything but close with a rousing song. So, we'll end it with a rousing invitational type song – *You Can Have Your Summer Town*. The many refrains will be general choruses with everyone singing them, but between the 5th and 6th verse, there will be up to four consecutive refrains. One of those will be sung by Jimmy. One by Becky. And one by Terry. Before the final two verses are sung, widespread dancing should commence.

Considering the verses, Marie will lead, taking the first verse. Grampa Owens will sing the second verse. Julie will sing the third verse. Marie will sing the fourth verse. Howard will sing the fifth verse. And David and Linda will harmonize on the final two verses.

Following the song, the cameras should capture a still or series of stills of Becky, Frank, Dawn Marie, David and Linda, Julie, Tom and Gary. Final film credits should be worked in around this setting, with special emphasis on Becky and Julie.

The torch has been passed!)

Song: *You Can Have Your Summer Town*

Refrain:

**You can have your SUMMER TOWN. You can be a SUMMER TOWN.
If you will let your life astound, you can have your SUMMER TOWN.**

**1. Life is what you make it, Friend. You can be brittle or you can bend.
It's up to you to follow through – to see life itself as the truth.**

Refrain.

**2. In SUMMER TOWN, we don't accuse – God in eternity of being a ruse.
It's they who trick who use His name – to make others play their game.**

Refrain.

**3. Don't be afraid of life, My Friend. We all have the very same end.
As we live we die and pass away. Touch your life, be happy today.**

Refrain.

**4. There is no ugliness in life. Seeing such will cause you strife.
Reach and touch your body, My Friend. Your soul will benefit through the end.**

Refrain.

Repeat verse 1 – then *Refrain* 4 times.

(Instrumental interlude with dancing)

Repeat verse 3 – then *Refrain*.

Repeat verse 4 – then *Refrain* several times.

SONGS

SUMMER TOWN

Refrain:

Summer time is Summer Town. Winter time is Summer Town.

Spring time and fall time too – Summer Town lives the truth.

Life's majestic and that's the truth.

Life's fantastic and that's true too.

Life is splendid. Life is sweet.

Life should knock you off your feet. *Refrain*.

Creation's a miracle and that's a truth.

They are satirical who otherwise accuse.

Satire and judgment make us frown.

They don't belong in Summer Town. *Refrain*.

Nakedness inspires and that's a truth

For those who don't look at life as crude.

If you see life as crude, then don't come around

to our wonderful home called Summer Town. *Refrain* (3).

LET'S LOOK AT EACH OTHER DIFFERENTLY

Male:

Let's look at each other differently with a whole new respect.

Sure, we have genitals, but why should we object?

Genitals are only muscles – they're not so mysterious.

Touch them and they extend, but why make it serious?

We treat sex like a thrill and isolate ourselves with our act.

We don't stand with the world – belong only to the human pack.

And then we run away and hide and God we accuse.

You shouldn't have made us that way, we say, and His grace we refuse.

Let's look at each other differently with a whole new respect.
Let's join the stars and seas and with Creation, let's connect.
Let's enjoy what we are – genitals and all.
Then we won't be so weak and won't with Adam fall.
Come on, is it so hard to see each other differently?
I'm not alone. I'm like all men. Enjoy the world that's in me.

Female:

Let's look at each other differently with a whole new respect.
It's time we had a new vision – and new values, let's select.
The old one isn't good, I agree – it divides the world in two
and puts on one side all that's good and on the other, evil crews.
As a lady, I am tired of being measured by my breasts.
Why can't I be a woman without passing a ratings test?
And as a man you shouldn't care about the size of your penis.
It's just a muscle, as you say, and it doesn't measure genius.

Let's look at each other differently with a whole new respect.
We could really fall in love because our natures we'd accept.
And then when we'd act together – sexually and otherwise,
we wouldn't be strangers to the world – we'd need no disguise.
Our ebbs and flows wouldn't be restricted within our flesh.
We'd truly be one with the world and with everything enmesh.

Male: Let's look at each other differently

Female: with a whole new respect.

Male: I am ready.

Female: I am too.

Both: Let's take the first step.

Male: I'll take my clothes off, for good, my good.

Female: And I'll do the same.

Both: We'll stand so proud with our eyes aloft
and we'll give our souls a raise.

Male: Oh, birds, can you see? Come fly in real close.

Female: We'd like to aspire on your wings to become holy ghosts.

Male: Well, My Friend, I think that this is Paradise.

Female: But only if we act as pure and welcome our own sight.

Male: Let's look at each other differently – Oh, yes, let's do.

Female: Feel free, My Love, to look at me – and I will look at you.

FREEDOM

I want freedom in my life – freedom in my soul.
Freedom to be right – freedom to be a fool.
There's no way that I can be what it is that you call free
if I have to wear the garb of your society.
I want freedom for you, Dear, freedom for you, Sir.
And if you're not free to be, then none of us are free.

I want the freedom to ride my bike without any clothes,
without the charge of indecency directed at my soul.
I want the freedom to do what I feel my soul should do,
and you ain't got the right to tell me I can't lose.
I want freedom for you, Sir, freedom for you, Dear.
And if you're not free to be, then none of us are free.

I'LL PUT ON A DRESS TONIGHT

I'll put on a dress tonight – and Tom and I will go to town.
I'll put on a dress tonight – but why do men have to act like clowns?

They say we're living in a land that's free – but if I were to go without
they'd point their fingers, cry insanity – but the real insane are among their crowd.

I'll put on a dress tonight – and I'll try to enjoy,
but no one will know my true life – and many will tease like I am their toy.

Oh, what dress should I put on – the red one or maybe the green?
It won't matter to my friend, Tom – he'd prefer to see the one who is me.

But I'll put on a dress tonight – and I'll go in a disguise.
I'll put on a dress tonight – and go a stranger in the night.

Why, I wonder, don't people want to know – who they really are?
Why must they hide in shadows – and compete in darkness and in war?

I'll put on a dress tonight – because the world is afraid
of all that's good and lovely – and of all that God has made.

I'll put on a dress tonight – and Tom and I will go to town,
but I can't help but cry a little – why must men act like clowns?

BE AT PEACE WITH THE UNIVERSE

Master:

**Be at peace with the universe, and everything within.
Be at peace with the universe, and you'll not know sin.
To be at peace with the universe, accept this as a clue,
Peace can only be if you're free – and peace depends on you.
Peace can only be if you're free – and peace depends on you.**

**Be happy with the universe, and everything within.
Be happy with the universe, and you'll always win.
To be happy with the universe, listen to this advice.
Happy can only be if you're free – and you see with your own eyes.
Happy can only be if you're free – and you see with your own eyes.**

**So, open your eyes, My Friend, and look
Life should be an open book – just sit back and read.
The pages of Nature are there for you.
Be in awe and you'll find truth in the grass – the sand and the sea.**

Student:

**I'll be at peace with the universe, and everything within.
I'll be at peace with the universe, and I'll not know sin.
I'll be at peace with the universe, the path I clearly see.
Peace can only be if I'm free – and peace depends on me.
Peace can only be if I'm free – and peace depends on me.**

**I'll be happy with the universe, and everything within.
I'll be happy with the universe, and I'll always win.
I'll be happy with the universe, thanks for your advice.
Happy can only be if I'm free – and I see with my own eyes.
Happy can only be if I'm free – and I see with my own eyes.**

(Instrumental interlude – with dancing)

***Master:* Repeat third verse.**

***Student:* Repeat both your verses.**

LIKE A BIRD IN THE HEAVENS

Refrain:

Like a bird in the heavens, I'm free to be.
Like a bird in the heavens, I can fly to thee.
Like a bird in the heavens, I'm in love, you see
For love is just being me.

Look at the little birds. See how they fall? In seconds, they learn about flight.
There's a lesson so clear. It should bring a tear.
Man's still at war with his fears of the night. Refrain.

Bridge:

Oh, how I love all the birds of the air – no less than I love ole sister Moon.
So, please don't blame me if I follow their lead –
and act like the whole world is my living room.

I don't need a servant - tending my needs.
I don't need the world feeling sorry for me.
I don't need your glasses - to let me see.
Just set me free – to be little me. *Refrain*, followed by *Bridge*.

(Then repeat "*I don't need a servant*" verse, concluding with *Refrain* twice)

LET'S GET STARTED

1st Refrain:

Let's get started to see a new world.
Let us look each other in the eye.
Let's get started to be a new world.
Let's find God. He's not so high – He's only sublime.

If God is in everything, then He's not just above us.
He's inside and outside the ring – So please tell me, what's the fuss?

1st Refrain.

If God is in everyone, why listen to a preacher
who sees a daughter less than a son – and claims he is a teacher?

1st Refrain.

If God is in the sand and leaves, why look for Him in a book,
a book that claims to part the seas – and drown like rats ones claimed as crooks?

2nd Refrain:

**Let's get started to see a new world.
Let us look each other in the eye.
Let's get started to be a new world.
Let's find God. He's not so high. He's only sublime.
He's not so high. He's only sublime.
He's not so high. He's only sublime.**

(Instrumental interlude with dancing)

Repeat 2nd Refrain – End strong.

I AM DIVINE

**I'm like a star in the heavens. I'm like a sun in the sky.
I'm like a star in the heavens – because I am Divine.
You're like a star in the heavens. You're like a sun in the sky.
You're like a star in the heavens – because you are Divine.**

**Who knows what the life of mystery is – who knows, who knows?
Who knows what the mystery of life is – who knows, who knows,
who knows, who knows – who knows, who knows?**

**I'm like a deer in a meadow. I'm like an eagle flying high.
I'm like a deer in a meadow – because I am Divine.
You're like a deer in a meadow. You're like an eagle flying high.
You're like a deer in the meadow – because you are Divine.**

(Repeat Who knows series)

**I'm like a horse on the prairie. I'm like an angel riding high.
I'm like a horse on the prairie – because I am Divine.
You're like a horse on the prairie. You're like an angel riding high.
You're like a horse on the prairie – because you are Divine.**

(Repeat Who knows series)

**I'm like a man in a garden. I'm like a lady in Paradise.
I'm like a man in a garden – because I am Divine.
You're like a man in a garden. You're like a lady in Paradise.
You're like a man in a garden – because you are Divine.**

(Repeat Who knows series)

**I'm like a parent holding hands. I'm like a child running wild.
I'm like a parent holding hands – because I am Divine.**

**You're like a parent holding hands. You're like a child running wild.
You're like a parent holding hands – because you are Divine.**

(Repeat **Who knows** series)

**I'm like a star in the heavens. I'm like a sun in the sky.
I'm like a star in the heavens – because I am Divine.
I'm like a star in the heavens. I'm like a sun in the sky.
I'm like a star in the heavens – because I am Divine.
I'm like a star in the heavens – because I am Divine.
I'm like a star in the heavens – because I am Divine.**

THE WEDDING SONG

Refrain:

**We are gathered today for a wedding – a wedding that all of us should see.
We are gathered today for a wedding – a wedding so blessed and so free.**

Minister: Refrain – then:

**Will you take this man to be a husband? Will you take this woman to be your wife?
Will you take each other in marriage – and promise to love all your life?**

Woman: **I'll take this man to be my husband.**

Man: **I'll take this woman to be my wife.**

Both: **We will take each other in marriage – and promise to love all our life.**

Minister: Refrain – then:

**Will you love this man forever? Will you take him for your own?
Will you love this woman forever – and make her a happy home?**

Woman: **I will love this man forever. I will take him for my own.**

Man: **I will love this woman forever – and make her a happy home.**

Minister: Refrain.

(Instrumental interlude with dancing)

Minister:

**Will you search for the natural - and love the natural in your man?
Will you stand beneath the stars – and find equality in her hand?**

Woman: **I will search for the natural – and love the natural in my man.**

Man: **I will stand beneath the stars – and find equality in her hand.**

Minister: Refrain – then:

Will you realize God in her life – while embracing all her charms?

Will you realize God in his life – while he holds you in his arms?

Man: I will realize God in her life – while embracing all her charms.

Woman: I will realize God in his life – while he holds me in his arms.

Repeat *Refrain* several times. (sung by all)

YOU CAN HAVE YOUR SUMMER TOWN

Refrain:

You can have your SUMMER TOWN. You can be a SUMMER TOWN.

If you will let your life astound, you can have your SUMMER TOWN.

1. Life is what you make it, Friend. You can be brittle or you can bend.

It's up to you to follow through – to see life itself as the truth.

Refrain.

2. In SUMMER TOWN, we don't accuse – God in eternity of being a ruse.

It's they who trick who use His name – to make others play their game.

Refrain.

3. Don't be afraid of life, My Friend. We all have the very same end.

As we live we die and pass away. Touch your life, be happy today.

Refrain.

4. There is no ugliness in life. Seeing such will cause you strife.

Reach and touch your body, My Friend. Your soul will benefit through the end.

Refrain.

Repeat verse 1 – then *Refrain* 4 times.

(Instrumental interlude with dancing)

Repeat verse 3 – then *Refrain*.

Repeat verse 4 – then *Refrain* several times.

SUMMER TOWN



THE END

TEN VIRTUES OF NAKEDNESS

Written in 1986

REFRAIN:

*Come on, my friends. Come along with me.
Come on, my friends. Come along with me.
Come on, my friends. Come along and see.
I'll tell you of ten virtues – for going naked and free.*

The 1st virtue is closeness to God.
If for no other reason, that should be enough.
To be like the birds, the trees, and the sod.
You can't get closer to God than the buff.

The 2nd virtue is closeness to me.
My soul yearns to know who I am.
To be shy and insist on privacy
shuts out the world, including this man (one).

The 3rd virtue is closeness to you.
I can't relate except with myself.
If you want to know me and learn my truth,
then you can't keep me from you on the shelf.

The 4th virtue is gratitude.
I can't say thanks to the nature inside
if I insist on denying the truth
and run from its grace by being shy. *Refrain.*

The 5th virtue is peace of soul.
Adam lost it from the start.
I'd only continue to be his fool
if I deny nakedness on my part.

The 6th virtue is honesty of mind.
It's hard to lie if I'm exposed.
If it's life's greatest truths I'm here to find,
I defeat myself by being clothed.

The 7th virtue is willingness to share.
I am my brother's friend – or at least should be.
To open myself helps me to really care,
to assist my sisters to find their peace.

The 8th virtue is body health.
Clothes restrict circulation –
not only of the blood, but the lymph as well.
Sickness sets in from strangulation. **Refrain.**

The 9th virtue is easy talk.
It's easy to relax if I've nothing to hide.
What makes life hard is to have to walk –
depressing the feelings that are inside.

The 10th virtue is violence restraint.
The root of all evil – not money or flesh.
It's fashion that leads to most anger and rape
and causes our natures to be looked on as trash. **Refrain.**

I could list more virtues for sure
why nakedness is truly an aid for all.
Let's stop failing and finally mature.
God's truly in us – not outside a wall. **Refrain.**

Ending:

Yes, I'll tell you of ten virtues – for going naked and free.
Yes, I'll tell you of ten virtues – for going naked and free.

MORALITY
(Wings)

(20 Pages)

By
Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
- 2005 -

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Laramie, Wyoming. U.S.A.
November, 2005

INTRODUCTION

Hi! I wrote this small work (20 Pages) on morality in 1989 and am now transcribing it from a typed page to a PC file. There are a few changes, but only a few. For the most part, as I do this retype in 2005, I am leaving it much like I wrote it originally. There are a few exceptions, however. The most notable change is in the final chapter – a poem I call *Wings*. Originally, *Wings* had only five verses; but for this writing, I am adding two new verses – verses five and six – to the final effort.

For me, the idea of morality has changed to be more a matter of guidance than anything else. I consider myself very moral, though I am sure that many would consider my morality, immorality. My standards in life are not the standards of many in life, but then their standards are not my own either. As you will see, I consider myself more of a *Natural Moralist* than anything else. I will offer a bit of my reasoning on that during the following work; but regardless of what kind of moralist I am, morality in general is worth while discussing I think. So that is what I am attempting to do with this work – discuss morality in general as well as to speculate on my own chosen morality as well.

As a kid, and I am now almost sixty-four, morality was more for me a matter of imposed discipline than merely a matter of reasoned guidance because I was caught within the web of seeing conduct rewarded or punished by another. I am rewarded by my current morality – and punished by it as well – but only by virtue of having to continue some course of conduct by the strain of it, not because someone outside myself is making me do something.

So, my morality has changed down through the years – or my sense of morality has changed; and perhaps one of the biggest reasons it has changed to be more of self-realization than threat of punishment by another is because I have analyzed it. I do not think many people know what morality really is because they have failed to ponder its meaning for themselves. Like I did earlier in life, so many just accept another's idea of morality and do not decide the issue for themselves. Since the issue of morality in my life has become such an essential consideration, I am one who has taken some time to speculate on it and to analyze just what it is. Perhaps my speculation about it may be useful for others too; and that is why I am offering this treatise on morality that I am.

Enjoy, then, as you can and will, one man's speculation on morality.

Gently,
Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming – U.S.A.
November 8th, 2005

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1

The First Genesis

Do you believe in the Garden of Eden? Do you believe there was a first set of human parents who chose the vices of haughtiness and thanklessness over the virtues of respect and gratitude? And if you believe in the story of Adam & Eve and believe they did, in fact, choose vice over virtue, do you believe they could have chosen otherwise?

One of the greatest and most important questions regarding our beginning as a human race, I think, is – could we have chosen differently than we did? And if so, can we choose differently now than we have? Can we change course? One of the truly great lessons of life that I have learned simply by living it is, yes, I can choose to be different. Accordingly, then, yes, Adam & Eve – as my own prototypes – could have chosen a different course too. They could have chosen as I choose now; or I can choose to be like them and do what they did.

The greater world, I believe, chooses to be like Adam & Eve and embrace their sin of confusion. Most think they can't choose otherwise, at least not without the help of some righteous redeemer who alone can set them on a correct course and who alone can keep them there. For the record, let me say that I am not among these believers. I am not among the multitudes who think they have to imitate Adam & Eve. I can and do choose to do otherwise.

Traditional religion and I have a parting of the ways on this matter that I have to inherit the choice of another and claim that same choice for myself. I do not believe that; and neither does most of the world if it would only think the matter through. Unfortunately, most do not think it through and often live their lives thinking they think other than they do.

I don't believe that just because my parents chose to live in Wyoming that I have to follow their choice – though, in fact, as I write this in 2005, I am living in Wyoming. I do not believe that just because my parents chose to be Catholic that I have to choose to be so too – though, in fact, I did choose to be Catholic earlier in life as I choose not to be Catholic now. I do not believe that just because my parents chose to be farmers that I have to choose to farm too; and I do not believe that just because my parents chose to believe in sin – as traditionally understood as *separation from God* – that I have to follow their course.

That which I do believe, however, is that the choice is mine – and rightly so. I can choose to believe as Mom & Dad; or I can choose to believe differently. And because I can choose differently than Mom & Dad, we – all of us – can choose to be different than Adam & Eve. We are not destined to repeat their failure. The single greatest lie of all time, I think, is that destiny commands us to sin because our parents did. That's the life of many churches and the death of truth.

So, let's talk about it. What's at the base of what could have been different? How can we really be different than Adam & Eve? Assuming that they did sin, how could we not sin as they?

The answer is as clear as a cloudless sky. We can choose to be open; or we can choose to hide, or try to hide. We can choose to tell the truth; or we can choose to lie. We can choose to be humble; or we can choose to be haughty.

When I was a small child growing up on a small farm in northern Wyoming, I knew the story of Adam & Eve – and it seemed clear to me that they did wrong. I kept asking myself, why didn't they do otherwise? Why couldn't they have done otherwise?

Then after high school and several years of college, I came to realize that I was asking the wrong questions. The questions I should have been asking were not why didn't they do other than they did, but why am I doing the same as they? The day I exchanged me for them and we for they, I grew up and the real lesson seemed clear.

The early story of Adam & Eve was clear. It's the story of the fall that begins the distraction from the truths of the first and only important verses of all the **BIBLE**. The story of Adam & Eve states it clearly. Adam & Eve could have chosen differently; and because they could have, we can.

Likewise, he who wrote the book of *Genesis* could have chosen to end it with Chapter Two where Adam & Eve are shamelessly naked, but fool that he was, he wrote Chapter Three; and for all time – to this day at least – he confused life and its true meaning. With the end of Chapter Two, man is innocent and filled with hope. By the end of Chapter Three, he is dead and driven from the Garden. That's how that author wanted his story to end; but we do not have to end our stories that way. We can go back and rewrite from Chapter Three anytime we want. How? By continuing the ideals of Chapter Two.

No man has to lie. No man has to steal. No man has to murder. No man has to hate. No man, or woman of course, has to fail. No man has to hide from himself; and if he should try it, he is doomed to repeat the Chapter Three of the old *Genesis* and lose innocence. He is doomed to repeat the shame that Adam & Eve chose.

Chapter Three has an important lesson, though. Perhaps it's important – in order not to rewrite it in the same way – to know what it is. God (or some authoritative voice) told Adam & Eve, *you can eat of the fruit of any tree but the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil*. The day you shall eat of that, you will die, they were told. The story says that it was God who commanded Adam & Eve, but that's not important. **It's not the Commander, but the Commandment, that's important.** If ever there was an important commandment, it was this one not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

So, what is this fruit of which we must not eat in order to continue the bliss of Chapter Two? The tree of knowledge of good and evil is the same thing as confusion. The one commandment is clear – don't eat of confusion or you will eat of death. In other words, don't mix good and evil. See only good and you cannot die any of the deaths caused by seeing evil.

You will not die the death of deceit because you will not want to hide from the truth. You will not die the death of anger because nothing can threaten your peace. You will not die the death of selfishness because you will know you are not the only one who is good. You will not die the death of insecurity because you will accept all that comes as worthy experience. You will not die the death of needing a messiah because you will know you were never lost.

2 The Original Sin

Seeing evil, I think, was the *Original Sin* of Adam & Eve; but unlike the author of *Genesis* from Chapter Three on, I do not believe we are doomed to repeat it. We can repeat it, but we do not have to do so.

When Adam & Eve were naked in the Garden of Eden, they knew no shame because they saw only good. It was when they began to doubt that all is good that they were introduced to deception, confusion, and sin. That lesson is clear, very clear, yet, in general, mankind continues to overlook the obvious lesson of the so called *Original Sin*.

The author of *Genesis* had great insight in his understanding of what went wrong with Adam & Eve and what is still wrong today; but, I think, he sold humanity short by insisting that the evil that was done could not be righted by mankind. He sold humanity short by intentionally leading us to believe that we have no power to right our own failed course.

Why did he do that? Why did he foment a dogma of helplessness of man to correct his own error? Why? I will tell you why – because he set out to tell a story that already had an ending. Like many a novelist, he knew that ending before he constructed the beginning.

The author of *Genesis* had one thing in mind when he told his story – and that objective was to prepare a course that would have to end in a chosen race and out of that chosen race, a messiah. All was told with that one objective in mind; and that's why he had to have Adam & Eve fail and be doomed to helplessness.

In a way, he cheated us by pretending to evolve a story from beginning to end when all the time he was only engraving an ending with a beginning – not the other way around; however, as I say in my chapter called – *GENESIS – AGAIN* – the author of *Genesis* did correctly state the notion of evil in a riddle of sorts that could be resolved. And for me at least, defining the cause of their error for me, I can correct the mistake of Adam & Eve. At least the author of *Genesis* did not leave us without an explanation of evil. I will further explain in subsequent chapters.

The concept of a chosen race – what a concept! That's the entire theme of not only *Genesis*, but of all that collection of stories referred to as the *BIBLE*. It's a crazy concept and one totally bereft of any dignity concerning the human race as a whole. How can anyone believe that God could, or would if He (or She or It) could, choose one race over another? Did He not inspire them all? How, then, could He choose one over another? Only a fool can believe He could.

Am I to believe that if I had not been born a Jew in the days before Christ that I would have been lacking the grace of God – or in the grace of God – as compared to the Jews? Am I to believe I would have been outside the sphere of salvation? Yet, that is precisely the dogma of the Scriptures. Is God found in that dogma? I don't think so.

The Scriptures! They have been used for ages to intimidate and to control those who refuse to use their own minds to find their own truths. They are the lazy man's excuse to fault life and not have to find the answers. The Scriptures are about as grand a collection

of nonsense and misguidance as has ever been written; and yet they are the most believed of all the nonsense in the world.

From the very beginning – from Chapter Three of *Genesis* on – they lead man to believe in that wonderful old comforting dogma of perdition. Man is lost and cannot help himself! Unbelievable! And even in the two chapters that are worth while, the author of *Genesis* tells it wrong in his tale of the sequence of creation. He has God making day and night, daylight and darkness, before he has God making the sun as if the sun is not the source of daylight. Of course, he didn't think it was; and that's why he told his story as he did. In any case, he clearly erred.

And how about God's resting on the seventh day? Have you ever wondered about that? God worked for six days and rested on the seventh. Strangely, there is no counting on from there. An eighth day never occurs. Presumably, it is still the seventh day and God is still resting; but for someone who is still resting, he sure has been awfully active in the salvation of mankind – or in the damnation of it.

And how about Cain after he slew Abel? Allegedly, he was banished from the presence of his parents and dismissed alone. Yet, he went off to be rather prolific and gave beginning to many children all doomed under the so called *mark of Cain*. Where did the woman or women come from who bore Cain his marked children?

Never mind, of course. Reason does not enter into much of *Genesis*. The author's only intent in writing his story was not to tell the truth, but to fabricate a beginning consistent with an assumed end of perdition. Cain was only one excuse he used to fabricate the tale.

3

Revelation Morality

The Scriptures are called *Revelation*. Through them, God reveals Himself and His rules for mankind through the chosen nation of Israel. The author of *Genesis* was very convincing. He managed well to convince a nation it had a right and a reason to be deemed a chosen race. From the Jews and through the Jews would the revelation of God come to lead an ignorant world to God.

Who knows the real source of all the revelations of the Scriptures? We can only guess. They may well have been dictated by a ghostly agent or agents who could have been interpreted to be God. More than likely, however, the claim that they are from God is purely pretense. There is no more reason to believe that God wrote the Scriptures than there is to believe He is writing this essay. Am I less chosen than the Jews or the Christians or the Moslems or whoever to speak of or for God?

That brings up an interesting point. Who can speak for God? Can anyone? It seems to me that the issue of what might be called *revelation morality* can only be settled if we can know who can speak for God. That would seem to be a proper and relevant question, would it not? Who can speak for God?

There is, however, another question far more important. Why does anyone need to speak for God? That's a better question and it yields a whole different perspective in terms of deciding morality.

From the First Grade and before, the Catechism of my youth taught me one striking lesson – God is everywhere because He's infinite or *without limits*. If that is really the case, the claim that God is outside of me to rule me is false. Does it make sense to you that someone or something that is inside of you would have any need to deliver a message to himself – or itself? If God is the source of Revelation, He must talk to Himself to talk to us. Now, that's pretty dumb, don't you agree?

The only way that it makes any sense that God could talk to any man is that He does not reside in that man in the first place. Yet, if that's the case, He's not infinite because He's not everywhere. On the basis of this logical truth that God must already be in man, it should be decisively clear that God cannot be the source of *revelation morality*.

Alright, He's not the source of *revelation morality* because He can't be and still be God, but can He be the source of some other morality that's totally independent of any revelations? For the same reason we resolved that He can't be the source of *revelation morality*, it can be argued that likewise He cannot be the source of any morality. Again, thinking it out will clarify the issue.

Morality, as tied to God, makes no sense unless it is possible that related to God, immorality is possible. In other words, if we cannot violate God, we cannot be immoral in relationship to God. The question, then, becomes – can we violate God? Can we fail God?

How is it possible to fail something inside of you? How is it possible to reach out and miss something that's already touching you? How is it possible to be at home with

God and to be absent from God at the same time? Or perhaps the better question is – how can it be that God can be at home in us and absent from us at the same time?

You see, the notion of morality implies that a set of moral rules can be violated. Since God is in us and cannot be evacuated from that positioning, there is no way that God can be violated by us. We can only violate what we can dismiss or restrict. Since we can't dismiss or restrict God, neither, then, can we violate Him; and if we can't violate Him, we can't practice any kind of immorality in relationship to Him. Rather simple. Isn't it?

4

Freedom & Morality

If morality cannot be traced to God, does that mean we are free of all morality? No. It does not. As long as obedience to some command or entity is a reality, no one can be free of all morality.

Morality is nothing more than *obedience to some authority or guide or influence or set of rules*. We may be free of God in terms of His being an authority we can violate or displease, but that's not to say that we are free of all who might want to influence or control us. To the degree that we might accept obedience to those who would have us obey them, we could be said to be practicing a morality in relation to them; and should we defy them who would have us obey them, we could be said to be practicing an immorality in relation to them. **Morality, in general, is only paying attention to some set of rules. Immorality is defying a given set of rules.**

Likewise, attention to an idea or ideal could indicate a morality whereas defiance of that idea could indicate immorality as related to that idea. One man's obedience could be another's disobedience; and one man's morality could be another's immorality. That's just the way it is.

For instance, one person may consider abortion the right thing to do to prevent exposing a child to a world of hurt by giving it birth. Accordingly, for that person, abortion could well be a matter of morality, not immorality. Another person may consider abortion to be taking life, not preventing hurt. For that person, abortion could be considered immoral. It would depend upon one's perspective as to how they would judge the morality or immorality of abortion. Again, that's just the way it is. One person's morality can be another's immorality.

5

Morality Camps

Morality, then, is relative to a person's ideals and the ideals of his or her morality camp. The greatest danger to any soul threatening defiance of a particular morality camp or morality persuasion would be the loss of any protection that members of that camp might offer or be willing to offer. It stands to reason, does it not, that if I want your friendship, I better be good to you and your friends. Otherwise, you will ignore me – and in a sense, abandon me and leave me isolated and unprotected or deprived.

On the other hand, to attend to you and try to please you will gain for me your attention and maybe your assistance and protection. Such assistance and protection might come in mighty handy in a pinch.

I honestly believe that it is just this kind of thinking that persuades some souls to pledge allegiance to a given morality camp – like a camp claiming kinship to Jesus or a camp claiming kinship to Mohammed or a camp claiming kinship to Moses or a camp claiming kinship to Abraham. Though the rulers of these fantasy camps pretend to be some all powerful, protective providence, like God, they are really in reality only fellow finite beings taking advantage of the blind who may be yearning to pledge allegiance for protection and salvation.

Keep in mind, too, that just because someone claims to be of a certain camp, that does not automatically make them a member of that camp. I happen to love the one called Jesus and I doubt very much that many who claim allegiance to Jesus know anything at all about the man; but the *camp of Jesus* can be used as a title to draw membership, even though a director of that activity may, in fact, be responding to a Jesus impostor. Just something to keep in mind.

To those who choose to seek the protection and providence of a trust and trusting fellowship, a morality is offered. Immorality for these who have pledged their constancy and confidence and obedience to a given persuasion or camp of believers amounts to betraying or withdrawing from their pledge. The penalty for betrayal is, of course, reverse betrayal or reverse withdrawal of providence or protection. Many a morality camp is held together by a fear just as this. The wise man, perhaps, recognizes the probable reality of various morality camps and moves cautiously so as not to be caught between warring camps or by a wrong one.

When I was a kid, in my ignorance of the real Divine Presence in everything and in everyone, I used to pray to what I thought was God, expecting His protection and friendship in exchange for my pledge of allegiance. In essence, by calling to God, I expected Him to come to me.

Then one day it came to me that it is stupid to believe that God can be absent from any reality – including me. He (or She or It) has to be everywhere due to His infinite character and I am part of that everywhere. Therefore, He must be in me too; and if He is in me, why should I be calling Him to come to me?

Realizing this notion changed my life because I stopped looking for God *out there* and found Him (or Her or It) everywhere; but not only did I stop expecting to hear a voice calling me blessed, I started to realize that those *out there* could not be God.

Many, however, do not agree that the various voices cannot be God. So, many of them risk that one of them is God and almost literally dive in and pledge their faith, expecting to be a big winner for the pledge, as in a million dollar lottery. Eternal life is often the million dollar prize; but it can only be collected by dying in an embrace of *faith*.

6 Faith

I would be the last one to put down the notion of faith. I find my own extremely comforting; but at the same time, having passed from one camp of morality in this life to another with a much different perspective, I am the first to know that blind faith is neither wise nor safe.

Blind faith in anything is like dedicating yourself to a tunnel vision and preventing awareness of worthy options in life. Blind faith often sees camps of morality where they are not and refuses to see the camps of morality that are. Blind faith may take good and evil and make camps of morality out of them. In terms of optional power, neither camp actually exists as such, but those with a blind faith may think they do.

Some of the blind think the advantage belongs to the takers in life and choose to side with aggression and force, and maybe, Evil. Others think the advantage belongs to the givers and forgivers in life and choose to side with generosity and what they think is Good.

It is certainly true, however, that faithfulness may be rewarded, not only in this life, but in the life to come as well because the friends we choose in this life may likely remain in the next. **For the most part, faith amounts to collecting friends and fellowship in this life so as to not be alone without friends in the next.**

Because of this notion of fellowship, a very worthy notion indeed, it's very important to choose correctly and with open eyes. As we live, we will certainly live on. As we begin, we will continue. As we reach, we will find. Accordingly, it is so terribly important to know and pledge our faith only to the real feelings inside. Let us be true to them; or else we may find ourselves alone in a chosen camp of nonbelievers. We may gain their protection and providence, but will we want it?

Sources of Morality

Morality, I do believe, belongs where we look for it. I guess that's what makes it relative and not absolute. We differ so much in our perceptions. How can we not find morality in different places?

Some look for morality in God and expect to find it there, though they do not know God. Some look to find it in a book in which they place their trust. Some look to brotherhood and friendship and discard anything else as illusion and pretense. Some look to find it in power and a charge of dynamite. Some look to find it in art or music with waves of notes. Some look to find it in sexual passion and animal instinct. Some look to find it in a savior or messiah who can do for them what they think they can't do for themselves. Some look to find it in a trophy and in a claim within a winner's circle. Some look to find it in loneliness, loving the lack of competition.

There's lots of sources of morality, lots of camps of ideals and communities of believers. **The kind of moralist we are is defined by that which we see as our meaning.** As for myself, I am primarily a *Natural Moralist*. It's Nature that I see as the source of my found meaning. I do not put a whole lot of meaning in laws imposed outside of Natural Laws. I find solace in Nature and choose my friendships among those who share my perception.

I do not understand why people live in life to deny it, as if in denial there is some greater blessing. To each his or her own, but it seems to me terribly wasteful of life to act like it is below me – or I am above it. So many in life do that – act like life is without dignity. They cover it every chance they get, accusing it of ugliness as they go, and fail to use their opportunities of life to embrace it. To many, death is more meaningful than life.

My morality, however, is simply based in Nature. In my writing, I often capitalize *Nature* or *Natural* whenever I can because it is a form of respect. Often when I write a word with a form of *nature* in it, it becomes an opportunity for me to bow down to the morality of my choice. Since, for me, *Nature* and *God* are interchangeable in that where one is found, so also is the other, my morality in mind is defined by *God* as well as by *Nature*. I see no wisdom in living life turning away from it; and as a *Natural Moralist*, I'm in love with life and the *Divinity* that resides therein.

Morality, any morality, is respecting some rule, some guide, some ideal. *Natural Morality* is respecting *Nature* as the rule of life and as the house of *God*. *Natural Morality* is a morality that accepts and respects *Nature* as a blessing, and does not reject it as a curse. It's the ultimate morality, I think, because it's a morality that cherishes the gift of life as it is and does not pretend imperfection as grounds for dissatisfaction.

Wouldn't you agree that many moralities not only pretend imperfection, but also demand it? That's their bread and butter – their platform of power. They pretend that life is naturally imperfect. Now, I'm certainly not going to capitalize my reference to *naturally* in the phrase, *naturally imperfect*, because there is no such thing as *naturally*

imperfect. Some, however, pretend that life is naturally imperfect so as to set themselves up as redeemers or messiahs. According to them, life is imperfect, but needs to be perfected. That's where they come in – to perfect it. We need only listen to them and they will lead us to our needed perfection.

But what fools we are to presume ourselves more perfect than the nature we condemn; and what fools we are to believe the nature we condemn and wish were different needs salvation. That morality which dictates such nonsense as this is truly a blind morality in that it is founded in falsehood.

The whole of life is perfect – and each of us, as part of the whole, is perfect. We may not view ourselves in that light because we look at ourselves in isolation for the perfection that only a greater *Nature* possesses. Even disease is part of the whole that is perfect. It has its place, for if nothing else, it provides some temporary survival for germs and viruses. In themselves and for themselves, germs and viruses are good – as the lion is good that eats the deer. The deer may not like being a meal for another, but just the same, that deer participates in the whole perfect picture of life.

The *Natural Moralist* views life as a big picture and understands that the very nature of survival of anything is that the survivor feeds on the prey. It's not bad. It's not evil. It's only *Nature*; and though we may want to change it, all the wanting in the world won't. Will it?

The key to happiness, I believe, is to resign ourselves to our *Natural Fate*, whatever that turns out to be. ***Natural Morality is resigning ourselves peacefully to our Natural Fate and accepting the events of life and death as they unfold.*** The *Natural Moralist* is happy in life, but is also happy with death – or the prospect of it – because death is part of the whole picture of *Natural Experience*. *Nature* is the perfect designer, the perfect parent. We should just relax and release ourselves to the never ending story of *Natural Perfection*. **That is *Natural Morality*.**

8

Genesis – Again

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.

That's how Chapter Two of *Genesis* ends – and how life should begin. You see, it's only a matter of perspective. Correct perspective offers wisdom. There are no struggles between Good and Evil as camps opposed because there is no such place as a place without God where Evil can reside. Where God is, God reigns; and where God reigns, non-good – or Evil - cannot challenge.

There is no Satan, as a captain of Evil - only devils who pretend there is. Evil, defined as opposition to God, can only exist where there is a void of Good. Since nothing can be void of Good – or the Presence of God – Evil is impossible as a force unto itself. Ignore it. It does not exist. To attend to it is to pretend a power that does not exist.

That is not to say that evil as an action cannot happen; but evil even as an action cannot happen except preceded by confusion. In the end, people who sin, as it were, fail to appreciate the *Divinity of All*. In their *confusion* of insisting on dividing life into good and evil or good and bad, they sin against their fellow man; and very often they sin – if you want to call it that – in the name of God Who supposedly lives only where angels reside and out of reach of the devils. In truth, God must reside in both angels and devils. It is the very notion that God cannot reside in all that lays the foundation of real evil and real sin.

Of every tree of the garden, you may eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat; for the day you shall eat of it, you shall surely die.

Those words are found in the old *Genesis*; and though as suggested earlier in this essay, the author probably wanted to have us actors fail the test of the verse, the verse is probably correct. It is one of the greatest tricks of all time, I think. The definition of *evil* was provided – though quite subtly - even as the reader of the verse is expected to ignore the meaning and fall in line with a false camp of morality.

Whoever wrote that verse had a tremendous awareness of what constitutes evil, but whoever wrote it – or perhaps whoever translated it later – offered no attempt to clarify the meaning. It was like the author cleverly tried to establish a riddle, but did not define that attempt as a riddle – just to see who could break the code and solve the puzzle – all the time, hoping and expecting that no one would.

Some have, however, broken the code and understood the meaning, while realizing that understanding the verse is what frees us. Maybe I am not giving the real author credit for supplying a riddle in good conscience. Maybe he did hope that his riddle would be resolved via understanding, but I really think he was being clever while hoping that he would not be caught – at least not for a long, long time.

Otherwise, why did not the author of that story tell us frankly what the tree of knowledge of good and evil is? I am doing so in this essay. How come he did not when he wrote his story? By keeping the meaning hidden, I am led to believe that the author intended it to stay hidden; but maybe I am wrong.

The author of *Genesis*, though, had Adam & Eve failing to understand the code and falling flat on their fannies and into the mud of confusion. That is where the author of *Genesis* wanted Adam & Eve to land – in the mud of confusion; and so, quite cleverly, I think, that is how he wrote the ending of his story – which has been the beginning of billions of lives since.

The author of *Genesis* represented – and maybe represents – a morality that intends to diffuse people into camps of Good & Evil for the advantage of controlling them. **All division confuses; and all confusion divides.** So, if you want to control another, divide him from others and suggest the others are less in value for whatever reason. No one can control another unless this prescription, as it were, is followed.

The story of *Genesis*, I think, is a very clever story told to tell the world that it failed in the only chance it had – and thus has been fated to inherit sin and evil for all time. But what the author failed to do is to suggest that no one need inherit the sin of Adam & Eve as long as they understand what it was – and is. In understanding the sin, the sin could be no more – or control using that sin could be no more – at least for those who understand the riddle.

So, what's the riddle? We talked about it earlier, but not as a riddle. So, let's do it again. It is as plain as it can be. Most people concentrate on the ending of the story and miss the riddle. **The riddle specifies in bold and plain terms that the foundation of evil is confusion.** That's it. It is no more complicated than that. The definition in this tale is *confusion*. Avoid, *confusion*, then, and you avoid *evil* – or the control of those moralities that may use it.

Just look at the verse. **Of every tree of paradise you can eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you cannot eat – and the day that you eat of it, you shall die. Conversely, the day that you shall stop eating of it, you will live.** In other words, do not see life as composed of good and evil. That is the tree of condemnation. Eat of the tree that would have you divide life into camps of Good & Evil, and you shall inherit confusion – and death in life.

Now, isn't that clever? Now, isn't that also true? And isn't that also devious? The author could have defined just what the tree of knowledge of good and evil is, but he did not. Why didn't he define it? Because he did not want those who might read him to understand why they are being controlled by him. Pretty sneaky – I would say. Oh, author of *Genesis*, how could you betray a whole world just so you could nap quietly in your control of them?

No matter, however. Though the author of *Genesis* cleverly disguised the whole notion of evil in a cute story about failure without any allowance of success, he did define evil. So, **Mr. Genesis**, you have been found out. Your code has been broken. Now, let's hope the world is smart enough to regain Eden.

Others may ignore the riddle, but we *Natural Moralists* pay attention to it – and resolve it – and are not thereby destined to repeat the failure of Adam & Eve. That's the only commandment of a *Natural Moralist*, the only commandment he or she needs – *of*

the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat. Eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil means seeing two and not one. It means confusion.

See only Good by refusing to accept that the *Divine Presence* can be lacking – or that anything can be lacking in the *Divine Presence* - **AND THE GARDEN IS YOURS!** See evil by accepting that the *Divine Presence* is missing from where you are looking – and the garden exists no more. The Garden of Eden vanishes in those moments where awareness of the *Presence of God* is lacking; and the Garden of Eden thrives in those moments attended by awareness of the *Presence of God*. The Garden of Eden is as simple as that.

The Garden of Eden exists wherever the tree of knowledge of good and evil does not. Adam & Eve lost the Garden the moment they wished for something more than the *Natural Fruits* of the world, the moment they wished for a kingdom of their own. It is not for me to want for a kingdom of my own, but to blend in with *Nature* and to share in the *Natural Kingdom* that is.

There is no place in that kingdom where God is not. So, why act like there is? *The Garden of Eden is nakedness – and the love of it.* When Adam & Eve loved their nakedness, they belonged to the Garden. When they thought themselves above it or outside of it, they arranged their own exit.

But we can reenter the Garden anytime we want by refusing to divide life into camps of Good and Evil. Replace knowledge of good and evil with awareness only of Good because of a belief that all equally possess God; and the Garden of Eden is yours.

9
WINGS

**Oh, Adam, what have you done with privacy?
Have you made it a king, gave it a throne?
Oh, Eve, from whom do you hide?
Why do you choose to act so alone?**

**Stand tall, my friend, Adam.
Hear no more, you are cursed.
Stand beside him, my friend, Eve,
and let not a leaf hide your verse.**

**The author of Genesis did you wrong,
by making your regret, your worth.
And he did us no favors either
by dispersing his evil upon the earth.**

**You chose as he chose, not as you might
because shame is what he wanted to loose.
He had the power with his mind and pen
to hang us all with his evil noose.**

**Adam & Eve should have been allowed to eat
of all but the knowledge of good and evil,
but Genesis did not want them to succeed.
So it was written to have man bow to the devil.**

**If you see only good, you can do no wrong.
It's seeing life as bad that causes despair.
Those who rule need to divide to confuse
like the author of Genesis did with great care.**

**Eve, reach out now and put back the fruit
that he made you take to make him king.
And we'll all embrace you forever more
as Genesis we rewrite to give us wings.**

MORALITY
(Wings)



The End!

UNMASKING THE SOUL!

(34 Pages)

By
Francis William Bessler

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September, 2005

*Dedicated to My Parent Soul or Souls
and to any Child Souls I may have in the future
and to all who have encouraged me
in my search for the Truth of the Soul.*

Introduction:

Ladies and Gentlemen and little adults, let me tell you about this work. It is an investigation of the soul – that is, an investigation of the various major theories of the soul. There are several pet theories or beliefs of the soul that will be investigated. Perhaps, and quite likely, your own belief will be among them. An original concept or theory called “**The Natural Soul Theory**” will also be discussed. I hope you enjoy the discussion and find it worthwhile.

What are my credentials for writing on the soul? It’s hard to say. I have no degrees. My only claim to authenticity is a lifelong dedication to find the truth about the soul. Perhaps there is a good deal of insight behind my thoughts – or maybe just luck.

For what it’s worth, I studied for the Catholic ministry for six years in Wisconsin and Colorado after graduating from high school in Powell, Wyoming in 1960. I conjectured about the soul a lot during those years. Disliking a lot of the doctrines of the Church, however, I discontinued my studies for the ministry in 1966 and left the Church completely in 1973.

Much of the cause of my disenchantment with the Church was its perception of the soul. That discord led me to search for something more agreeable; however, it would not be until 1980 that I would finish my own personal search; for in that year, I found, or discovered, the truth for which I sought for so long. It is that truth, or perception of the truth, that is the kernel of this work on the soul. Perhaps it’s only one man’s journey and cannot apply to anyone else, but I do not believe that. I think my own journey can be shared; and that’s what I am trying to do with this work.

With that in mind, let us begin.

Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming, U.S.A.
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1.

The Soul as Illusion

Soul, of course, can mean different things to different people. It means only “representative being” for some. My soul is my inner being. Poetically, it’s the heart of me. For sure, it is that for me too, but it is also much more.

For some, it lives only as long as the body lives. It is, then, part and partial of the body. Its life originates from the body and has no sustenance outside of it. For those who believe this way, the soul is truly an illusion, not a reality unto itself. Soul becomes equated with attitude and philosophy and approach to life. It is not an entity unto itself.

One of my best friends believed in this definition of the soul. I say, believed, because he is past tense now. He has passed on to what he believed is oblivion. My friend, Emmett Needham, was a kind man; and I think I have never had a better friend. I know I have never had a better friend.

I have often wondered how he could be so kind and gentle by believing as he did in mortality of the soul. Why didn’t he just go out and be the meanest person he could be and take what he could while he lived? If he had no fear of a judgment after life, what difference did it make?

Many would have done just that – plundered, murdered, raped, anything at all to get what they wanted because there is so little time to live it up, but not my friend, Emmett. Though life was mortal in his eyes, he wasn’t about to squander it on meanness. He saw meanness as squandering life by being insensitive to its wonders.

Emmett stood in awe of Nature and embraced everything about it and everyone in it. Within his circle of friends, and I have never known anyone who had more, Emmett was a kind of saint and would have been preferred 10 to 0 over a traditional hard nosed saint like, for instance, Paul of Tarsus. Saint Emmett saw simplicity through kindness as the answer to the good life. Saint Paul saw complexity through judgment as the answer to the good life – and punishment for those who don’t measure up to some strict standard.

Beside Emmett, I have known others, too, who had no belief in an after life of the soul. Quite frankly, I love the people I have known who believe this way. At least in my friend, Emmett, fear of life and even fear of rejection and dying were absent because he saw his life and his living as being in the long stretch of things, rather insignificant. Most people I have known cannot survive happily unless they view themselves as significant. Most never do. So they live unhappy lives.

Emmett lived a fairly happy life, bless his soul, because he did not depend upon significance for virtue. Those of us souls who do depend upon significance or being recognized often pay a mighty price of being ignored for that dependency; and in the long run, we should ask, is it worth it? Who am I anyway that I should deserve admiration? Is not the nature of my being the real father of my attraction and my blessings?

Can consciousness itself be explained as only physical and chemical processes and reactions? Those who believe that the soul exists only as an illusion must also

believe this. Intelligence and emotion must also be explained within these boundaries. Is my intelligence the expression of the brain of my body? Are my emotions solely the expression of touching and being touched – like electrical impulses that come and go, dependent upon the position of a switch? Is the soul confined to expression within the limits of a yes or no reality? Yes, I'm being touched and it feels good. Yes, I'm being touched, but it does not feel good. I'm not being touched and I do not like the inattention; or I am not being touched and I don't want to be.

Is touching and being touched, then, the major graciousness of life, its basic reward? Are wars between good and evil total nonsense? In the view of this concept that the soul is solely an illusion, evil and the struggle between it and good are voids. Neither the evil nor the struggle actually exists. When the body dies, there is no judgment; so when the body lives, there can be no evil; for in the final analysis, evil can only exist as the judgment of life. Where there is no life hereafter, neither can there be judgment.

At an earlier point in my life, I would have been repulsed by the very thought that I am only mortal, that my soul is also my body or a process of it; but since Emmett and a few others I have known like him, I have lost a fear of that possibility. What a wonderful notion it is that judgment need not be feared for lack of a life hereafter to be judged. For those who truly believe this, living cannot be burdened with idiotic fears that have no base in reality because life itself is the only reality of perception. Life is not divided into regions of good and evil. It just is; and what it is is nothing short of mysterious and miraculous.

Is my friend, Emmett, a saint of his belief? I think so; though I also think he survived and survives as an entity itself. Is my friend, Emmett, in the hell of another's opposing belief? Because he did not believe he had to believe in evil and did not embrace a prince of salvation he did not need, is he condemned for eternity? Is believing only in goodness a sin? Is believing in the sanctity of creation itself grounds for condemnation? Perhaps only a fool of the greatest stature believes it is so.

If I should not believe in an afterlife and then die to find one, is it reasonable to suspect that my non-belief would be grounds for punishment by believers? Should a true prince of goodness and kindness find grace in banning me for my non-belief to a pit of unending hurt? Only a fool would believe it.

Belief itself cannot be grounds for salvation anymore than non-belief can be grounds for punishment. Whether I believe or I do not believe in an afterlife, in the final analysis, it's only kindness that matters because only kindness carries with it the security of insignificance and a gratitude for being.

2.

The Soul as Real Entity – Introduction

For some, the soul is an illusion. For others, of course, it is not. For some, like me, the soul is a real entity unto itself. It is an entity unto itself that may marry in time with a body in the span of a human life and may separate with the body upon the death of the body. The remainder of this work will concentrate on that definition of the soul; and we will take an analytical look at several theories regarding this perception of it.

Our discussion, however, is not going to be on the substance of the soul, but rather on the origin of it. Personally, I do not think that in a million years of study that we could begin to define the substance of the soul. In a way, that would be like trying to define the substance of God.

I am not saying that the soul is like God as a synonym or comparable entity. I am just saying the soul and God are both greatly indefinable within the limitations of the human mind. Both the soul and God are invisible and immeasurable and are properly assumed to exist because the alternatives of no God and no soul are almost unimaginable, at least for many of us.

My approach, then, in this little work on the soul is that, assuming the soul exists as an independent entity, what must be its origin? My thinking here is that if we can deduce probable origin, we can also predict probable destiny; and that is really the basic interest in the soul anyway. There are indeed subtle indicators that the soul does exist as an independent entity, and we will touch on a few of them in our discussion, but in the main, we will be talking probable origin and destiny.

Our discussion will focus on two traditional explanations of the origin of the soul and on one somewhat original explanation. Our first discussion will focus on the basic religious doctrine that the soul is directly created by God. Our second discussion will focus on a couple of traditional reincarnation theories of the soul. Then we will deal with an original concept I call "**The Natural Soul Theory.**" I have also dubbed my theory "**The Parent Soul Theory.**"

Granted that this work is mostly about the origin of the soul and not the substance of the soul, I do offer a sort of definition of the soul as I see it in Part 6 where I discuss the issues that I think my own theory or explanation of the soul resolves that other theories do not. But for preferring to concentrate on the origin of the soul rather than the substance or what of the soul, I will leave my own definition of the soul itself until later.

With that in mind, let us continue.

3.

The Soul as Direct Creation of God

When did I begin? That is, when did my soul begin? If we are to believe those who believe that my soul was instantaneously created by God, I suppose that my soul was instantaneously created sometime between the conception of my body and the birth of it. For those who believe in the direct creation by God theory, however, I do not think that timing is much of an issue. God creates the soul and that is all there is to that – regardless of when it happens.

A serious searcher for the truth of the soul, however, must care and must ask questions to satisfy a healthy and rightful curiosity. Does God wake up when human parents unite to conceive new life and then cooperates like a being in bondage to satisfy the creation of a new soul? Or is it possible some bodies are denied souls?

Is it possible that God will challenge a situation and say, sorry, I'm not giving this one a soul? Is that an explanation of evil, a body not blessed with a soul from God? Does God participate in some cases and fail to participate in others? In the one where He does participate, we have good; and in those cases where He doesn't, we have evil? Such is the burden of those born without souls – to wander forever without the blessing of God?

In my frank opinion, the direct creation explanation of the origin of the soul has more snafus than a field of a thousand *mind bombs*. The serious student of the soul must study the implications and probable conclusions of every theory or concept of the soul. Everywhere you go with the theory of direct creation by God, you end in an explosion.

If God creates a soul for each body, does He decide for the parents to get together and consummate? If so, he automatically gives His blessing to every union, be it within marriage or outside of it, within race or outside of it, be it a teen or a senior citizen; and if God should approve of a twelve year old conceiving, who are we to condemn it? Is it our right to sit in judgment of God?

Many will say, No, it's not right to sit in judgment of God, but God has the right to sit in judgment of us and hand out fate at His whim. Thus He has the right to create one soul trapped in bondage and another blessed in freedom. He has the right to create one soul and give it an inheritance of puritanical restriction and the right to create another soul and give it an inheritance of open splendor. God is all wise and He knows what's best for each soul; and it's up to each soul to suffer or enjoy its own personal fate or fortune. How many mind bombs have already exploded? And we have only begun the investigation of the natural conclusions of this explanation of the soul.

And after the soul is directly created, what does it do – live forever? It begins in time, yet it has no end? Any mathematician will tell you that if an event has no end, it also had no beginning; for where there is no end, there can be no beginning. But the soul has a beginning; therefore, it has to have an ending. If that is the case, where does it end and who ends it? I suppose since only God can create a soul, only He can

“uncreate” it. Will He end it for some and extend it for others? And how long will He let us live – a year, a life, a thousand lives, a million years?

How many mind bombs have we exploded? Why quit now? Let’s explode a few more. Let’s consider punishment for a soul created by God. Those who believe in this concept generally embrace a thousand fold, punishment for the soul, that is, external punishment. Which soul is to be punished and which one isn’t? That’s easy. The one who does His will should escape punishment and the one who rebels should not. But what is His will? How do I know it?

I’m told the prophets have been born to receive His will and pass it on to the rest of us poor sinners. Who is the right prophet and how will I recognize him or her? The mind bombs continue to explode, one after another. Everywhere you step, you end up without a leg to stand on. The rightful prophet is the one who speaks the truth. Everyone knows that. Alright, how do I know what is spoken is the truth? By accuracy of happening or prediction, I am told.

Is that to say, then, that if I predict twelve things to happen and they do, by design or otherwise, I can assume that a thirteenth one that can’t be verified, like eternal happiness, has to be true? Am I to presume that you are a prophet of God because you always tell the truth? Is the truth something that is a sign of God? Or can an enemy agent tell the truth too? Am I to conclude that you are sent from God because you claim the mission? Does claiming it make it so? The mind bombs continue to explode.

OK, say you are a prophet and I rebel. My soul is condemned, but to what? Fire, you say. Is that to say that the soul can suffer physical harm because the body can? No, that’s only a graphical illustration of what’s in store for a rebel, you say. He or she won’t actually burn because an immaterial soul can’t burn, but his or her pain will be like an endless fire. Oh, I see, I say.

And where will this soul of mine be burned by something that’s like fire but is not fire? In Hell, you say. And where is Hell? Is there a section of God’s great universe that He has roped off called “Hell” – where all rebellious souls are sent? Does this place have simulated fires of varying degrees to punish the victim more or less according to the degree of his or her rebellion? The bombs are getting bigger!

No, you say. Hell is a place where there isn’t God. Your punishment will be to never know God. Is that to say that God can be known by some and not by others? And who decides the needed capacity for understanding? Are souls who obey blessed with a greater capacity and those who don’t damned with the original gift? That’s interesting. Is that to say that happiness is directly proportional to the capacity for understanding? Is that to say that God holds back on those punished?

How about the idea that God is restricted in His own home? Is not all the world, God’s home? How, then, can He consider one portion unworthy of His presence, call it “Hell,” and never visit that place of damnation? How, then, can Hell exist as a place where God is not? Or does He exist everywhere and Hell is only not being able to see Him where He is? Are the obedient fitted with some special glasses and the disobedient left without? Give the prophets of this idea some time and I’m sure they will manufacture some special glasses. Once an objection is raised, they will deliver an answer. It may not be smart, but it will be an answer.

Of all the concepts ever proposed as an explanation for the soul, the most unlikely is this one that the soul is directly created by God; yet it is probably the most widely believed. A simple analysis of this concept is to destroy it as one without guts or one having absolutely no chance for being true. How many mind bombs did we explode by following its trail? How many more have been left unexploded?

Those who believe it might say that the unbeliever can think of a thousand reasons to deny it, but a real believer needs only one reason to embrace it – the love of God. God's love is so terrific that it can resolve even the grossest of fates. Can this possibly be true? Or is the correct response one that says it's not the love of God that creates divine fate for souls, but rather the ignorance of man who knows neither himself nor God and tries to define both within the boundaries of that ignorance?

4.

The Soul as Reincarnated

Again, we begin where all theories should begin. When did I begin? Many reincarnationists believe that originally the soul is created by God and then that soul strays from its origin, perhaps by getting lost in the world of flesh. For some reason, the reincarnationists who believe that man has strayed from God somehow believe that the world of the flesh is below God. Now, how a soul could have “descended” into the flesh in the first place is beyond me, but some think this way. Getting away from the flesh that traps a soul seems to be the whole course of a soul that has somehow dropped away from God. It makes no sense to me. Why would a soul consider travel in the flesh useful if the flesh is lacking in God? Why would I want to incarnate – or go into the flesh – if by incarnating, I’m trying to get back to God? If the flesh is somehow distant from God because God is Spirit, why would a soul delve into that which is distant from God in order to get back to God? Those who think that way confuse the jeebers out of me.

Many reincarnationists believe that the soul can wander away from an original perfection in that they can stray from God. God is then limited to some mysterious center, outside of which He doesn’t exist. My idea of God is that it is that force or entity that exists everywhere. That is the very definition of God. So, how can there be some so called “center” where God exists and some “outside the center” where God can’t exist? With just a little thinking, we can resolve that it cannot be that any being can “stray from God.” It can’t be so because God must be everywhere. There can be no straying from something that is everywhere.

In truth, then, God cannot be some mystical center from which everything evolves and from which straying occurs. The reincarnationists who see God as creator of souls who can stray from the creator overlook the fact that it is impossible for a soul to stray from God because God is everywhere and cannot be escaped. The soul, then, needs no journey to get back to God; for it could have never left Him – or It.

Another variation of the theory of reincarnation has the soul being the product of some so called, “Big Bang.” This theory, too, reaches for the implausible as an answer for the beginning of a soul. It has its own serious field of mind bombs.

What causes this big bang that allegedly allows for the projection of myriads of souls from some mystical and ethereal star of soul energy? What causes this source of energy to explode in the first place? Does it have a place in the universe, like a planet of potential soul energy? It seems to me that this theory has no base in reality and is as much purely speculative as the direct creation by God theory. In short, it offers few answers while it poses multiple questions for which there are no plausible answers.

The “Big Bang” theory, I think, is solely the product of scientists pondering the beginning of the universe. As it is speculated that the universe originated from some cosmic star that exploded, so also it is speculated that souls proceed into existence in the same manner. The cosmic soul star, having all that bounded soul energy,

explodes and scatters souls hither and tither. I suppose each soul wanders for a time until it can find a host to take or inspire; and when it does, it turns into a leech sucking experiences from the host body, experiences that serve as fuel for its journey back to the original source.

This is the stuff science fiction is made of, but hardly something a serious soul can consider as plausible. If the original soul pocket exploded and scattered souls from its midst, there would be no parent host to return to. So, where would such a projected journey back to a nonexistent center end? It would seem that the souls coming from this original explosion are doomed to wander forever, unless the journey itself is deemed the essence of the experience. If that is the case, the trip back translates only into a trip without an end.

At least my friend, Emmett, had an end in view within his belief of illusionary soul. He had an end called "oblivion." This particular view of reincarnation projects no end, but rather endless wandering in and out of bodies looking for a parent that has ceased to exist. For all its lacking of plausibility, however, the "Big Bang" theory at least resolves God from judging souls and does not finitize God by having Him (or It) be the source of the big bang. If it did, God would have been exploded into a jillion little godlings with the original God being remanded to oblivion. God can't explode and be scattered where He was not; for again, as infinite, God must already exist everywhere. The soul cannot be explained at the expense of dividing or limiting God.

All traditional reincarnationists believe in the sanctity of experience. A soul must experience this or that to be brought into some mystical original alignment with perfection. For reincarnationists, at least for many of them, perfection cannot be found in a current state of being. Like the souls of direct creation by God, most reincarnated souls have to go, or think they have to go, someplace else to find perfection. Over the rise, there may be perfection; but perfection is never at hand; or else the journey will have ended.

But what is this mystical perfection for which they reach? There is always a higher and lower echelon of virtue where ultimate virtue is perfection. That which is low is that which is evil, although evil in a relative sense; and that which is high is that which is good, and perhaps, God Himself.

A major pitfall of most theories of reincarnation is the basic perception that perfection is never at hand and always beyond. Many reincarnationists fail to see that by definition God has to be everywhere at every moment; and therefore, perfection must always be at hand and never out of reach if attainment of God is indeed the definition of perfection.

So what if attainment of God is not the perfection for which they seek? Say that they realize that the deposit to the God-attainment account is already at its maximum. What then? What becomes their objective? Which goal are they seeking by thinking that they have to be born and reborn until they get it right? Many reincarnationists say they have to be recycled, as it were, again and again until they get it right. If attainment of God has already been achieved in spite of themselves, what is the "right" they seek? What do they have to do to get it right?

Is it truth? Will the truth really free them? And if so, for what? Many reincarnationists remind me of travelers who set out for some far land without having any idea how far it is. "Getting it right" translates to reaching the unknown destiny.

It could be a hundred miles, a thousand, a million, a trillion, a zillion. They keep trudging along because stopping and recognizing their destiny has already been achieved is not part of the plan.

Another concept that many reincarnationists love is the concept of realms or strata or dimensions or planes. The soul must penetrate some imaginary plane of existence to reach into the alleged dimension beyond. It's like the imaginary dimension beyond belongs to a different intensity of energy. It's a whole new world.

I think this perception results as a logical conclusion of the soul travel idea. If souls travel, they must travel someplace and toward some goal of aspiration. So imaginary planes of existence that divide those who might fail from those who might succeed are injected into the scheme of things.

From there, we have wise souls who have penetrated the planes speaking to those who need to penetrate them. Souls speak claiming experience in a different plane; and students of reincarnation gather to hear the "all wise one." But are those wise souls any different than the prophets of the direct creation corral? Am I to believe that planes of existence do exist because some philanthropic soul "on the other side" claims as much? This wise one would naturally tell me what I want to hear since he is at hand to do the telling in the first place, rather than pursuing his own adventure.

What else can he or she say? Would you expect him to say: ***I speak to you from the same plane. The only difference is that you have a body and I do not. You are as I, no better, no worse. You have no where to go but where you are.*** Would he or she likely get my attention by stating equality?

I think many of the so called "wise ones" who seek channels through which to speak are souls searching for attention, much like preachers willing to give advise. A preacher needs an audience; and so does a "wise one" from the other side. It stands to reason there must be souls living in the beyond who need attention because there are many living in mortality who do. Are attention seeking souls really going to stop their practices when they pass into the great beyond? I don't think so.

So, what is it that a great wise one, like a great prophet, can tell me that I don't already know or have a way of knowing? Is the place they are more miraculous than the place I am? Not if God is equally here and there. Are they in less physical pain and suffering than I? Probably because if they are in a beyond, they are without bodies that allow pain; but when I pass, too, into that great beyond, I will be as they; and all their accumulated wisdom will not have affected the achievement.

5.

The Soul as Generated by a Natural Soul (The Parent Soul Concept)

So, here we are, totally suspicious of the soul as a direct creation of God and the soul as reincarnated – and even the soul as an entity that dies with the body. Have we not covered all bases?

No – we haven't. There is another I'd like to suggest. The soul does not originate as a direct creation of a personal God, nor as a starlet of a soulful energy exploding from a big bang. It exists, not so mysteriously at all, as the progeny of another soul. We have been looking too high for the answer; and the answer is only navel deep, as it were. Look into your belly button and there is the answer.

You see, we really do not have to know the process to understand that it is so because like all processes in Nature, none of which we thoroughly know, the birth of the soul must only be a reflection of Nature's other processes. After all, the soul is natural. Is it not? It must, then, have a natural explanation, not a supernatural one; and it must have an explanation that is ongoing that takes place on a consistent basis like all other processes in Nature. We're not looking for an answer that is a once in a million years happening. Rather, we should be looking for an answer that is happening now.

There are many, I know, who would resist this notion that the soul is natural, as natural as the body. These are the ones who want to see God in Heaven and not in Hell. These are the ones who want to see God in a church or in a prophet and not in a kitchen. These are the ones who want to see God in the priest and not in the prostitute. These are the ones who divide reality into regions of good and evil and separate the miracle from the miraculous.

Why not answer the soul with a natural explanation? Why go beyond, unless one sees Nature somehow as less worthy of virtue than the God Which creates it? If the soul exists at all as an individual entity that is not dependent upon the body for its life, why should the soul not have to follow the same rules as everything else in Nature?

And what are the rules? We just have to look at the rest of Nature to find the answer. In all of the rest of Nature, anything that exists as a living being comes from something else and comes from something that is like it. This is the evidence we have somehow totally ignored when discussing the soul.

I began my own personal existence at birth on December 3rd, 1941. Everything else that began on that date came from something else and came from something that is like it. Why should my soul have been different? Why should it, too, not have had its birth from another born earlier - given that my soul is a living entity, independent of my body?

We're talking independent entity here, not dependent entity like my friend, Emmett's, illusive soul. Given that my soul is an independent entity, why should it not have to follow the same rules of all other independent living entities of Nature? That is the way of Nature; and it is foolish of me to think I am different; for in both body and soul, I believe I am a son of Nature.

Now, perhaps my soul was not born at the same time my body was born. Perhaps it was born at the same time as my conception or when my gender evolved within my mother's womb at six weeks or nine weeks or whenever, but at some point, even if before my conception as a body, my soul was probably born of another soul. It was never born of God as a consequent of a direct creation. That is not to say that God is not in me. It's only to say that God did not do me personally; and He or She or It did not do you personally either.

That's a tough one for a lot of folks to swallow. They so want a personal relationship with God and need the same. So, an impersonal participation of God in the birth of a soul is totally unacceptable. The Jews of old, and even today, believed so strong that a personal relationship with a stern God figure is needed that they fomented the dogma of the messiah, a masculine Godly figure, to fulfill it. The Christians then took the same dogma and brought God into a personal mode in the character of Jesus. The need for a personal relationship with God is deep – very, very deep.

If there was evidence in reality that the body is "poof created" by God, then I would have reason to believe that the soul is also "poof created." But there is no evidence of the body being a poof or instant creation of God. Accordingly, there is no reason to believe that the soul is either. If the soul is not the product of an instantaneous personal creation, then, it must be the product of an ever consistent natural process of generation.

Through the wonderful power of observation, two principles of natural generation are obvious. *Number one, all things that exist in Nature come from something else – not themselves; and number two, all things that exist in Nature come from something that is like them.* We may not understand why it has to be that way, but it should be obvious to the most casual observer that it is that way.

It is obvious, for instance, that a cat - or a body of a cat - can't come from a dog. It just doesn't happen that way. It's obvious, too, that a fish can't come from a lion, nor a bird from a bear, nor a human from a cow. **The plain simple truth is that in every ongoing process in Nature, without exception, all things are born of something else and are born of something that is like them.**

Given, then, that the soul even qualifies as an independent entity that perhaps can marry with a body, it, too, should have to follow the rules of all generation. It must come from its own kind, which is to say, it must come from another soul or souls. The power of observation, the greatest tool of wisdom, will tell us that.

Of course, we can deny our observation and claim that the soul does not have to follow the rules of all other generation. We surely can do that – and have done it and continue to do it. We can cling to a notion not enforced by any observation that some things in existence can be created instantaneously. Nothing in Nature is created outside of natural generation out of thin air. It just doesn't happen that way. Does it? Why should the soul be different? *Why shouldn't the two principles of all natural generation have to apply to the soul as well?* Like everything else, the soul, if it exists at all as an independent entity, must come from something else and must come from something that is like it.

Observation, then, can tell us all we need to know about the soul. We need no special laboratory, nor prophet, nor ethereal wise man. We need only to observe and to pay attention to the general rules of all generation. Know the rules – then apply them. That’s all we have to do. It’s really not all that difficult, unless we make it so; and knowing the rules and applying them doesn’t detract from the mystery of God in it all either. It only redefines it a little. The fantastic mysteries of God can never be challenged by any degree of knowledge of humankind, even as humankind comes to understand more about itself.

6.

Issues the Natural Soul Concept Resolves

I believe the “**Natural Soul Concept**” resolves a lot of issues that other theories do not, although it doesn’t answer everything. Just for the heck of it, though, let me offer a few issues that I think the Natural Soul Concept resolves. How about – seven? OK?

Number one, it absolves God from having to be finite because the idea does not require a personal God. Personal is finite because personal is limiting or defined by a relationship. Where there is a relationship, there is definition. God, as infinite, cannot be “defined” or stated to be here and not there. This is important because we get ourselves into a lot of confusion trying to bring God down to our level to satisfy the need for a personal God. To create man or to judge him or to personally bless him, God has been personalized to get the job done. He has been “finitized” or limited by virtue of the process imposed upon Him.

We can’t have it both ways. We can’t have both an infinite God and a finite God; and we can’t make God into something He (or She or It) is not just to satisfy a need to make God the leading character of a fairy tale. It’s not like we are excluding God from the picture. We are only recognizing there is no place in the picture He is not. The Natural Soul Concept doesn’t need a personalized God. Therefore, it does not need soul creation, soul judgment, or soul blessing by a personal God. The blessing is reality.

God is not finite. God is infinite. That means that God is everywhere. God is therefore in us, not out of us as if we are external carvings of a Divine Sculptor. We are not external carvings. We are internal expressions. We can’t be outside of God because God cannot be outside of us. The Natural Soul Concept resolves the issue of the ages that would have God being outside of all that God is creating. To be only outside of me is to be limited. To be only inside of me is to be limited – or finite. God is not limited. God is both inside and outside of me and you. God is infinite – not finite!

Number two, the Natural Soul Concept provides an answer for the beginning of a soul. The other theories suggest notions that are more speculations and impositions than answers. You can’t even begin to verify them. They remain pure guesses. The Natural Soul Concept, however, offers an answer that is consistent with a Nature of answers. Nature does all beginnings in the same way. All living things come from other living things and come from living things that are like them.

Is my soul, a finite entity if it exists at all, like God? How, then, could it have been issued from God in a personal way? Is my soul like a ray of light? Is any living thing like a ray of light? How, then, could my soul be the son of a beam of light? We could go on, but there’s no need.

At one time in his history, man was convinced that his body came from a deity too, but science has come to offer a rational explanation for the process of physical

generation. If the soul does exist as an independent entity, most likely, it also respects some natural law of origin. Consistency of mind would demand it. It is unreasonable to assume that Nature has one rule for one set of life and another rule for another set. Most likely, all life attends to the same rule of origin – or rules of origin.

What is the soul? The Natural Soul explanation can't answer that with certainty any more than any of the other theories can, but if I were to have to define it, personally this would be my answer: ***The soul is an individual expression that resides in time and place which records for posterity the experiences of life.*** But individual expressions have beginnings. In my opinion, the Natural Soul Concept offers a far better explanation for the beginning of a soul than does any other theory about the soul.

Regardless of its origin, however, I think it is important to realize that whatever the soul is, it is an individual. That means it can be owned – as it can own. As something that can be owned, ideally we should own our own souls. Too many souls are individuals owned not by themselves, but by others who wish to control them and make them their subjects. Whatever the soul is, it should be your own as my soul should be my own. I may have come from another, but once given birth, I should belong first to me. That is not to say I can't belong to others as well, but if I do not belong first to me, then as far as I am concerned, I am a soul without dignity for having to depend upon another for meaning. The soul is no different that anything else in creation. As completely filled with God, it should need nothing outside of itself for a sense of completion; and any soul that thinks it needs another to be fulfilled lacks esteem for its own perfection.

Number three, the Natural Soul Concept provides an answer for the ending of the soul – or the destiny of the soul or a soul. If the soul ages, it will probably also die, but who is to say that it does age? Assuming, however, that it does age, lots would worry about the prospect of a soul dying. They don't want their souls to die, but wishing against it won't make it so if that is the end of the process.

Do all things in Nature die? All that we can see, yes; but keep in mind, there's a lot we can't see. Maybe the soul will die and maybe it won't, but regardless of any aging process, it is likely that the soul continues after the death of the body for some indefinite period of time. How else could it become a parent soul itself? Then, too, maybe the soul is exempt from breaking down or aging and therefore is trapped in existence. Who knows? I don't. But knowing it or not knowing it won't alter the process, whatever that process is. The wise man will just let Nature take its own course and be grateful for the participation.

Number four, the Parent or Natural Soul Concept provides a much needed answer for the tradition of a soul. Why is one soul naturally angry and another always at peace while both souls enjoy the same benefits? The Natural Soul Concept would say that souls, like bodies, naturally inherit characteristics and moods, and maybe even memories, of the parent soul. Though a soul may not have lived incarnated in a previous life, it would be as if it did because it will inherit the experiences of the parent soul which did live before.

It is also possible, if not probable, that a parent soul would stick around its child and provide some degree of providence or protection or guidance. Maybe the presence you sometimes feel that gives you a warm feeling of being loved and cherished doesn't come from a personal God, but rather from a personal soul from your own soulful tradition, be it your own parent soul or souls or just a relative soul or friend. The possibilities of a soulful providence are endless, given that you are the son or daughter of another soul or of other souls.

The Natural Soul explanation provides grounding for a soul like none of the other theories do. My soul is grounded to a parent soul, and, as such, can reasonably expect some degree of angelic assistance; however, it's also possible that some soulful parents, like some human parents, will not choose to stick around and will, in fact, abandon their progeny soul or souls.

It would seem likely, too, that a soul, when it has finished its journey in mortality, will join and be joined by the tradition of souls that preceded it. Death for some of us may mean quite a homecoming; and for others of us, it may be a solo. Life is like that – and probably so is death or life beyond death.

Connected with this discussion of the tradition or heritage of a soul, the Natural Soul Concept explains the possibility of soul mates – and even soul twins. Who's to say that a parent soul can't make twins and who's to say those twins can't decide to incarnate at the same time? Even if the positioning was at opposite ends of a culture, each of the twins would likely be initially disposed with the same character traits – and consequently, may have the same likes and dislikes.

If the soul also influences physical development, the bodies of those two separated souls could also develop along the same pattern, depending upon the blueprint or soul map inherited from the same parent soul. I'd say that's an interesting possibility; and the Natural Soul Theory would say it is plausible.

The issue of soul mates could be similar. There could be another very similar to me in the world as a brother or sister from the same parent. It would be no wonder that two souls could be attracted as if one entity because their heritage may have paved the way to that end. The Natural Soul Theory would provide a very sensible answer to the issue of soul mates. Some of us may have multiple soul mates in the world. Perhaps it is our destiny to find and even marry with one another.

Also connected with this discussion of the tradition of a soul under the tutorship of a parent soul, homosexuality could find an explanation. Say that a given heritage of souls has been male for successive generations, or has selected masculine forms as hosts; and then a male inclined heritage with a natural attraction to females decides to go with a female progeny – or a feminine form. What might be a possible result? The tradition and blueprint of that soul could have been so paved with attraction to the female sex that the current progeny keeps the same tradition and attraction. Thus, the daughter could find herself attracted only to other females. It's a thought. It might be hard to alter a habit in one generation.

While on this subject of body selection, it might be worthwhile to consider the issue of deformity and poverty selection here. If we are right on this matter that souls select bodies, and maybe even control their development, why would a soul intentionally choose to go with the unattractive – like deformity and poverty?

Perhaps the answer is to correct an imbalance by a soul intent on altering itself for its own tradition.

Maybe a tradition of souls has a habit of kicking dogs – and a rebel soul decides it's time to stop kicking dogs. So it becomes one to correct the imbalance. Instead of being one to kick dogs, it becomes a kicked dog. Or maybe a tradition of souls has a habit of sneering at the poor – and a rebel soul decides it's time to stop sneering. So it becomes one of the sneered poor. Or maybe a tradition of souls has a habit of deforming and demeaning other persons – and a rebel soul decides it's time to stop deforming and demeaning. So it becomes one of the deformed so as to embrace them.

Oh, what wonderful mysteries lie in the selections of a soul! It may seem this line of thinking is crazy, but I don't think it's crazy at all. The world of souls must be like the world of people because souls become people. As there will always be rebel people from human traditions, it follows that there will always be rebel souls from soulful traditions. Rebellion often takes the form of choosing the opposite of a disliked tradition. So why not for souls too?

If my tradition is one of abusing and I decide I don't want to continue the tradition, the best possible approach could be to go over to the abused side so as to see things from there. That way, in a rather dramatic fashion, I could correct the imbalance caused by my tradition and right things so as to proceed along my own very different course.

What I mean to say from this conjecture about imbalance is that, though a soul would naturally have a tradition to uphold, it could, if it wanted, change course. It could go from an inclination to be rich to an inclination to be poor just to change an undesired course. Again, the reason for saying so is that humans do it sometimes – and souls are only inhuman entities before they become human entities or human souls.

On the other hand, however, a soul could choose the tradition of its soulful family only because it lacked the need or desire to change a family course. Thus, one of a tradition of poverty could choose it again; and one of a tradition of riches could choose that again; and one of a tradition of moderation could choose that again too.

It could be, then, that a rebel soul is personally taking charge to change its destiny from its tradition when embracing an attitude and a practice different from its tradition. But consider this too. Say that an entire tradition is desiring a change and decides to give birth to a soul to represent that desired change. That progeny, then, would be “*sent into the world with a mission,*” but that mission would be for the entire tradition, not just for itself.

In such a case, and it's reasonable to expect that such a scheme could happen because it also happens in mortal mode, a progeny soul would carry the load of an entire tradition. It would be like that soul, in doing battle with an entire world, would be doing battle for an entire soulful family or community or tradition.

On the other hand, the representation need not be a rebellious one from the manner of the parent tradition. It could well be that a soul is continuing an age old tradition by sending a son or a daughter into the world to do this or that. Through that progeny, an entire tradition could, in a sense, be living and maturing and caring or

hating or killing and raping, whatever the case may be. In this light, too, I am sure there are myriads of cases that are entirely reflective of this kind of setting.

For instance, could Christ have been a disciple for his tradition? Could it have been literally true that he was “*sent into the world by his father*”? Personally, I think the chances are extremely slim that he did not fit this mold of mission.

And what was his mission? It’s hard to be certain about that because there is so much confusion and contradiction in the Gospels about his possible mission. In one case, we find him representing a tradition out to judge the world and condemn it for non-belief; and in another reflection, we have him representing a tradition intent on telling the world that Heaven is at hand and that Heaven is for everyone who recognizes that the world is the blessing of God and not a trap for the soul.

As so often happens, writers and reporters report what they see – and that may not be truly reflective of reality. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John speculated in their own vague ways about the mission of Christ, but each of them told of it as supportive of their own particular view of life. In other words, they fit Christ to their belief. They didn’t change their belief to fit Christ because they did not know the real Christ; or, at least, such is my opinion. I think they represented an earthly tradition which required a messiah; and in Christ, they found one – or made one. They represented a tradition that saw sin as a human inheritance that could only be washed away by a sinless God; and then they made a god of Christ to wash away that sin. What else could they do – given their perception of life – remain lost forever?

Who was Christ and what was his mission? That’s anybody’s guess, as it was also the guesses of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John – and Peter, who may have driven them all. Each of these reporters had an axe to grind with their renditions of Christ. And what is the real story? Well, I guess it’s written in the wind and in the Holy Book of the soulful tradition and family of Christ; and perhaps that will not be found in any book here on Earth.

Even as I say that, however, I do believe there is a version of Christ that comes much closer to the real person than that offered by any of the favored Gospels of the **BIBLE**. In 1945 in a cave in Egypt, there was found an ancient script that has since been related as **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**. By carbon dating, it has been determined that this script, written in an Egyptian verse called Coptic, has been in that cave off the Nile River since the 4th Century A.D. I do not choose to offer a personal interpretation of that work here, but I think it’s worth noting that I have offered an interpretation of that work in a work of my own that I call **JESUS VIA THOMAS COMMENTARIES**. The Christ that I found in the work by Thomas, alleged to be Thomas, one of the Apostles of Christ, is a very different Christ than that presented in the regular Gospels. At least, I think so. It is worth while to note that here, I think; but having noted it, let me proceed.

Number five, the Natural Soul Concept provides an answer concerning the judgment of souls. God may not judge souls, lest He or She or It be finitized in the process; but that does not mean there is no judgment. The old saying, ***What goes around, comes around,*** says it all. There is no forgiveness for hurting and being hurt except by stopping the action that’s doing it. The Natural Soul Concept absolves God

of judgment, but it places judgment squarely where it belongs – on the individual of judgment.

If I am a kind soul, in mortal life or hereafter, it is reasonable to assume I will continue the kindness. If I am a mean soul, I will continue the meanness. If I am a joyful soul, the joy will continue. If I am a pessimistic soul, the pessimism will continue. If I am an optimistic soul, the optimism will continue. ***Continuation of a state of mind is the main judgment of a soul.***

There are many who don't like that prospect. How dare it be so that a man who murders another should not be punished for the deed! It may seem otherwise, but they are punished by continuing their state of mind and not having an easy way to escape it. Isn't that punishment enough?

Those who answered "No" are likely subject to their own judgment to continue their state of mind of mercilessness. I don't think it would be much better to be a man with a merciless state of mind than it would be to be a man with a mean state of mind. In fact, there is not much difference between the two. In effect, meanness and mercilessness are similar states of mind. So if you are all so concerned that the mean person is not getting his due, perhaps you should be looking to change your ways because your own mean heart is lurching there close behind your revengeful attitude. Meanness and mercilessness are more like siblings than opposites because both are conducted by angry souls. The Natural Soul Concept would say that judgment is automatic, self-imposed by attitude, and universal. No one can escape it because no one can escape themselves. Can they?

This thing about it not being easy to change ones state of mind should not be underestimated. Perhaps that's why we are born into bodies in the first place, to change a state of mind – given that a soul is a guest of a body host. Why would a soul choose to fill or inform a body if not for some advantage a body could provide that a bodiless existence could not? Maybe bodies, through sensation, allow change within a soul by some soulful feedback. Maybe they can't alter their state of mind outside of an atmosphere of change that doesn't exist in purely soulful existence.

If so, how about this? A soul might yearn for freedom from the body because life is seen as a burden rather than as a joyful experience, then is freed from the body through death, and then has to continue its state of mind of feeling life is a burden without ability to change or correct the state of mind without being born again. That's what you could call a vicious circle; and that's also judgment. It's like being caught in a spiral that repeats and repeats and repeats. So the wise man will not take judgment lightly.

Then, too, there may be the judgment of revenge to consider, perhaps as heartless and determined as the injury we imposed in our turn. We are free of a vengeful God for sure because God is inside of us and not outside of us to be able to be vengeful, but we may not be free of vengeful souls out to get even. Is it not likely that if I should bind others against their will, when they are freed – even if by death itself – they may choose to try and bind me against my will? That is if they are revenge minded and cannot let that go because they are caught up in a judgment of their own desired revenge.

Given that souls might have an ability to track or track down other souls, revenge would likely be predictable as a judgment upon a soul guilty of inflicting pain or death in his turn simply because of the vengeful character of many souls. Of the six million Jews executed under Adolph Hitler, for instance, maybe one million of those may be revenge minded. How would you like to be pursued by a million militants and their families? That may well become the “eternal” fate of an Adolph Hitler. How would you like to be marked for death upon birth? That could be a consequence of the judgment of revenge.

Number six, the Natural Soul theory provides an answer for the prevailing existence of churches in the world. Why are there so many religions, all claiming to represent the one true God? Is not that God the same for all? Why, then, all the different churches, each one disclaiming the validity of the other for this reason or that? The answer is, it’s probably different soulful traditions allowing for their own control of things.

Would it not stand to reason that if my state of mind is to control others, especially their souls, that I would want to establish some structure for that purpose? Presto, a church, at least the kind that seeks to regulate and not simply, suggest. I’m sure there are some souls, like there are some humans, whose desired state of mind is to gather souls. After all, I suppose souls need company too. On the part of some, I’m sure there is a continuous effort to add to the fold. A church might be a proper vehicle to that end.

This is not to say that churches are of no value. Certainly not. In his own way, Christ came to add to his fold and declare his church for doing that. I am sure there are many Christian churches which actually reflect the actual aims and intentions of the real Christ; but there are also many churches which have no idea about the real Christ but think they do and generously use the name of Christ to gain adherents to their own faiths. This is not to argue for or against any particular church. It’s just to argue that the Natural Soul Concept offers an answer as to why there are churches and so many of them.

And finally, ***Number seven, the Natural Soul Concept and theory and explanation offers us a reason, a tremendously motivating one, to go free.*** The greatest bondage is ignorance. That is, the greatest cause of bondage is ignorance. To the degree that we allow ourselves to be herded into some soul corral or other, we will have always been ignorant to that same degree. We are capable of controlling our own destiny – or of being controlled by another’s destiny.

We can establish our own soulful traditions and then bare our children souls within the constraints of that tradition. We are free to have fun, if that’s what we want; and, unfortunately, we are also free to impede others from having their kind of fun and fulfillment. If we do choose the way of impeding others, however, then one judgment we will suffer will be the loss of our own freedom. The wise soul knows that it is impossible to impose without being imposed upon. To restrict another is to be restricted by virtue of our expenditure of energy; for if we restrict others, we are not free to be free of them. In making others our prisoners, they become our

responsibilities as we become their servants. Indeed, judgment may wear mysterious robes.

We are free of a God Who or Which commands not to eat of the apples of the orchard. We are free to enjoy the meal of our own choosing, keeping in mind that dietary habits and all other habits are ours for the making, but also ours for the keeping. It's a terribly old cliché, but the Natural Soul Idea would agree all the way: ***We can make the bed we want, but we also have to lie in the bed we make.*** Life and Judgment are strictly up to us.

7.

Reincarnation and the Natural Soul Concept

Perhaps there is not one single answer in respect to the total life of a soul. If you will, let us consider a marriage of concepts. *Perhaps the proper marriage is one between the Parent Soul or Natural Soul Concept and Reincarnation.* Given that the beginning of a soul is not a direct creation by God in a personal sense and not from some cataclysmic explosion of some magical soul star, it would seem feasible that a born soul might choose to reincarnate indefinitely.

Who's to say that a soul can't do this? Who knows the mechanics of incarnation to say it can't be so? I know of no one. How about you? *It would seem to me very logical that if a soul could incarnate once, it could do so forever – given that it is truly or practically immortal and given that the soul controls the process.*

If, however, souls are infused into bodies as part of the process of physical generation, reincarnation is not likely. If somehow the birth of a soul is intertwined with a greater process of life and conception and embryonic development, it is not likely that an existent soul could play a part in the drama.

Perhaps a parent soul wanting to give birth to a son or daughter uses a human conception, or any animal conception for that matter, as a cocoon in which to nestle the child soul. If so, this would imply that the entry of a soul into a carnal form would be a one time event. Perhaps birth of soul in some crazy way depends on physical generation and can't happen outside of it. If so, then, it is unlikely souls can be reborn within a subsequent conception; for there would be no need. I suppose it would be possible, though, that a soul could choose the generation of carnal life as the time to repeat itself in a child or children souls. Accordingly, maybe a parent soul, as such, would never reincarnate and any soul would only incarnate once – as it is given birth by a parent soul. It does make for some very interesting speculation. Doesn't it?

If, however, a soul is already born before the incarnation takes place, and was born itself outside of the process of incarnation, having a life totally independent of the flesh, then there is no reason why the incarnation process can't be repeated indefinitely for any given soul. Given the apparent comings and goings of souls in some cases of human experience, the evidence strongly suggests the latter process to be the right one. Souls are already born before they take possession of bodies. They may not be born as part of the process of incarnation itself.

Assuming reincarnation as real, however, what is the evidence to suggest that existing entities take possession of bodies? Perhaps it can best be illustrated in cases of so called **possession** where a human person is visited by another soul who takes charge or tries to take charge and take control away from the resident soul. This could explain schizophrenia and multiple personalities. There may be multiple souls trying to occupy the same body. Normally, the result would have to be confusion and conflict with souls fighting each other for control, unless the multiple possession is by kindred souls.

Then there is the evidence of **obsession** that would suggest the existence of souls before incarnation takes place. There are many instances where external souls, or some external phenomena, have attempted to interrupt a life or a situation or even attack a person with whatever force it is that bodiless souls have. Some would dismiss activities due to obsession as hallucination on the part of the recipient, but it is clearly possible that visits and involvements on the part of foreign souls, friendly and otherwise, could occur if it is so that a resident soul visited a body initially. If one soul can visit a body, perhaps multiple souls can visit that same body.

The possibilities are there; and they are very real. So called “devils” could be nothing more than antagonistic souls intervening to try and upset or control a resident soul. I’m sure this happens continuously within the many dramas of life. We’ve all heard of voices commanding a soul to do this or that. Sometimes what is commanded is friendly; and sometimes it is not. I suppose the kind of command would depend entirely upon the nature or character of the one giving the command.

Perhaps our asylums are filled with people who are victims of possession, and even obsession. If there are multiple masters of opposing minds trying to control one body host, only chaos could result; and this might be the chaos reflected in much insanity.

As suggested, however, multiple possession need not be antagonistic, although I doubt that much friendly possession occurs because of a respect of friendly souls for one another. Friends do not normally invade one another. Friendly multiple possession probably doesn’t occur, but friendly visits and even friendly assistance in ways unknown by the resident soul probably occur all the time. Maybe that would explain inexplicable powers that some people feel sometime. Maybe there’s a kindred soul around offering a boost to a friend.

Anyway, back to the possibility of incarnation happening at the agency of an existent soul and not a soul being born as a soul, multiple possession is perhaps our best evidence that souls do, in fact, exist to take possession of a body – whether that be a baby body or otherwise. If it can happen to an adult person, it could certainly happen to a baby. From that, I think reincarnation is far more fact than fiction.

Why would souls reincarnate? That’s the big question. Isn’t it? I suggested in a previous Part that perhaps the key is the sensation of the animal form, allowing change to be reflected in a hosted soul. Maybe this is the answer and maybe not. I don’t think things happen or can happen for no reason. So, it’s obvious to me that the flesh must provide some advantage to a soul occupying a body or else it wouldn’t incarnate in the first place.

What would our reason tell us about the advantages of the flesh to a soul? Well, for what it’s worth, I’ve thought about that and it seems to me the motives, though many, can be reduced to several simple ones – **to ride, to hide, to find, and to deride.**

It may seem strange, and even contradictory at times, but I suspect some souls marry with bodies to hide in them for various reasons. Some marry with bodies to find the truths of reality. Some only want to use them for a ride. And, unfortunately, there are some whose only mission is to deride and control others.

I have known lots of people in this world who care nothing at all for the truth. It’s meaningless to them. Their only interest is to ride the waves, to use the world for

the moment, to want or to make a fortune, and to be comfortable. A soul born into the world to seek adventure for only the sake of adventure is a rider. These would use the flesh only for the sake of comfort and adventure and fun and thrills and would resist any attempt to defeat that goal. Generally speaking, among – but not restricted to – this crowd of souls, we would have persons intent on realizing a fortune – of their own making or not.

As I have known lots of rider souls, I have also known lots of hider souls. These are the ones who don't want the truth and hide in the flesh to avoid it. Perhaps the last place you will find a hider is in a nudist community. That would be like trying to escape your shadow by running in the sun. Hider souls do not care for the light that much. They prefer the shade and the dark and the freedom to reach for fantasy.

Many hider souls may oppose loose standards because of a fear they would be expected to follow suit. They may not want to follow suit. So, for instance, they may oppose as immoral any attempt to make nakedness and truth exposition acceptable. Hiders are often desperate; and the last thing they want is for someone to show up with a flashlight in the dark. As a defense mechanism, they may well try to ban flashlights.

Then, there is the finder soul – the one who marries with the flesh to find out about the world of reality through it, including the reality of him or herself. The finder soul is interested – first and foremost – in the truth as he or she finds it, not necessarily as another might present it. The finder uses the flesh to observe its truths and its mysteries and its wonders and relates those truths, mysteries, and wonders to its experience as a soul.

Lastly, there is the derider soul – the soul whose only aim for living is to control others in life. This is the one who insists on making the rules and insists that others within his or her circle of experience abide by them. Personally, I do not understand the ones of this mentality. I have no need whatever to control others and have absolutely no sympathy for it. But there are so many in this world who have great desire to control others and subject others as if it is only in the control of others that there is any meaning to their existence. These are the ones who are the complete opposite of my dear, departed friend, Emmett. Like Emmett thrived on being insignificant, the derider souls thrive on a sense of significance.

Of course, some souls would be interested in a little mix of soulful temperaments too. I know I am such a one. The only temperament that I do not personally cherish is the derider sentiment. One moment, I use my body as a mirror and the next I use it as a carrier; but mostly, I think, I use my body and all reality to find the truths of life – even as I also take great pride in using my body to ride the waves of sensation just for the purpose of experiencing the feel of it all. One moment, I may use my body to intently study life and watch it for what it does; and the next, I may be relaxing with a drink in my hand and simply acting like a passenger in love with travel.

It stands to reason that different souls will choose to handle life and the opportunities of life differently since people do. Different souls may have different objectives; and contrary to a lot of oppressive moralists in this world, each soul has its own right to have its own objective – and even the right to change objectives throughout the course of a life.

My own personal objective, for instance, is to find the truth – and maybe tell about it. In fact, that’s what this work on the soul is all about – to tell the truth as I have discovered it. The main reason I am writing this essay is to offer an idea, the idea that souls begin as children of other souls and come together with bodies for the experiences that can be realized within them. As I have struggled in my life with the beginning of the soul and have searched for an answer, I can’t help but feel that others want an answer – or answers – too. Maybe my found answer (and answers) isn’t for you; but then again, maybe you can find it realistic and rewarding – if it’s realism you want.

As for me, it is realism I want. I do not want superficial explanations grounded in fairy tales. I’m not a fairy. I’m a natural human person with a natural soul and a natural body; and I cherish them both. I want realism because only realism can open my eyes to what life is and what I should be as a son of life; but, then, you see, I am one of those finder souls.

Reincarnation seems likely to me because, given a natural beginning of a soul at the outset, the evidence is overwhelming to suggest it. From the evidence of multiple possession to the realism that experience seems to never end, it seems souls exist and are not just figments of our imaginations. ***Incarnation by an existing phenomenon that could be called the “soul” seems real; and if incarnation is real, how can reincarnation not be?***

8.

Prayer

In my opinion, the expression of a soul is the basic prayer of that soul. We pray according to how we think and how we act. Souls need to pray and do pray with whatever consciousness they represent. Prayer can be vocal or silent, individual or social, solemn or light, spontaneous or formal.

In general, prayer accomplishes two things: *It establishes or confirms a certain perception or consciousness or awareness and it locates each of us for a particular providence.* For those of us who believe that the soul is only an illusion, only the first purpose for prayer could be perceived as valid. For those of us who believe in the soul as an independent entity, both purposes are valid. Oh, I think the second purpose is valid for those who think of the soul as an illusion too because even if they are denying it, they are caught within the boundaries of some providence.

All souls, regardless of belief, pray whether they think they do or not. Every soul, by virtue of being, has to establish or support a particular perception or outlook on life. We have to think of life in one way or another, even if the thought is one of indifference. If so, our prayer is simply one of indifference, but it is a prayer. It's the expression or communication of a soul. **Prayer is only the language of the soul; and every soul must speak some language.**

Like any other talent, however, prayer can be tuned into an art by focus and attention to it. It's much like music perhaps. In each of us there is a natural rhythm that is music, but only some of us attend to that rhythm and become musicians in the process. Others of us have a song to sing, but never choose to sing it. Our prayer, at best, is an inattentive one – or one without concentration. As my friend, Nancy, often says to me: *Don't let death catch you, Frank, with your song unsung!* – or something like that..

To attentively pray is to supply the chords to a song that is already there. To attentively pray is to unify the body with the mind of the soul, to bring them together and let out the sound of a symphony. *The best kind of prayer, I think, is simply listening to the logic dictated by one's soul and obeying the dictation, keeping in mind that soul tunes can be as different and as many as there are souls to sing.*

Prayers can be spoken or thought, depending upon the reason for them. If the reason or purpose is only to speculate on or confirm a perception or awareness, thought is sufficient. If the reason is to locate ourselves for a particular soulful providence, vocalization would likely be useful. **Thinking a prayer is much like writing a letter. Vocalizing it is like sending it.** Sometimes writing a letter is sufficient, perhaps as needed therapy, but at other times, we need to send it so that another can read it.

Prayer is a way of staying in touch with a preferred presence or providence, which, in essence, is a respective attitude. There are souls out there who are gentle and prefer the way of kindness. If we wish to belong to that family or community of souls and that providence, be it our own specific soul origin or not, praying a prayer

of gentleness or kindness and a message of kindness locates us for identification by the community of gentle souls.

On the other hand, there are also souls out there, or probably are, that are mean and prefer the way of meanness. If we wish to belong to that community of souls and that providence or type of providence, praying a prayer of domination and mercilessness and meanness locates us for identification by the community of mean souls – or a community of mean souls. There are probably many communities of mean souls like there are probably many communities of gentle souls. ***Support of a given identified soul by its chosen type of providence amounts to the providence of that soul.***

Can a prayer of kindness or gentleness be intercepted by a mean soul or vice versa? It's probably much like a world of many languages or dialects. Should I be a man of strict temperament, insisting on speaking and understanding only English, I would never pay attention to another speaking French. The Frenchman could talk a blue streak right in front of me and I would not understand a word. If he should refuse an understanding of English, we could both live as neighbors and never hear one another.

Prayer, I think, is like that. **It can only be received by a familiar temperament and can never be intercepted by a stranger to that temperament.** We can pray our prayer, then, and send it out, knowing that only those intended to hear it can hear it and will hear it. That is a very comforting notion, indeed. Isn't it? We need never be in fear of an invader hearing our prayer of gentleness and sending a sword for an answer.

It's good to keep in mind, however, that according to the attitude of our prayer and not the words, we will attract attention. If our words are of kindness, but our attitude is of meanness, the providences that will hear will be ones of meanness, not kindness. It's the attitude of one who prays which determines the attraction, not the words.

What about meditation? ***Meditation is really only silent prayer.*** It's attentive, intense, silent prayer. As a form of prayer, it is highly worthwhile. Personally, I prefer informal meditation and not formal meditation, although I must admit that in the past, formal meditation has been an enjoyable and guiding experience. Formal meditation is only meditating with the aid of some prescribed verse. Informal meditation is merely meditating without such an aid – just letting your mind flow as it will, spontaneously and without prescribed course. I have enjoyed both types of meditation in my life, alone and with others, but the type I have used most is the informal type.

Collecting one's thoughts is always good; and for the most part, that is what meditation is. It's collecting your thoughts to better direct your life. It's examining what you are and who you are and where you are and why you are. It's pondering the four W's – What, Who, Where, and Why in order to find present position and direct future course.

When I was finding my way, the discipline of formal meditation via some written text was very useful, but now that I have found my way and myself and my direction, my prayer is almost completely informal – merely spontaneous. Now and then, I do

recite out loud, but for the most part, I just ponder in silence. Reciting out loud, even if no one is around, however, can be terrific because it aids in the concentration of one's thinking. I have done a lot of recitation out loud when only hidden muses could hear. I have heard; and it has helped greatly in my forming my opinions and directing my life. Talking out loud, even if no one is there, can be a wonderful way to spend time because it adds to the focus of the moment.

When I was looking for my way, I'd emphasize petition as part of my prayer. In other words, I'd make it a routine to ask a favor of some real or imagined spiritual audience. Now, I recognize my providence and I am one and there's no need to ask for what my providence already knows I need. I do ask for favors in my prayers a little, but not a lot like I used to do. My needs are theirs; and theirs are mine. We're in this thing of life together and we have trust in one another. When trust is assumed, for the most part, petition prayer is unnecessary. On occasion, however, petition prayer is useful in terms of admitting to yourself by your prayer that others are about who can help. That's good to know, I'd say. Wouldn't you?

I used to be rather wordy in my prayers, but now I often have one little rather unique expression that tells my soul all of which I want to be reminded. It's a rather unintelligible expression, really, that says thank you to all my life's benefactors – from God to a man made faucet delivering water to me. Often people think I am grunting when I say it, but I am really full of gratitude for that which is about me at the moment and I say, **Huh, Huh!** as in “HMMMMMMMM – That's Good!”

That little grunt sounding expression is often my total prayer – which is to illustrate that a prayer can be comprised of only one or two words or one or two sighs or a thousand words or whatever – or even an illiterate grunt. **Huh, Huh** says it for me quite often – and no one is aware that I just prayed. That little grunt, however, as an expression of a grateful heart, is a prayer at its finest. It's not how long one prays that is important. ***It is the intention with which one prays that makes all the difference in the world.***

9.

Secrets of the Soul

Where does the kingdom of souls exist? Wouldn't we all like to know the answer to that one? Is there another soul where you are right now, lurking about? Is there a friend in your midst you can't see, or an enemy? If so, where does he or she or it go when the visit ends? Can you be visited in a dream by another soul? Can another soul communicate with you in a dream state? I guess these are secrets of the soul; and we may never know the answers.

How do souls select bodies to take for their own? What controls the process? Are there more souls than bodies available? Or perhaps more bodies than souls? In abnormal situations, it seems that multiple souls can share the same body, but in normal situations or circumstances, it seems only one soul controls a body. Why is that? Is it that normally there is only room for one soul? If so, why is there room for more than one soul in abnormal situations? Or is that only an illusion? Is there only one soul in control at any given moment?

What should happen if my soul should leave my body for an astral adventure trip? Is it possible that while I am away, another soul could take possession and I'd be left homeless? And if another did take my body when I was away, would he take over the memory I left behind in my brain? I may be a coward, but I don't think I'll take the chance of trying to leave my body; leastwise not until I'm finished with it.

Where does the soul reside upon taking up residence in the body? Does it reside in the head, or the heart, or the genitals, or the shoulder, or all over? Does the soul grow with the growth of the body? That would not seem realistic if it enters the body as an existing entity, presumably as a mature soul upon incarnation – or reincarnation. Is the soul, then, elastic? Is it like one of those stockings where one size fits all?

How does an incarnated soul glean its information from a body? Do the senses communicate to it; and if so, how does it store the communication in its memory? Or does it even have a memory? It would seem likely that it does in order to link experiences from one life to another. How does the soul manage the images it receives? I suspect there are secrets of the soul for which we will never know the answers.

When a soul is free of the body, does it fly around? Does it feel anything? How does it move? What is its fuel? Where does it go? Does it get tired? Does it need to rest? Can it plan a day's activities with a community of souls? Do souls have parties? Do they join gangs? Can they touch each other; or do they have to incarnate to do that?

How is a soul born of another soul, assuming it happens? It seems outrageous that a soul can give birth to another soul; but it seems more outrageous that it can't. Otherwise, how did my soul get started? We have already reviewed the alternatives; and none of them make much sense. There's no need to question the fact of a start; for I am living and got a start somehow. I don't question the start, just the how of the start; but I guess that, too, is a secret of the soul for which I'll never know the answer.

Did my soul come from a union or marriage of two other souls? Are souls sexy? That, too, seems preposterous; but then I guess all secrets are, leastwise all secrets of the soul.

And what about this thing called *destiny*? As I am writing this chapter, it is June 20, 2003. On the evening of June 17th, three days ago, just less than half a mile from where I sit, Walter and Betty and two grandsons, Scott and Bryan were on their way home to Oregon via I-80 West that goes by a community outside of Laramie, Wyoming called “Country Meadows” where I live. It was 5 in the evening. Moments before, there had been an accident which had stopped the traffic. Walter and Betty and Scott and Bryan were sitting in a pickup with a camper on the back of it and were the tail end of the stopped traffic. They were stopped behind a semi truck.

And then along came Ivan. He was in another semi truck traveling in the same lane as the lane in which Walter and Betty and Scott and Bryan were stopped. Along side of Ivan was another semi truck. It all happened so quickly. When Ivan saw the stopped traffic ahead, his first notion was to change lanes, but the left lane was already occupied by a truck as large as his. And so Ivan took the path of least resistance, having no time to maneuver otherwise, and plowed into the pickup containing Walter and Betty and Scott and Bryan. They had no chance. Almost nothing was left of their pickup and camper after the collision; and Walter and Betty and Scott and Bryan had met their moment of final climax.

Was it their destiny to be the victims of a tragic accident on their way home to Oregon? Perhaps – and perhaps not. Perhaps it had been all “arranged” by the providence or providences of Walter and Betty and Scott and Bryan. Perhaps the accident up ahead had been also pre-arranged by the providences of these four. Perhaps it was a matter of providential timing rather than simply a matter of accidental happening. Who knows?

Souls come into this world and leave this world. Each of us needs an entry and each of us needs an exit. It could have been an accident that took the lives of Walter and Betty and Scott and Bryan – and then again, it could have been a conclusion to a kind of providential conspiracy. It wasn't God who took the lives of these four at this time because God is in us and not outside of us to make things happen like that; but it could have been a providence, a natural providence, not a divine providence, that arranged for Walter and Betty and Scott and Bryan to be reunited with the community of souls from which they came. Maybe they all belonged to the same community; and maybe each of them belonged and belongs to a different community. Who knows?

But perhaps our destinies are among the many secrets of the soul – or secrets of souls. My father was killed on July 7th, 1966, standing on the side of a road. From my early teens, Dad told me periodically that he did not expect to live to see 60. When he passed, he was 59 and a half. A pickup came toward him traveling on the opposite side of the road. The driver fell asleep at the wheel, crossed over the road, and smashed into my father who should have been safe, standing on the opposite side of the road as he was. But maybe it was Dad's time – all arranged ahead of time. Maybe Dad's providence had decided it was time to “take him out”; and so they arranged for all the particulars of that day. Maybe it wasn't an accident; but an arrangement, a providential arrangement. Know what I mean? Who knows?

There's so much we don't know – and perhaps will never know. For some reason, fellow angel souls in the bodiless realm can't tell us the answers about them and us; or perhaps they just do not choose to do so.

I tell my soul and my soul tells me – don't be afraid. Life is not so fragile as we might think. No one can take a soul and control it, unless the owner let them. Your soul is your own and mine is mine; and neither of us should yield. We should share, yes, but not surrender.

Bodies may come and go and they are wonderful as miracles unto themselves, but souls probably go on and on. Thanks to the union of spirit and flesh, bodies can share with souls and souls with bodies; and the two together are perfect as each separately is perfect.

There are as many secrets of the soul, I think, as there are stars in the sky; but like the stars in the sky don't keep us from moving on and living and loving, neither should the secrets of the soul. Let the stars shine on; and let the secrets of the soul do the same.

UNMASKING THE SOUL!

THE END

I ONCE KNEW A MAN (A Poem)

Written April, 1990

(while sitting on an Atlantic Ocean beach at Savannah Ga., pondering Dad.)

I once knew a man who walked upon this land -
and oh, what a man he was to me.
I once knew a man who was as simple as he could be
and he taught me to be, like he.
I once knew a man who took me in his hands
and taught me that all souls should be free;
but now that man has gone, though his soul lingers on,
and memories of him come and go like the tide of a sea.

I once knew a man who walked upon this land -
and oh, what a light he has been.
I once knew a man who was good for those he loved
and he guided me to seek to understand.
I once knew a man who struggled all his life
to be an example to the children that he had;
and now I'm proud to say, his life was no waste;
for I still love today – the man I call Dad.

Memories of him go on, like ducks on a moonlit pond;
and they comfort me in times of need.
He was like a flower on a hill,
a gentle breeze through a windowsill.
He was, and always will, be to me poetry.

I once knew a man who walked upon this land -
and oh, what a man he was to me.
I once knew a man who was as simple as he could be
and he taught me to be, like he.
I once knew a man who took me in his hands
and taught me that all souls should be free;
but now that man has gone, though his soul lingers on,
and memories of him come and go like the tide of a sea.

NATURAL DESIGN & SEX

(28 Pages)

By
Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
- 2005 -

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Laramie, Wyoming. U.S.A.
December, 2005

INTRODUCTION

Hi! Originally, I wrote this small work (in 23 Pages) in 1992. This is a rewrite of that original with a reorganization into chapters. The original was a single essay. This rewrite attempts to divide that original essay into chapters in order to give the whole thing an improved structure.

I have always been a man in love with Nature and the natural. I have also always – when true to my inner feelings – realized that Nature and God are essentially one in terms of where one is, so also is the other. In my view, God is infinite. That makes God everywhere. If God is everywhere, that means that God has to be **in everything**. If God is truly in everything, then nothing can be separated from God. I will touch on that a little more in this work.

Being a lover of the natural, I have always loved sex too because I have always considered sex to be part of the entire natural that I love so much. How could I not love sex if I love the natural? No way could I not love sex, thinking as I do. I do not see sex as some exclusive activity among adults, as do most folks, however. I see it as natural activity for all – young and old; although for the most part, that which is considered sexual I view as only sensual. I will explain that within the following work.

Indeed, at times, I have objected to the description of *sexual* when what is considered sexual is more properly just *sensual*; but for this work, I am treating sensual as sexual. For me, sex is not primarily *re-creational*, but rather *pro-creational*. I am somewhat hesitant in treating genital attention as sexual when there is no intention to procreate with it; but the public at large tends to bind re-creational sex with pro-creational sex and call it all the same thing. So, for this work, I too will call it all the same thing.

The problem with that, however, is that children tend to not be included within the sexual parameters of life – though they are accepted within a discussion of sensuality. So, by dropping sensual for sexual, by this work, I'll be including children within the sexual. Maybe that's a good thing, though. Maybe by treating all as sexual and not trying to modify certain ones as only sensual, some unification of children and adults might be the result. In my view, that would be nice because I do not see them as separate anyway.

This is not a sex manual, however it could be seen as one, perhaps. If so, it would have to be the single most unorthodox sex manual ever written. In truth, however, it's far more a personal tribute to a way of life I call *Divine Naturism* – or *Divine Naturalism* – which includes sex, but is not restricted to it. I must admit, however, that in a very significant way, sex should typify all of life – and so by offering a treatment of sex within what I call *Divine Naturism*, all of what I call an attitude of *Divine Naturism* will be featured.

So, let's get on with this unorthodox treatment of sex & life. Perhaps, in time, I will not be the only identified *Divine Naturist* in the world, though the label is my own – coined by me in the 1980s to label my general philosophy of life. Who knows? In time, you may choose to call yourself *Divine Naturist* as well. If so,

Welcome to a Wonderful Way of Life!

Gently,
Francis William Bessler, Laramie, Wyoming – U.S.A.
December 1st, 2005

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1

The Ideal of Divine Naturism

Within any scenario or ideal of life, there can be found a set of corresponding values. Within the ideal of life I call *Divine Naturism* or *Divine Naturalism*, the essential value is conduct consistent with *Natural Design* and conduct determined by *Natural Design*. Natural Design, then, is the chief value for a *Divine Naturist* – against which all conduct can be measured; and that includes sex. **The objective for a *Divine Naturist* who is proud of the identification is to decide all conduct, sexual and otherwise, on conformity to the perceived guidelines of or within *Natural Design*.**

Before I actually get into sex by Natural Design, I think it necessary to address the notion of *ideal* as opposed to *dogma*. Dogma carries with it the threat of an imposed and arbitrary judgment via an external party. Dogma says that if I violate some rule or other set down by an external party who has authority over me, that party has the right to punish me according to his or her will, should I violate his or her dogma. On the other hand, *ideal* carries with it the threat of automatic and absolute judgment via the *ideal system* itself.

For instance, if I set down a dogma that you will be in by 8 P.M. and you come prancing in after that time, you will be subject to whatever punishment I choose to offer you, be it a tongue lashing or a whip lashing or whatever. If I set before you an ideal stating that supper will be served at 8 and you are free to dine with me and whoever else is gathered, if you show up at 9 and find all the food gone, then the only thing you are subject to in the form of judgment is you will go to bed hungry because all the food was eaten. You simply miss a dinner by operating outside the limits of that dinner.

Having drawn this distinction between dogma and ideal, let me state that *Divine Naturism* is an *ideal*, not a *dogma*. No external punishment by any external party will be forthcoming should the ideal of *Divine Naturism* be broken. The only – and I repeat – **only** – judgment that can be rendered for violation of the ideal is release from the ideal itself and consequent surrender to another judgment and automatic commitment to another rule or set of rules. I'll have more to say about this as this essay continues; but keep in mind, *Divine Naturism* is an ideal, not a dogma or set of dogmas. You either belong or you don't belong to that ideal. You either are or are not a *Divine Naturist* – as I define it.

Just what exactly is conduct consistent with the *perceived* guidelines of *Natural Design*? Perhaps the emphasis should be upon the adjective, *perceived*. Each of us might see *Natural Design* in a different light. It is not for me to define *Natural Design* as it is to encourage others to define it for themselves. I have my own ideas about it – and some of those ideas will be communicated via this little essay work, but no one has to have my ideas of *Natural Design* to decide to honor life by living according to whatever one sees as the dictates of *Natural Design*.

Now, if a person were to honor Nature and have no feeling there is a God, then for that person, the term *divine* could be dropped from any consideration of life. If such an atheist were to want to commit to a regimen of conformity to the perceived guidelines of

or within *Natural Design*, then they would be simply committing to an ideal of **Naturism** without modifying it with *Divine*.

I consider myself a *Divine Naturist*, however, and not just a **Naturist** because I do believe in God in terms of believing there is an *Infinite Presence* that is equally in every being. It's that *Infinite Presence* I call *God*. Given that God is in all things and is everywhere, *Natural Design* could just as well be called *Divine Design*. The approach of what I call *Divine Naturism* simply tries to decipher the guidelines of life according to what one can perceive that Nature as a *Home of God* could be telling us.

Divine Naturism is an approach of life or to life that dispels any need or use to having to listen to so called prophets of God. God is not found outside of life as the various "prophets" of God would have us believe in order to establish their own criteria for life as also the criteria of God – whom they claim to represent. *Divine Naturism* as an ideal, not a dogma, dispels any need to listen to any so called "prophet." Since God is within Nature and since Nature is thus *Divine*, to find what might be called *Divine guidelines*, all we need to do is to search for them within *Natural Design*. In general, that is what the ideal of *Divine Naturism* is all about.

For the rest of this work, I will offer somewhat on my individual perception of what I think *Natural Design* is or could be telling us, but that is not to say, my perceptions should be your own. It is not for me or anyone to define *Natural Design* for another. It should be for each to define it for him or herself. It is only for us to know there is such a thing and that each of us should pursue whatever guidelines one might see being offered through it – as it is understood by any individual.

Sex & Natural Design

For so many of us, sex is a troubling thing; and it shouldn't be. It should be among the simplest of human activities, but we have made it the single most complicated of human activities. From the moment we are born and our hands can reach *down below*, we are often scolded, should they actually touch the *banned zone*. It shouldn't be. If we can touch it, it's natural to do so – and there should be encouragement to do it as often as there is an inclination to do it.

A baby can only touch, of course, and no orgasm will come, but he or she should be allowed that freedom. It should make no difference that something can happen or not. The design of the hand is to reach and if that reach extends to the genitals, so be it. That is how it should be.

Then a child grows older, and as he or she does so, the feelings intensify. The change in intensity of feeling should have no bearing on the propriety of an act. As a child grows older, one of the chief excitements of his or her maturing process should be the act of recognizing differences between mother or father and self. With father, the penis is larger like all appendages are larger, and with father, continued touching ends in some degree of climax. So what? It should be natural to see it happen – regardless of any degree of happening. Son and father should be able to play together, not with each other's body, but with one's own individual body. If it would happen, as it should naturally, think of how the growing excitement of curiosity could blossom in a young man or a young lady and how the great excitement of life itself could be told simply through touching through the years.

When it comes to this natural touching of one's own body, society has often contorted the act to claim it is not natural to touch oneself – or shouldn't be. From the start, touching oneself is banned; and for the most part, children are often taught they will have to wait for another to touch them later on in life – much later. It is truly sad this society of ours does not recognize the value of starting natural and staying that way throughout the years.

Is it natural for two little boys to touch each other? How can it not be? If touching oneself is natural, how can it not be natural for one little boy to touch another? Yes, it is natural for two little boys to touch one another – or should be – and it should be encouraged, not discouraged – if there is mutual consent. Think of the growing excitement of two friends growing older together and for the most part being able to witness in front of their own eyes the wonderful changes of Nature within themselves.

Is it natural for two little girls to touch each other? How can it not be? If both little girls are taught that touching is good and desirable, the most natural next step in the world would be to reach out and touch one another – and begin to feel the wonder of companionship – of doing together with another that which feels good to oneself. That is what companionship is all about – or should be about.

Instead of letting it happen, however, we ban the zone of the touch and turn mind healthy wonders into little neurotics. We have made sex the single most complicated of human activities. Instead of allowing ourselves to be the great laboratories of our own

experience, we have taught ourselves to put on frocks and girds and hair shirts and ignore our laboratory as if it is the devil's design itself. ***And we have been so wrong.***

Is it natural for a young man of puberty to touch himself? Of course it should be because the reach is still there and the design is still in effect. What the hand can touch, it should. That's a first class rule of ***Natural Design***. What the hand can reach, it should. That which should be unnatural, however, is for that young man of puberty to feel it necessary to withdraw from father or brother or friend to do what before was the most natural thing in the world. On the contrary, when a young son can finally reach climax himself, it should be an exciting thing he should want to share with his father and mother who made him.

Is it natural for a young lady of puberty to touch herself? Of course it should be because the reach is still there and the design is still in effect. If mother had been aware of ***her job*** all along, little daughter would be an expert at touching herself by the time she reached puberty. She would have become an artist at it. At puberty, mother and daughter should be able to share talk about what the touch means and what it feels like to stimulate a natural excitement simply waiting to be known.

Self massage should be an art that is taught by example from the day a child emerges from the womb. Oh, I don't mean to say that a father should stand in front of his baby and bring himself to completion. I am only saying that a father should not withdraw just because his baby is before him. ***Let no man do in private what he would be ashamed to do in front of his child.*** If I had a simple rule that I would apply to all sexuality – or sensuality – it would be that. ***Let no man or woman do in private what they would be ashamed to do in front of their children; and of course, let no boy or girl do in private what they would be ashamed to do in front of their parents.***

For the most part, I think, people keep hidden, or try to keep hidden, that which they think is ugly. Those who close doors and turn off the lights do so to hide an ugly thing – or something they think is ugly. Now, they won't admit that's their reason, but just the same, I think, it is. The normal response for closing doors and turning off the lights concerning sexual activity is that it's a ***personal*** thing. It's personal alright, but primarily it is seen as ugly – or the door would stay open and the light would stay on.

If we could but be honest with ourselves on our real motivation for closing the door to hide sex from the children, we could begin to be honest with ourselves in terms of what is natural and what is not. As it is, one self deceit leads to another self deceit – and we end up flipping things upside down. We are upside down in the way we look at Nature and our participation within it. We are upside down because we see ourselves first and Nature second, if at all. We are upside down because we try to resolve every natural consequence of sex we don't like with an artificial interrupt of some sort.

Sex should not be so complicated, but we have made it so by insisting on our ***personal*** rights over and above natural processes. The natural thing is to cooperate with the natural blueprint, not attempt to trick it or divert it. The ideal is to let Mother Nature have her way, to go along with Mother Nature in her design, to support Mother Nature in her ways. Accordingly, it is not Mother Nature's design to use intercourse for other than conception purposes. Outside of mankind, in all species – except maybe in some isolated ones here and there – when male enters female, it is to climax toward conception – not to entertain some individual thrill. Using this general design for sexual intercourse and applying it to mankind as a member of the general animal kingdom, it could be

determined that if mankind is to *cooperate* with some general *Natural Design*, sexual intercourse should be restricted to intending conception. That is how it is with all of the rest of our animal companions. So, why should mankind be different?

How simple life would be if we would do just that. Mother Nature and the design of Mother Nature make life very, very simple; but we complicate things so much by confronting that design and using it like it is a pot of clay to mold as we wish. That is sad for so many reasons. We acquire illnesses otherwise avoidable that range from the mildly annoying to the dreadfully deadly – like *AIDS*. We cut family communication and trust into pieces by having to hide what we do. But the severest agony of all is that we betray *Natural Design* which should be our friend, but becomes instead our enemy. We betray ourselves most by freeing ourselves from a wonderful protector; for in ignoring and diverting natural processes, we isolate ourselves from *Natural Purpose* and *Natural Beauty* – which is overridden by personal purpose and personal beauty.

Our perception of reality has been turned upside down by emphasizing the personal over the natural. With our high intelligence, we act as if the human race has every right to design itself, but how we complicate things by doing so. Think about it. What animal presents us with a single example of copulating for the sheer fun of it? I'm told humans are different and have a right to be. My response to that is, yes, we are different, but largely because we want to be, not because we actually are. We humans want to segregate ourselves and divide ourselves from the rest of the animal kingdom because we are not comfortable within the animal kingdom. Claiming the right to copulate for the sheer fun of it is just one of the ways we manifest our distinction; but we don't have the right to be different just because it is our decision to be so; and it is very unhealthy to isolate ourselves from the real world of design.

The objection is forthcoming: That's your opinion of what *Natural Design* is. Others might argue love making, via coitus, is within *Natural Design* by virtue of the fact that is commonly accepted to be natural regardless of intent. If that's your judgment, then you are free to operate by that notion; but you are not free to be released from the judgments imposed by the decisions you follow. If you think it is natural, go ahead and do it, but be ready for the many possible judgments of your decision and your commitment.

That does offer me an opportunity to reiterate what I said before, however. My idea about *Natural Design* does not have to be your own for you to choose what I call the *ideal* of *Divine Naturism*. There are many who do not see the guidelines I do in my observation of general life on earth. That's fine. No one has to agree with my particular observation to choose the general ideal of *Divine Naturism* and apply whatever perceptions they see coming from *Natural Design*. I do not mind being alone in my perceptions, but alone or with you, they are real for me. That is all that is important.

Everyone needs guidance in this life. *Divine Naturism* is only one mode of morality that can be chosen; but within *Divine Naturism*, the sky is the limit for determining a guideline for life because perception is individual and should be individual. In this work, I am offering my perception and perceptions as I see it, but most importantly, my conclusions need not be your own.

To continue with my discussion, as I see it, there are no routes in life without tradeoffs. No matter which route you choose or which ideal or dogma you embrace, there will be advantages and disadvantages. A principal advantage of limiting coitus to

conception is the wonderful quality of simplicity. A principal disadvantage of limiting coitus to conception is restriction of relationships. By voluntarily restricting my relationships, I avoid all sort of possible confusions and sex-related consequents, like unwanted pregnancies and unwanted sexually transmitted diseases; however I also miss a dimension of intimate sex activity I could have had, had I not been so strict.

Remember, however, the discussion about idealism I discussed at the outset. I can go ahead and operate within a scenario of judgment that embraces coitus for pleasure only within *Natural Design*. I can stretch *Natural Design* to include it and consider myself safe for doing so, but whether I call the resulting ideal *Divine Naturism* or some other *ism*, I must abide by the judgments of my decision. I must abide by the judgment of my commitment, so to speak. No matter how I try, I cannot escape having to deal with the possibilities of my decision.

Some might argue. OK, I'll restrict coitus to conception before I pass the potent stage of my life and change to include unconditional coitus after I pass child bearing status. To that, I'd say, Go Ahead, but you will yield a certain degree of respect for design by doing so. Sure, you can get away with it. You can cheat on the design if you want, but you'll also have to pay the price of yielding respect for design. You won't hurt anyone but yourself – and yourself only if you do not hold *Natural Design* in a lofty light. That's the biggest risk you take by loosening your standards, besides risking a certain degree of sexually transmitted diseases. You risk losing respect for *Natural Design*; and when that happens, you may have lost much of your reason for living.

You can't cheat on an ideal because violation of an ideal results in automatic loss of that ideal. By violating an ideal, you cross the border into another ideal or another rule. The bottom line, then, is it's yours to choose an ideal – and yours to live up to it. If you violate it, you lose it. It's as simple as that. Having an ideal should be like having a friend. Respect for it is a requirement; and where there is true respect, there will also be honor and love, and, if you wish, joyful duty without the baggage of being a burden. ***If you see it as a burden, perhaps it's not really your ideal – and maybe you should let it go.***

3

Rape and Curiosity

Is it natural for a man to take a woman, in marriage or out, without that woman's consent? Absolutely not! The design of sexual intercourse for intended conception would say that rape is not natural and should not be allowed within any society that claims respect for the natural. Why? Because within other species of Nature, coitus is always for conception. Unless a rapist is intent on fathering a child by his sexual intercourse with a victim, rape – in marriage and out of it – could not be natural. We have tried to redefine sexual intercourse for more than procreation, but our redefinition does not make it so. **Rapists are always unnatural because they ignore the purpose for sexual intercourse.** It's an act of violence upon a victim, not an intended act of procreation.

Is it natural, sexually, for a parent to touch a child or for a child to touch a parent? No in the first case, Yes in the second. If a child should want to touch or explore his or her father or mother, it's likely a thing of curiosity; and the natural response to curiosity is to satisfy it. The unnatural response, which is largely the traditional response, is to suppress that curiosity and, at best, teach a child from a book rather than from a real body. What absolute idiocy! By nature, a growing child wants to know the truth. That just happens to be what growing up is all about – to find the truth of whatever it is young inquiring minds want to know.

The key to guiding the young in sexual response matters is to let them be the drivers. ***Parents should not command curiosity, only respond to it.*** If given freedom of growth, a child is not likely going to ask about something he or she can't handle. Some children will be curious about sex earlier than others; and I suppose some won't have much curiosity about it at all; but again, the key is to satisfy curiosity when it naturally occurs.

Should a child want to copy his or her mother and massage Dad, for the duration of a first lesson, let it happen. What possible bad can come from a child massaging Dad as long as it is the child who wants to do it to satisfy curiosity. Of course, if a child never witnesses his mother caressing his or her dad, there would probably be no reason for curiosity about such an activity; but if there is openness in a home and Mom is openly affectionate with Dad, then curiosity on the part of a child may well occur. Should it occur for whatever reason, the natural thing is to allow a child's curiosity to be resolved by activity.

Dads and moms, however, have no business requesting a child to gratify them sexually; and once a child's curiosity has been satisfied, dismiss the class. Letting it happen twice would be permitting the formation of a habit, perhaps, and a child should not get into a habit of sexual activity with any but their own age. Once a child has been satisfied, curiosity wise, they can be told that theirs is a world of pretense until they reach puberty and then they, too, can begin orgasmic massaging of one another. ***In general, let kids do it with kids as adults do it with adults.*** If pre-puberty children want to do it to each other, let them. Nothing will happen anyway; and no one will be hurt.

On the other hand, parents – and adults in general – have no business sexually massaging a child. If they have the curiosity and the desire, children should be allowed

to massage each other, but adults should stay out of that picture. There is absolutely no reason for them to get into it because there is nothing unique they can offer to a child that another child cannot. In the case previous where a youngster wants to copy Mom and massage Dad to see if the reaction is the same, the parent has something unique he can offer to the child insofar as showing adult response to the touch of the youngster. That's natural, but in the case where a child is massaged or played with, no unique contribution can be had from a parent. As such, parents should stay out of it. **The only time parents should be involved is when another child cannot satisfy a curiosity.** The natural thing is for peers to play with peers. Exceptions can be in order to teach response, but other than that, they should not be allowed.

When a child asks a question or wants to explore response, the natural ideal is to satisfy that need with an immediate demonstration. Unfortunately, many – and maybe even most – adults do not have a handle on their own responses to be in a position to explain them to an inquiring mind. So, it's much easier to say *you're too young to know those things* and turn the child away. How much better it would be first of all to have a handle on your own responses and know why they occur physically and then pass on that information to a youngster when they inquire about it. We are talking natural here, not like responses should not happen. The assumption must be that all natural responses are good and it is for each of us to appreciate them for what they are and not insist they are improper in and of themselves. ***Any natural response or reaction should be natural grounds for curiosity on the part of a growing child.***

If Dad is lying naked on top of the bed reading a magazine and his child comes in and lays down next to him and begins to explore Dad with his or her little hand, it should be natural for that to happen; and more than likely, it would be unnatural if it didn't. Go with the natural because the natural is good. If the child wants to explore, let it happen. The worst thing you could do is push the hand away and throw on a cover. The lesson that would come from that stupid response is Dad shouldn't be naked and Dad's genitals are bad. What kind of a natural lesson is that to teach a kid?

On the other hand, if the child is allowed to explore, see the reaction, and leave on his or her own terms, the little mind will have made tremendous progress in learning to love Nature and natural things. After that initial lesson, when the child tries to explore again, he or she can calmly be told that he or she should be playing with his or her brother or sister or neighbor; and the issue will be closed.

Instead of allowing normal sexual contact to occur between parents and children, however, this society often thinks that no touching should be allowed and children can find out for themselves what happens in the sexual arena later on. The problem with that approach is that it starts a breach of communication between parents and children that reaches into all aspects of their lives, not just the sexual aspects. ***No, a parent has no business drawing out of a child a sexual response because curiosity should be the natural basis of a parent-child relationship; and curiosity should always be child or student driven, not parentally or masterfully imposed. But, Yes, a parent should respond to any curiosity a child has and deal with any and all issues honestly and forthrightly, showing via natural conduct, the truth of sexual responses.***

As the banned zone should disappear for children touching themselves, it should also disappear for children touching parents. This can be sticky, of course, and many will fail to deal with their children honestly and for the sake of the children, using sex with

children as an excuse to satisfy themselves. But honest and sincere parents should not let the irresponsibility of other parents cancel their own requirement to be open and responsibly parental to their own kids.

The primary obligation of a parent, or any adult for that matter, is to act openly as if no kid is around. That openness will be sufficient in almost all cases of sexual development. Experience of observation of others will be the basic class a kid will need from a parent. In actuality, children will have no desire to have sex with their parents and will naturally tend to relate to children of their own age, not adults out of their own league. Ideally, if no sibling or other child is available for an only child, parents should arrange if possible for a friend and let the little ones do their own growing and relating and experimenting. If the adults are responsible and do not include any *unnatural behavior*, the children will surely follow their example.

Our society has a lot of problems dealing with sexual education, I think, because kids are not often allowed to frolic naked. Nakedness allows for a natural progression of curiosity and the satisfaction of curiosity that clothed society does not. It is hard to be natural with ones curiosity when constantly enveloped within unnatural cover-up. Sex for so many humans is the single most awkward activity of life simply because it is often discussed outside of naked behavior. It is not seen as natural because the natural of nakedness is seldom, if ever, practiced.

Needless to say, ideally, nakedness should be as common as toasted bread in order for sexual activity to be viewed as an extension of the natural and not an exception to what should be normal conduct. Curiosity is a wonderful thing, but it can only be truly satisfied where there is an allowance of freedom in general via general naked behavior. So, I guess it makes sense that ideally, sexual education of any kind should be conducted within a circumstance of nudity. Given an initial comfort with nudity – which is as natural as it gets – all sexual education, regardless of age of student, can be as easy as learning to walk and then walking with complete confidence forever more.

4

Homosexuality

Is Homosexuality natural? I don't mind telling you I have beat my head against the wall on this one. All other aspects of sexuality I've been able to resolve, but homosexuality is an aspect that, quite frankly, leaves me grasping – though certainly not gasping. Personally, I have little feel for it; and that puts me at a disadvantage in trying to explain it – in natural terms or other. ***What seems so natural with children growing up somehow doesn't seem so natural with adults who have grown.*** It's OK from a natural curiosity viewpoint for boys to play with boys and girls to play with girls, but what makes it OK is that boys with boys and girls with girls are finding out about themselves. There is no question in my mind that youthful same sex interplay is not only natural, but quite satisfying as well. It is almost entirely a matter of curiosity.

But adults should have passed the stage of curiosity. The reason for youthful same sex play is to find out about things; and it's the curiosity that justifies it; but I suppose the same could be said for adults who have not had same sex interaction. For sure, adults can have curiosity too – maybe until they die. So maybe some adults are forever curious and that is why homosexuality retains youthful appeal for some forever. Indeed, I will certainly admit to curiosity about my fellow males, though few of them will admit the same about me; but I think that's because of the way our tradition has reared us. We are not supposed to be curious as kids and certainly not supposed to be curious as adults.

Maybe homosexuality among the mature is nothing more than having an insatiable curiosity about your own sex. Suppose? And maybe in that light, for those who choose to be interminably curious, it's OK. Like I admitted awhile ago, I admit to a certain degree of curiosity myself about my fellow males even as I'm super interested in the female sex. The few experiences I have had with other males has been reassuring of my own sexuality, though beyond my teenage years, which ended over forty years ago, I have never completed another man, nor allowed another man to complete me, orgasmic-wise, that is. I simply have had little feeling for it; and what I have a lack of feeling for, generally I don't do, although in the process of finding my way in life, I've done a lot of things I no longer do.

My own interaction with fellow males, however slight, has been good, though; and that I can pass judgment upon. In those few instances where I have intentionally investigated and touched another man, the lessons I have been taught have been dear. We are all the same, yet we are all different. That may seem trivial, but it's amazing how many men go through a lifetime having never shared with another man. It's wonderfully educational, even though we know what to expect having the same parts. ***It's good to know we are the same and it's good to know we are different.*** Both senses of knowledge are reassuring as they are simple; but by and large, it's really the simple truths that often excite us in life.

The natural thing – no matter how old we get – is to constantly find out about oneself. Being able to compare oneself and our own dimensions with another is wonderfully helpful in that process. In several instances, I have compared larger than others, but in far more instances, I have compared smaller than my comparison models.

So what? I am me and they are they; and all of us are wonderful reflections of *Natural Design*. I speak as a man about another man; but surely it should be the same for one woman to wish to share the truths of another woman, friend or stranger. ***The thing about friendship is that when we meet we are strangers, but what should engender a friendship is finding out the other's dimensions – and by so doing – becoming friends.***

Friendship should never justify risky behavior, however. Anal penetration comes to mind as that which is completely outside of *Natural Design* and therefore, quite risky. **The anus was not designed for insertion – only for emission.** Show me one example in all of the natural world where a male enters the anus of either a female or a male. Then to add to that the possibility of depositing a fluid that may contain a virus or other invader may not be very smart. Nature may allow for introducing an invader within a vaginal environment because vaginal antibodies may dispose of it, but an anal invasion may not result in the same way. Personally, I would not want any anal invasion – not only because I have no desire for it – but also because I would not want to risk infection from doing it. I have no knowledge that it is so, but I have often wondered if diseases like *AIDS* happen as a consequent of unnatural anal invasions.

Just sticking to *Natural Design* is so safe. Personally, I can't imagine wanting to operate outside of its security. If homosexual activity is strictly limited to doing to or with another only what one can do naturally to oneself, then it can be safe and in no way a violation of *Natural Design* – for it's only extending the personally natural to another; but when sexual activity is extended beyond the personally natural – well, to each, his or her own; but I would classify it as contrary to *Natural Design* and unworthy of consideration.

Should that include oral affection to the genitals as unnatural? One certainly cannot kiss ones own genitals, can one? So if I can't kiss myself in the genitals, is that to say I should not kiss another in his or her genital area? Kissing is an entirely separate issue. I can't kiss myself on the lips either. ***Just look at the rest of the animal kingdom. Kissing or licking is almost universally accepted in the animal world – even kissing or licking ones own genitals for those species that can reach them.*** So, I'd say, kiss away – again, as long as there is mutual consent between two parties. There should be no limits to that in terms of being consistent with *Natural Design*. Personally, if I could claim a favorite activity, it would be kissing. It's personal, affectionate, wonderfully pleasing – and oh so safe – as long as that which is kissed is also clean.

Sex - Needed Therapy

No matter what the sexual experience, though, the key is to keep it simple. Simple massage with hand or mouth should be sufficient without the aid of broom handles or whatever else we *civilized beings* have chosen to insert into each other's openings. Forget all the nonsense we get into trying to figure out 10,000 ways to do it. If we need more than a few approaches, that is indicative that we are putting too much emphasis on sex. Of course, sex is good; but like anything else, it can be overdone. Anything good once should be good a million times as long as there are other diversions in between. **If we keep sexual massage simple, theoretically we could do it to and with one another without repercussions.**

If we restrict sexual intercourse to intending conception, we could still be loyal to a spouse as we are attentive to friends who might desire a little attention. Restricting intercourse to intending conception would almost automatically limit it within marital bounds; and marriage and family could be enhanced by the decision.

Life, indeed, is a lot of things, not just sex, but when one of us gets hung up on a sexual hanger and is not allowed to appreciate the hunger and excitement, he often takes that need way beyond youth and into a swirling torrent of confusion. The result is that he becomes so disoriented that he acts out and very often hurts and rapes and kills in the process. **It's sad to see a man wasted because society never allowed him to grow up naturally; and it's just as sad when that waste becomes a killer as it often does.**

In marriage and out of it, men who were refused the freedom to grow in youth become as useless partners later in life. A sense of enjoyment for what is sexual is replaced with a sense of what is brutal. There is a time in the time clock of each of us that when passed represents a time of lost sexuality. When our sexuality and capability of enjoying it with sanction is lost, whatever is natural becomes as nothing in our eyes. We passed beyond the line of being able to enjoy it when we had it; and there's a sense that what was lost can never be recovered; and for the most part, that sense is correct.

A man sexually deprived in his youth can have no sense of continuation; and that is terribly tragic. How can a man know in adulthood what he was denied in youth? Experience requires going with the flow. So when the proper flow isn't there when it's needed most in youth, there can be no appreciative flow later on. How can a man continue what was never begun? The same goes for a lady, of course.

That's one reason to get this sex thing right from the very beginning. If we don't, we will have to deal with a disjointed demon incapable of compassion later on. ***Compassion means feeling with and if a young man or lady is not sanctioned to know compassion in youth, why should we think compassion can automatically happen at some later age?*** It's stupid to think it can. Like anything else, compassion is learned, and, for the most part, learned young. One of the most important vehicles for learning compassion is sanctioned sexual experience; and it is the single most denied. Is it any wonder that society is comprised today of billions walking about as if in a daze, wondering where they are and where they are going – but most unfortunately not caring any more for the answer.

I do not wish to imply, however, that compassion can't be learned later in life. I am only claiming it is exceedingly more difficult to learn it later in life; but even so, I think the key to learning real compassion later in life is through sanctioned sexual therapy because it was basically sexual therapy that was lacking that brought about the dysfunction in the first place. ***Sex is terribly important because it is our nature and of our nature. We cannot begin to be functional without it unless we renounce it in favor of some unnatural behavior.*** In that case, and it's the case of many a monk and nun, we exchange natural function for life in an unnatural realm. Having denied Nature, we overcome a need for it. But for the many dysfunctional who have not made that denial, there can only be hell to pay without sex. A monastery or its associate – *celibacy* – is indeed a way out for some, but for the multitudes, I think sexual therapy is important.

In my opinion, **so many of the sexually dysfunctional are so – or have become so – because of social pressures upon them to meet some arbitrary norm or standard.** You can take two guys who are equally impotent for completely natural reasons and one of them will be sexually dysfunctional psychologically while the other has no problem with it at all. In the case where no psychological trauma is experienced, the reason is acceptance; and contrariwise, in the case where the guy suffers psychologically, he will not have accepted his status as matter of fact and will consider himself unequal to the task of manhood.

Social pressures to meet erection standards are at the base of many psychological traumas; and it's really unfortunate we can't be more accepting of our differences as well as of our similarities. Unless a sexual act requires penetration, a sexual act does not require an erection anyhow; and if we humans were more naturally oriented than customary oriented, the need for an actual erection would be rare. ***In truth, if we really actually acted natural, so many problems we create for ourselves would never see the light of day.***

6

Sexual Candor for Others

What about the neighbor's kid? How should a neighbor adult deal with the neighbor's kid, given that we are talking agreement with sexual candor on the part of the neighbor who's dealing with the neighbor's kid? This can be another very sticky area; and we need to be vigilant about it. For sure, three things have to be true to assume any kind of responsibility for a child not your own.

First, the child's parent must know who you are and what you believe; and that requires tremendous candor. Second, the child's parent or guardian must be open to your attitude on life and sex. And, third, the child's parent or guardian must overtly entrust you to care for the child. If those three conditions exist, the neighbor's kid can be treated as one of your own. If not, it may be sad to see the youngster lack in guidance, but there's nothing you can do – short of interference with the right of the neighbors to bring up their own child in their own way.

The ideal, of course, is for neighbors and acquaintances to be open with one another so as to preempt any unwanted surprises or shocks. It's to no one's advantage to be invited into a home wherein the conduct is entirely strange to the visitor. Just plain courtesy would dictate that any visitor know in general what to expect. The key there is to be yourself whenever you have the chance. ***Live up to your lifestyle as much as possible so the neighbors can know you believe in natural candor.*** Some degree of surprise, and even shock, cannot be avoided because customarily, people are not open with themselves. Natural candor is bound to be strange to some extent; but no one will be served by acting like it is of no value. That's the story of the past; and it has led to failed story after failed story.

Answer the door naked, fetch the newspaper naked, adjust the lawn sprinkler naked – do little things that can quietly introduce yourself and your natural convictions to the world about you – within restraint of law, of course. Depending upon communal law, some communities may consider it ***indecent exposure*** to even answer your door naked. I am not suggesting breaking communal law; but acting within the constraints of communal law, be yourself as much as possible so that there are no secrets between you and the neighbors about what you believe. Candor may be difficult; but in my opinion, a lack of candor can upset many a good intentioned conduct. We humans are not mind readers. **Let others know of your beliefs without imposing them on those others. Otherwise, many opportunities to share one's own good welfare might be lost within the horrible shrouds of secrecy.**

Don't refrain from being yourself if you believe in what you are; or that which you have will become that which you had. You can never add to a good thing unless you put forth some of the good and let others take notice of it. If you suppress it entirely for the public, eventually you may lose it yourself – because it will become of no value. If you believe in natural candor, don't go to the neighbors naked, but be naked when they come to you – if you believe they would be open to it. If you feel that nakedness itself might offend a visitor, use discretion and do not open the door naked. Show nakedness in your art instead. At least, that has been my way. Many can accept nudity in a picture. Start

there; and if there is interest shown in the art, then announce your naturalism and feel an acquaintance out. It has worked for me in life. From art on the wall to naked at the door. ***Once people get used to a way of life, it often becomes acceptable – once ones conduct is shown to be without threat.***

Nothing, however, is ever served by keeping ones belief entirely to his or her self. We learn by example if example is shown. My house is filled with naked art because I believe in what that art expresses and because I want to share my comfort with the natural with others. Some do not like it and never return for feeling offended by it, but what does it matter? If they are offended by my art, they are really offended by me. I do not like offending others. I think the best way to actually avoid offending others is being candid about my beliefs. There is nothing more healthy in life, I have found, than being candid to keep from actually offending others with some challenging conduct.

Indeed, being candid is just as good for repelling the disagreeable as attracting the agreeable; and who should want to go through life in the wrong company?

7

Sex & Intimacy

How do I value intimacy? Or better put, how should intimacy be valued in the life of a *Divine Naturalist* who is based on respect for *Natural Design* for guidance? **I think it's important to realize that true intimacy is a thing of the soul, not the body.** The body is only a vehicle of use by the soul. Lots of people argue that sex without intercourse is sex without intimacy, lacking sufficient closeness to be regarded as intimate. I think they confuse intimacy with shared orgasm. Just because two people are completed together does not mean those same two people are automatically intimate. In my way of thinking, true intimacy is only possible – not by way of conjunction of two bodies – but by way of conjunction of two similar souls. In my book, intimacy is rare because it's being able to share insights, not bodies – though sharing of bodies is a wonderful plus if insights are shared too. **Intimacy for me is being able to communicate the issues of the soul with a person who can empathize with you.** It can happen with a sexual partner, but it has nothing to do with sex.

Of course, that is only one man's perception of intimacy. Others may have a different view, but my view of intimacy is a thing of the soul and unfortunately cannot be communicated via an orgasm. Wouldn't it be nice if it could because I think it would be nice to convey ones soul with ones sexual fluid; but it doesn't happen that way. Accordingly, the value of sexual intercourse to make feelings intimate is completely baseless; and if one thinks sexual intercourse alone can create intimacy where a soulful meeting was lacking, he or she should think again. ***Unfortunately, sex can't find a soul mate. A meeting of the minds is the only thing that can do that.*** We can become attached through sex, but not intimate.

8

Benefits of Divine Naturism

Perhaps what I have offered here seems a bit shocking in some respects because it represents a somewhat drastic change from the current state of things; but I think it's just plain good sense. It's good sense to embrace the natural rather than criticize it or reject it. It's good sense to want our children to embrace that which we love. It's good sense to know that because God is in Nature – given the omnipresence of God – *Nature is Divine* and *Natural Design is right*.

Keep in mind, if you will, *Divine Naturism* is an ideal, not a dogma or a church or an assembly requiring membership. There are no dotted lines to sign to become a *Divine Naturist*. There are no dues to pay, no exams to take, no pledges to make – other than the self imposed pledge to conduct your life within the structure of *Natural Design*. It might be good to make up a poster and frame it and attach it to the wall where all who enter can see it. Let it say in your own words that the individuals and family living there are proud to be *Divine Naturists* – or *Divine Naturalists*. Put that pledge in the open so all can see it and so that all who enter there can be advised of the chosen structure of the abode. We all need some kind of structure; and I think *Divine Naturism* offers a structure insuring the greatest strength possible and the most endearing of freedoms.

The structure – and ideal – of *Divine Naturism* is living and conducting life according to natural limits. *It's seeing the natural limits as the Divine limits or seeing the natural regulations and encouragements as the Divine regulations and encouragements*. Why? Because God, being necessarily *infinite* and *everywhere* is in Nature. That makes the natural rules also the Divine rules. The structure of *Divine Naturism* says look to Nature for the answers. Don't look to anyone claiming to speak for God. *Being that God is within each of us and within each of us equally, we need no redemption from a lack of Divinity and God needs no spokesman*. That is essentially the structure I call *Divine Naturism*. It's a structure of truth – and a structure of freedom – and a structure of strength.

Any system worthy of being called a structure must imply guidelines – or it wouldn't be a structure. The problem with human history is that the structures human traditions have embraced have, for the most part, been false structures in terms of their claims. Men have decided those structures and claimed that God inspired those men to build the various structures and impose those structures on the rest of us. *Divine Naturism* is not based on any so called **revelation**. It is not the product of a prophet who has claimed he is speaking for God. It's simply deciding according to the design of Nature – or within Nature. **The rules of *Divine Naturism* are the rules of an ideal, not a dogma. There are no penalties for violating *Divine Naturism* except for losing it as an ideal and losing the benefits of that ideal.**

Those benefits, perhaps, could be summarized as follows:

1. ***Enhanced respect for Nature and Natural Design.*** Being a willing student and child of Nature offers a sense of belonging to Nature (and to the Infinite Presence) not otherwise attainable through another ideal or dogmatic system. True respect will always add a smile to your face, a twinkle to your eyes, and an uplifted beat to your heart. True respect enhances awareness and heightens gratitude – and that is what life should be all about.
2. ***Simplicity of conduct.*** Allowing the same rule of conduct to be applicable to all – no matter what the age or sex – offers simplicity not attainable through any other perception. Simplicity carries with it automatic avoidance of confusions more daring systems have to confront. It also carries with it automatic avoidance of many consequences more daring systems have to confront. The fires of discontent and jealousy can't touch a simple person.
3. ***Integration.*** Whether it be on a family level or community level or whatever, having one rule of behavior and one standard for all allows integration within family and community. Privacy, of course, is lost; but one has to ask, is the integration and openness gained worth more than the privacy that is yielded?

If it seems that the restriction of coitus to conception is hard to bear, then perhaps that reflects disagreement with the ideal of deciding conduct according to design. Otherwise, for a true believer, it may not be seen as a hard restriction. It should be seen for what it is – a natural definition or limitation of sexual intercourse. **Even so, a *Divine Naturist* is an idealist; and an idealist doesn't ask, is it hard? He or she asks, is it right?** A true *Divine Naturist* does not try to avoid design by cheating with contraceptives or playing sexual roulette with the so called rhythm method. A true *Divine Naturist* willingly submits to regulation by the design of Nature via virtue of respect for it.

It's good to keep in mind, however, that because *Divine Naturism* is an ideal and not a dogma, it can be retained or lost by decision. The ideal is so whether it's lived a day, a week, a year, or a lifetime. Yesterday, I may have qualified for the ideal and followed its course. Today, I may lose it by following another course, but if I do, I must also accept the consequences of any ideal or dogma I may choose. Tomorrow, if I have a tomorrow – and that's the great risk of weaving in and out – I can choose the ideal of *Divine Naturism* again. It's not a club. It's an ideal; and whenever I want, I can choose it or lose it. ***The problem, however, of trying to bob in and out according to personal whim is with a bobbing out of the ideal, I run the terrible risk of losing my perspective and losing my way to get back in.***

I can say, tonight I'm going to use sexual intercourse strictly for pleasure and not design. Tonight, I'm going to free myself and live on the wild side for a time. I suspect we all need to do that from time to time – including yours truly – but when we do, we are stepping within another ideal – the ideal of personal morality. Within that ideal, we have to make our own decisions without benefit of natural blueprint. It's OK to do it, but if we do, we should be aware of the consequences of such a decision; and perhaps the biggest consequence is isolation from safety, the safety of feeling secure as a child of *Natural Design*. If we operate outside of *Natural Design*, then we lose the security it offers.

If I can do it with my husband, then why not extend myself a little and check out the neighbor? But then what happens if complications arise? And complications always seem to arise when you operate outside of *Natural Design* – from unwanted disease to unwanted tension between parties. ***You are always operating in the red when you cross over the blue line of peace of Divine Naturism.*** And within the family: If I do it with my husband, how should I respond to my daughter if she asks about my conduct? Should I lie and tell her it's none of her business or should I be honest and tell her I used a contraceptive? Then, what happens with my example? If I can do it with my husband with the aid of some contraceptive protection, she should be free to do it in the same light. **What's right for Mommy should also be right for the daughter.** Now, I'm offering my daughter bad example and placing her at risk of acquiring an unwanted consequence.

It's good to keep in mind we can cross over the line any time we want and hope to be able to see clearly to cross back over to security when boredom or other danger threatens later. Unfortunately, if we are counting on that, it's nearly impossible to make a clear decision in the midst of confusion. **There would be absolutely no way you'd need to get back into the blue unless you confronted confusion on the other side, but within any confused state of mind, direction is lost.** How are you going to make your way out of the fog if you've lost any sense as to what is north, south, east, or west?

Therein lies the danger of thinking you can bob in and out of conduct according to *Natural Design*. You can very well get lost in the process. The question one should ask is, is crossing over the line worth it? At one time or another, it may, indeed, be worth it just to see what's on the other side – and that, too, is part of curiosity. But that's also where the old adage, *curiosity killed the cat*, comes into play. Satisfying a given curiosity might turn out complementary, but it might also turn out threatening too; and if confusion is awakened by the process and life is terminated without chance of recovery, then the soul will have to deal with whatever consequences confusion might provide for a soul released from a body. Who knows about that?

Then, too, how about the danger of habit? Talk about getting lost without possibility of *natural salvation!* Should I cross over the blue protective line of security within *Natural Design* and like it so much as to create a habit, what chance have I got to cross back? For some who have acquired a habit of acting outside of *Natural Design*, there would be no possible way for them to get within the blue protection of conduct according to *Natural Design* except that they die and be reincarnated within a surrounding that espouses and recommends conduct according to *Natural Design*. And that's taking quite a chance right there. Who's to say that a *safe surrounding* will be available upon need to reenter or reincarnate?

Indeed, I think, *Natural Design* is our greatest friend. By it, we can come to know ourselves. By studying it, we can come to know our souls – where they come from and where they are going. It's all there in the design if we just open our eyes and look. **By studying *Natural Design*, we study ourselves because we operate within that design, whether we acknowledge it or not.** We are ahead in the ballgame, however, if we understand our participation; and, in fact, by understanding our participation and cooperating with the design that allows it, we gain the most wonderful of all talents – self knowledge and self appreciation. We are each but a reflection of *Natural Design*; and it

should be our greatest joy to see ourselves in that light and know we are children of the Universe.

If you wonder about what I said about finding the truth of our souls by studying *Natural Design*, following that natural course, I have satisfied my own curiosity about the soul. By studying *Natural Design* in general and observing what is common within it, I think I discovered some very important truths about the soul. It's only opinion, of course, but my reflections about the soul are found in another work I wrote called **UNMASKING THE SOUL**. Perhaps you could find that one interesting. Determining the truths of the soul has been for me just another of the many benefits I have enjoyed following the trail of *Natural Design*.

Though I do not consider myself much of a novelist, I have written a couple of stories for their usefulness in illustrating recommended behavior. I would classify them as philosophical novels – dealing as much with thought as with action. One is called **FROM THE DARK INTO THE LIGHT**. It features a *Divine Naturalist* and her family as they deal with some issues brought about by their belief. Another is called **ALL'S WELL WITH THE WORLD**. It is about a young couple who decide to undertake a rational investigation into the meaning of life and subscribe some close friends and an open neighbor in the process. Both are quite low key stories that are into discussing life in the quiet and not debating in conflict. Perhaps you can find one or both of those stories useful. If so, be my guest. Both stories, however, feature open acceptance of life as *Divinely Natural*. I will let it go at that.

9

Escaping Ditches

Wouldn't it be interesting if in some way we souls of the earth are being tested, as it were, for commitment to *Natural Design*, and until we pass the test, we are only allowed a soulful visa to the earth? I don't mean *tested by God* - Which is in all things - but tested by some soulful providence or community of souls which will embrace as members only those who abide by the *ideal of Natural Design*. Round and round we go to the beginning of the line with birth, down the line with life, and to the end of the line with death and then having to go through the whole process again and again and again – until we finally prove ourselves worthy to leave the earth to be reborn in a better land afar – or at least different land afar or near – where only *Divine Naturists* assemble together. Who knows? It might be so.

I think that what happens with people who refuse to budge from *tried and true* ways is that they get themselves into a rut and with every refusal to bend and every objection to change, it's like they dig deeper into their rut. With every resistance, and especially with every put down of a varying opinion, they shovel themselves deeper and deeper into blindness, eventually digging a ditch with banks to the side so that there is no way they can begin to see the meadow about them. Pretty soon, all they see is the dirt banks they have created and any access to the top of the ditch to view the surrounding lush and green valleys is lost. It's bad enough that they create a huge ditch for themselves in this life; but to add to their *endless woes*, when life ends and they have to repeat, all they know is the ditch they left behind. So, back into the ditch they go because you can only relate to familiar surroundings; and so the cycle repeats again.

Maybe with essays like this, some of the *ditch people* will catch enough sense of the real truth to start crawling out of their holes; but unfortunately, great numbers will still be left digging deeper rather than crawling out. Perhaps, Huh?

In my opinion, we have it within us, each of us, to crawl out of our previous holes of not being aware that *Nature & Divinity* are one. Each of us can decide to adopt *Natural Design* as our only needed spiritual mentor or guide; and be it sex or any other issue of our lives, we can choose to follow the *real Master* – *Nature* – in determining our proper course. God is not outside of Nature. No one needs to listen for a voice that claims separation from Nature because if they do, in all likelihood, the voice that will be leading them will be an impostor of God, not God Itself. We can crawl out of our holes of deception and ignorance. We do not have to stay down there, missing so much of what *Divine Nature* has to offer.

WALK WITH ME

(A Poem)

Written in 1980s

*It's not easy, at first, to be truthful,
and to care about the truth.
No one, at first, likes to stand exposed
and to shimmer in the nude.*

*Nakedness doesn't come easy
because we're all programmed to hide,
Though it can come eventually,
but only if we try.*

*Why not walk with me
and find what strength we can?
Let us walk beneath the stars
and play naturally in the sand.*

*Don't be hurt that you're embarrassed
going forward without clothes.
Know that God can only smile
at all Its Graciousness you hold.*

*No man can become a prince
by hiding from himself,
And no princess can find peace
by lying on the shelf.*

*So, come on down and feel the goodness
that in you does reside;
And, together, let us build a castle
that no one can divide.*

***NATURAL DESIGN
& SEX***

The End!

NATURAL MANIFESTO

FOR

HUMAN REFORM

(12 Pages)

By Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
Originally Written in April, 1994
Rewritten and slightly revised in February of 2006

Note: Like anything I write about, this is opinion. Many will not agree with me for their own various and personal reasons. It's OK. Agreement is not being sought. My only intent is to share a bit of my perception about life and its ideal conduct. Thank you for lending an ear.

F.W.B. (February 18th, 2006)

How do we solve the problem of segregation? How do we deal with poverty? How do we resolve crime? In my opinion, almost everyone in an Earthly society who would try to offer answers to the above questions would try to do so within a framework of civilization as it is currently constituted and as it has been constituted or structured from time immemorial – or from as far back as history records.

Most would ask, how do we get there from here, assuming the current structure of civilization as correct. Most would not question the structure of civilization and leap right into thinking about a resolution of this ill or that by staying within the established organization of civilization. Very importantly, most would not question civilization at all in trying to resolve the issues of civilization; and that is why most cannot offer anything more than a tip or two on how to idle smoother than before.

The truth is, the world of human Earthlings has been in an idle state for most, if not all, of human history because human civilization itself has been in error. How can we begin to resolve problems that arise within civilization when civilization is the problem? And yet, for eons of time, we humans have done just that – tried to resolve problems that arise within our civilized structure of things by attempting to manage them within the structure. Unfortunately, we have failed to question the structure itself.

What is the structure of civilization of which I speak? In practice, though maybe not by intent, it's organizing to ban Nature. Human civilization does not have to organize in such a manner, but, in fact, it has and does; and that's why its organization or structure is unhappily futile. It – and we – live within life to ban life by banning open demonstration of its practices; and by so doing, we are doomed to defeat ourselves. We spit in the face of the Lord of life – Nature – and live to exceed that lord in our ignorance and arrogance.

In this, we are as foolish as we are wrong; and in our foolishness and blindness, we survive – if that it can be called – to ban Paradise.

How does current civilization – or society - ban Nature? A thing is banned that is kept hidden. That's the essence of banning something – keeping it hidden or excluding it from acceptance. We ban Nature – or attempt to do so – by declaring it, via its functions, as illicit or tasteless or indecent. We think we have the right to do that – for the greater good of society – but, Oh, what we lose when we do! There are many societies – or civilizations - on Earth, as many societies as species of living things, but there is only one society which has collectively decided to ban natural functions from open acceptance and made that ban a law – and that society is the one we call *human*.

How do we ban natural function as illicit or tasteless or indecent? We do so by our organizing for the purpose of keeping natural function, as expressed in and through us, hidden. We do so because we want to be set apart from all the rest of many natural societies; and that is the basis of our condemnation. Condemnation is nothing more than isolation or dismembering; and we condemn ourselves when we isolate ourselves from the very Nature of which we are a part.

There are many activities that can cause isolation, but there's only one way to make it happen – the way of hiding. We isolate when we hide what we are and what we do, be it in the name of taste, convention, or even – virtue – or that which we see as virtue. No person is truly virtuous, however, who does not agree with the Creator of life that life – all life – is good and not deserving of being hidden. No one hides that of which he or she feels proud. You only hide that which is not worthy, or that which is seen as not worthy.

Unfortunately, human civilization has organized to hide that which is worthy in order to structure a kingdom of its own; but in the very act of its purpose to establish a kingdom of its own, it has automatically and inevitably become estranged from all other natural kingdoms that have not chosen such isolation. In isolating ourselves from open acceptance of our natural functions, we have isolated ourselves from Nature in our thoughts; and our thoughts have declared us banned from our natural world. Of course, we still live in the natural world, but we are not really aware of it because we think ourselves outside of it. Though we walk in sunlight, our chosen blindness makes days seem as night.

When human civilization decides – as it has done – to privatize universal functions and manages for the sake of separation and segregation, it convicts itself of isolation. When we privatize what is a common function, we ascribe to it a character of which it is undeserving. That is sad in itself. When we claim that what we do behind a stall or curtain is private when we really mean it's dirty or ugly, we lie to ourselves about why we hide it; and within our own self-deceit, we begin to lose our sight as well as our precious connection within Creation. Every self-deceit ends in another declaration of isolation; and every isolation is like another nail in the coffin of humanity.

Then, in our own self-imposed isolation from Nature, we have become so arrogant as to think we can destroy life on Earth, including ourselves. We call such powerful destruction a sophisticated name like *Armageddon*, **but it's nothing more than a death wish**. Isolation breeds distrust and hate; and in our self-imposed exile from Nature, we have come to hate ourselves so much as to wish we had never been born. Thus, we dream of a day when life will be no more; and it's called *Armageddon* – among other things.

Perhaps it's becoming clear that the ills of civilization are nothing more than inevitable consequences of isolation that could be called **Judgments**; and they can never be resolved unless the isolation itself is dismissed. That is the key. Civilization will never be able to resolve the ills of segregation, poverty, and crime unless it changes its very structure; for these three – **segregation, poverty, and crime** – are unavoidable consequences of a structure based on isolation.

Segregation

A person who feels segregated from his or her fellow human beings does so for thoughts of feeling isolated from them. That isolation stems from greater feelings of being isolated from Nature. Thus, to resolve segregation, connect yourself to the Universe and all Natural existence; and the connection will extend to relationships with all natural beings. Begin by embracing natural functions; or there can be no sense you are worthy of them. That means, in the name of integrity and honor, do what you do – and all that you do – in the open.

Privacy would perhaps be a more reasonable expectation if each of us was different than his or her fellow human; but since we are all the same, it is a fairly stupid and useless device. If we would be wise, we would admit to our functions; and in that wonderful admission, we would not only attain peace of soul and body – we would attain integration within Nature. We would feel connected with and to the Universe. That is exactly what current civilization lacks – a sense of integration and connection within the Universe and with all natural beings. Our insistency on privacy keeps us at bay from the Universe, other natural beings, and most pitifully – from ourselves. **In my opinion, privacy is the single most dangerous habit of humanity and human beings because it serves to segregate and dishonor all who practice it.**

Once segregation starts, it never ends. Privacy and insistence on privacy is only the beginning of a path that leads to emptiness from isolation. With a beginning act of isolation or separation from Nature and natural functions, adults segregate from children to keep children **innocent** and protected from naturally good processes that have fallen from grace. Then the explosion continues. Men segregate from women and from each other; and races segregate from races. When races segregate, religion is generated to justify the separation; and inevitably, wars ensue for the sake of demonstrating that one race or social group is better than another. And it all begins with that one single insistency – **PRIVACY**.

Segregation of the races and religions really has little to do with the colors of skin or claims of Divine alignment. It really stems from feelings of independence from Nature as if Nature and Naturalings can possibly exist on different levels. If a person thinks he or she is better than or separate from Nature, that one thinks a foolish thought; and foolishness should never be applauded – though in current civilization, it is not only applauded - it is sanctified. Those who are great are those who stand out above the crowd and find little identification with Nature. These are the saints of civilization – not those who seek equality and fusion. **Blending in is not a sanctimonious quality insofar as current civilization is concerned; and yet, blending in and knowing a sense of membership is the only road to peace.**

Feeling yourself separated from Nature inevitably results in feelings of being separated from Naturalings; and that is what the false notion and practice of segregation is all about. Regular fire needs oxygen to happen. Without it, no matter how high the heat, no fire will occur. Comparing segregation to a fire – and that it is because it consumes its membership – the fires of segregation can never be snuffed until the oxygen of isolation from Nature is denied. Oxygen is for a fire what isolation is for segregation. As long as the oxygen of isolation is supplied, the fires of segregation will continue unabated.

Poverty

Then, there's the ill of poverty. It, too, happens only because men and women of humanity have declared isolation from Nature and natural functions as the sacred law of organization. **Notions of isolation from Nature are precedents for hierarchical order.** As long as we concentrate on differences rather than similarities or equalities, we will see them and act accordingly.

If I see myself as better than you, I'll see you as in a state, probably *deserved*, of impoverishment. That justifies me to be your lord – and lording it over you. But I can't see me better than you if I see you equally connected with Nature. If we are equal Naturalings, I cannot be better than you, nor you better than me; but if I think there can be isolation from equality, quite likely, I'll make it happen; and you, my former friend, will be my impoverished victim.

Everyone deserves good fortune, but no one deserves wealth; for wealth is but another name for *greed*. That which is at the end of the road of greed is wealth. Thus, *greed* and *wealth* could be seen as one. Greed is only the action and attitude needed to attain wealth. **Greed is taking for myself that which could be enjoyed by another – not shared by another, but enjoyed by another.** Greed is not just failing to share four apples out of five. It's taking more than one in the first place. Within current civilization, greed is almost a requirement for individual security because we do not hold equality in high esteem. Unfortunately, we must be greedy to survive because we are not constituted to do differently; but that doesn't make it good.

Equality of fortune can never be achieved if inequality among Naturalings is the foundation of civilized thinking; and notions of inequality among Naturalings stem from notions of separation or isolation from Nature. If I am isolated from my origin, I'll see only me; and in my loneliness, I will lack faith that I belong. That sets up notions I have to do it all myself which leads to greed to secure my independent and frail existence.

When the few are not greedy, the many will never suffer poverty. Why? Because the notion of connection and equal belongingness is contagious. When those who would be greedy submit their equality, rather than their *rightful superiority*, to work out a solution to this ill or that, those who would be enslaved or deprived would not be. You couldn't tell the difference between those who would be greedy from those who would be enslaved because there would be none.

Unfortunately, what happens all too often within current civilization is the greedy and the enslaved become exchanged in time. The enslaved allow enslavement for just so long, then rise up and overthrow their enslavers. Now, the former is the latter and the

latter is the former; and so it goes, around and around and around. Consequently, those who were enslaved become the greedy and those who were greedy lose what they had and become enslaved. It's a vicious circle; and within a civilization based on inequality due to isolation from Nature, it's an inevitable cycle.

Poverty can only be abolished when everyone within civilization accepts equal worth; and that can only happen if civilization organizes upon the idea that Nature is to be embraced – and all its functions – openly and sincerely and with uniform gratitude.

It can never happen, I'm told. It's unnatural and illogical and impractical; and being all of that, it's also foolish. I agree it's illogical and impractical within the framework of current civilization; but it's not unnatural. On the contrary, it would be natural because civilization everywhere – perhaps due to origin from the same seed – is unnatural. Current human civilization prides itself in being unnatural or better than all other civilizations or species because it started that way. **It's the judgment of life and eternity that a thing must continue as it starts until such time as it changes perspective.** Factions within current civilization or current human organization will always exist to ensure poverty as long as the perspective of isolation from Nature and natural function continues.

From the very first moment we can hear instruction, we are dictated a certain thing – *Son (Daughter), you must be better than your peers to make it in this world.* We are not permitted equality, but rather dictated inequality. We must be *better* than our opposition. We must be *better* than our competition. This is the logical and practical dictation that must ensue from a foundation of isolation from Nature which can only ensure a corresponding inequality – or sense thereof. Indeed, it is necessary to be better than another to survive within the current structure. It's not natural to have to be better than another; but it is logical and practical – within the current unnatural organization of civilization – or civilizations.

It's logical and practical alright; but it's often painful and hurtful too. Let us never forget that. To be *better than* someone else is to put them down as you put yourself up; and that can hurt them when being *better than* you must be their objective. And, too, it can be painful to you when the goal of your being superior eludes you for whatever reason. It can be such a waste of a lot of good energy to pursue what it takes to be *better than* someone else when you could have been concentrating on equality among Naturalings instead. Equality, for the most part, breeds notions and feelings of belonging and peace. Inequality, for the most part, breeds notions of isolation, disconnection, and anger. Why would anyone choose inequality when equality is far more natural, healthy, and complimentary?

Crime

As if segregation of adults and children and the races and widespread poverty are not enough as civilized ills with which to deal, perhaps as harsh as any ill is crime. **Crime abounds because humans do not know themselves except as competitors.** Humans compete and must compete when their entire perspective is based on inequality.

If my focus is on how different we are, then my energy will be dedicated to demonstrating we have different talents – or different levels of the same talent. Such is the basis of competition – which forms the structure of societies looking for meaning when meaning is lacking via connection to Nature. When impressed with a consciousness of *belonging*, however, which could be called *love*, no man or woman would be concerned with a need to compete.

Unfortunately, competition can and does go totally berserk; and one terrible result is crime, be it small and individualized, medium and business-sized, or large and militarized.

At the base of all crime, legal and otherwise, is a sense of being different. One person cannot kill another if he or she feels a true brother to the one who would be killed. Should I feel a need to kill you, it's because you threaten my existence. Pow! I shall stand – you shall fall! **But it is a fool unaware of connection and kinship who could be so unconscious of the actual tie between him and his victim who could kill.**

Regardless of how you slice it, murder results from one notion and one notion alone – *you and I are not one*. Because I am so caught up with the island of me as isolated Earthling, I cannot see you. That's the basis of murder and all crime. I could not feel free to stomp all over you, should I feel a healthy relationship between us.

Human beings the Earth over have a huge problem. They have organized upon a false foundation – **the foundation of separation from Nature**. Instead of feeling enthralled and thrilled with the miracle of life and being grateful for the gift of life, we have organized upon the statement that we are better than anything else; and that has projected us into a sense of isolation from celestial bodies, other animals, and even from ourselves. We have chosen to isolate ourselves from our flesh and have made it our enemy. It is no wonder, then, that we can so easily treat the flesh, regardless of whose, with such disdain as to starve it, beat it, and murder it. And it all comes down to one thing – a feeling or sense of isolation.

That which naturally happens when the natural is denied and a human person thinks he or she is better than a monkey – or even a blade of grass – is that air of superiority translates to a sense of being better than fellow humans as well. That translates into notions that one can overrule another – or use another for his or her own benefit without having to benefit the one used; and that is the basis of crime. The extreme of overruling another is murder – or execution in legal terms.

I'm told – ***murder – or execution - is natural***; and it saddens me tremendously to hear such a thing. The argument is that within all of Nature, animals kill other animals. That is offered as a defense for murder; but the truth is mankind is the only species on Earth that kills just to kill. Animals of a thousand species kill, yes, but they kill by instinct to feed or defend themselves. Man not does not kill other humans to fill his stomach, or very often to keep from being killed. Often, he kills to destroy and amazingly enough, for enjoyment. Man is the only creature on Earth that relishes murder like a form of entertainment. So very often, it has little to do with survival and a lot to do with sheer senseless destruction. **Animals kill with Nature's approval to eat and survive. Man kills without Nature's approval and outside of Nature's design from a single minded and extremely selfish motive of destruction. At least, often he does.**

My, My, how we enjoy that power! It has become a major force of human civilization. Because we have been distracted from the truth of our natural membership

for so long, few of us even begin to have a consciousness of it. At the opposite end of connection, there's isolation; and in our growing sense of isolation, we have fallen in love with hate. The gun has become the symbol of human civilization – as it was bound to happen when we organized in the beginning upon the *foundation of separation*. It's so easy to destroy that for which we feel no unity. That's why we human beings are so willing to kill. We're not connected to Nature; and we're not connected with each other as a result.

Connection – Not Isolation

So, what can we do to change the rather depressing state of man? I think I should answer that by saying the state of man is important, but no more important than the state of me. Let me get it right and not concern myself with the state of man. I can do little and should do little about another, but I can do much and should do much about me; and I must begin by disowning that which does not favor me – or please me - regardless of how many might acclaim it.

It should not be important for me to preach something, but rather to live something. Sure, I want to share and communicate; or I wouldn't be writing this article; but more, I want to know what is right so that I may follow the light. Light fame would be alright, too, as long as I do not let it become my purpose; however, it would not be good to write this article and claim no responsibility for it by thwarting recognition through some sort of anonymity. I'm a person and I'm connected. Anonymity would imply, not so much humility, but isolation; and that is not my intent in life.

I am not isolated; and so I admit my name and my purpose. My purpose is to be an alert and grateful son of the Universe and live my life aware of my natural connections. If I can keep true to my purpose and true to my trail, I can populate some of the wonderful Universe with me – or with the likes of me. When I die, I can pass the word of me and my convictions and send forward a lot of *Little Willies* to continue that which I have begun – or perhaps better expressed, what I am continuing. I did not come from nothing, did I? Anymore than you. So, whoever it was who gave me birth and sent me to live what he or she or it began – he or she or it is writing this paper because if my beginning did not happen through the creativity of another me, *me* would not be doing it.

So, what can I do publicly to change the world? Not near as much as I can do *privately without privacy* within the openness of my reach. I have a long way to go. I admit it. I have a vision of how I should conduct myself. So, in my home, I'll do it – or try to.

I won't stand on a public stage without invitation of civilized law and do naturally in the open; but I must go naked in my home so that quietly and confidently I can say thanks to the *Big William* of my past as I continue the way of my parent soul before completing my own mission for all the *Little Willies* to continue. We're in this adventure together, my wonderful soulful tradition and me; and together, we will stay.

Without a shadow of a doubt, in my opinion, man is wrong in feeling and believing that isolation from Nature is proper. This I believe, but I cannot dictate that belief and make others see it as I, even as I should try to shed some light where darkness previously lay. It is not my responsibility to keep people from killing each other or being greedy;

but it is my responsibility to myself and my providence not to kill, except for food as animal nature allows, and to keep from taking more than I need.

It should not be for me to keep a gun in my closet to defend myself. Should another wish my life to be destroyed, let him or her know that murder comes with a terrible price – the price of hate and apathy, which unfortunately, he or she will have to continue for letting it out. That's judgment; and no one can avoid it.

Should another strike me, beware, I might strike back to defend myself – and I have in my life; but should it happen, it will be unplanned. I will not waste my time by spending time on efforts of planned self-defense. I will spend my time connecting to the Nature of my origin – and to the God or Divinity so wonderfully present within it.

Loving The Natural Way

But I would like to ask that you, too, do as I – connect yourself to Nature via awareness. Learn to love Nature and God through the Nature in you. The Nature on the far side of the Universe is no more Godly than the Nature inside of you. It's all the same. Don't reach for God out of reach when He or She or It is present in the palms of your hands. Do what you do in the open, at least in your home. Nature has no shame; and as a member of Nature, neither do you – in any facet of life. When enough of us do what we do in the open in our homes, then and only then, can we become a force to change civilization to *cancel the foundation of separation* from Nature and *belonging to confusion*.

Mankind has been inspired with reason, but that reason has been more reason-less than reason-full. It has been said in the Jewish Scriptures, *let us reason together*, but he or they who said that and requested that were of the impression that reason is better than instinct, that man and his reason is better than animals and their instinct. From the beginning, that kind of thinking has betrayed us.

If we are ever to stop the ludicrous isolation from Nature we have embraced for eons, we must begin by equating our blessed reason with the equally blessed instinct of animals, not ruling reason above instinct. **And in not placing our reason above instinct, perhaps that's where our true salvation lies – as a civilization.** When we can tear down the inequality between man and lion or man and sparrow, we can become students of instinct and let our reason follow that path.

If we should question, is it right to kill, we should look to the lion, untainted by reason, and know Nature's counsel. The lion will lay down with the lamb unless the lion is hungry; and then it will kill to satisfy its hunger; but normally the lion will not kill, left unchallenged, unless it is hungry. That's fair enough. Mankind should learn from this instinct and let it be the guide of reason. Let us be as good as the lion and kill only to feed ourselves. That's fair enough since Nature formatted the blueprint. Let us be as good as the lion and kill only that which is a source of food and never kill each other for any other reason; for lions don't normally kill other lions – though admittedly, there may be exceptions. **Reason should not embrace the exception as the guideline – but rather the norm.** Normally, lions kill outside their fold. Man kills man, not for a source of food for the table, but for a false power that's felt in the gut.

If we should question, is it right to have sexual intercourse and when is it right, let us look again to the wonderful instinct of animals, not tainted by reason, for the answers.

What male animal enters his female mate for a purpose or a result less than procreation? Look among all animal civilizations; and you will find few who do – though again there may be exceptions. I am under the impression that male rats enter pregnant female rats, but that is an exception, not the norm within the animal world. Mankind, if smart, will choose the animal norm as a guide, not an exception here and there. **In truth, in the animal world, man is the only one who thinks he's outside the norm and has a sacred right to be so.** Again, his reason has put him outside the fold of normal natural rule and conduct.

That doesn't mean, however, that male and female cannot unite in sensual terms, except to conceive; but it does limit coitus considerably. When a man loves a woman – and vice versa – and there is connection due to closeness, the connection is the result of the bond; and *Natural Design* is respected. This closeness cannot be achieved in animals, probably due mostly to differences in anatomy. Humans stand erect and because of that feature of anatomy, their sex organs can meet and unite outside a rear pumping arrangement. Animals link with the male in the rear for the purpose of procreation. So can humankind; but humankind is unique in that connection is also easy when a male and female are bonding facing each other.

As long as it's an easy and compassionate encounter – meaning of mutual consent – and linkage just happens without the contrivance of emotionless sex, sensual bonding between humans via sexual intercourse can and should be beautiful. As long as there is no refusal of what passes between a man and a woman, vaginal intercourse is natural; but when such intercourse is conducted for orgasm and conception is pre-aborted or post-aborted, then the *Natural Design* of intercourse is flaunted and overruled for a civilized intent. **The world won't stop if civilized intent and practice overrules *Natural Design*, but with every situation where sex is conducted outside of *Natural Design*, the participants become more and more encamped in *Isolationville* and more and more distant from *Naturalville*.**

Within the animal world, too, the female controls the timing of copulation. The male acts only when invited – normally – though again, there may be some exceptions. So should it be with humans, though it is rare that it is. Within human civilization, more often than not, the male controls intercourse as if the primary design of intercourse – conception – is of no importance whatsoever. **Within human civilization, when a man wants his woman – or a woman he'd like to be his – he just goes in, with or without an invitation. Such arrogance is peculiar to man. No other male in all the other species of animals acts so aggressively and unnaturally.** Such arrogance is often called *love*, or *lust*, but it's more accurately an *act of natural treason*. The penalty for human treason within current civilization is often severe; and the least penalty would be deportation from the violated land. Likewise, **the penalty for natural treason is severe; and the penalty is *deportation to Isolationville*.** That is no small penalty to pay.

Humans should look to their animal equals to find their way. **Let the female control the process of sexual intercourse and let it happen only upon female invitation.** Anything less – in marriage or out – is rape. Let the female control the process by invitation when ready or desirous of entry; but let the female and her male partner be responsible for the consequences of intercourse without trying to trick, prevent, or abort the process. That's the *Natural Way*; and attempts to overrule the process by trickery or

abortion is once again a form of natural treason; and we know the penalty for natural treason, don't we?

Of course it is argued that people, young and old, need the experience or adventure of intercourse without the complications of a baby; but that is a dictum of civilization, not Nature. A young couple can fondle and bring each other off outside of vaginal intercourse the same as an older couple. Touching or kissing to orgasm is – or should be – natural for humans because of anatomical ease, but vaginal linkage via coitus for orgasm alone is an entirely different matter.

Nothing is natural that comes with civilized instructions on how to get around natural consequences. When responding to civilized instructions to bypass natural consequences, the act becomes a civilized act – and, of course, the result is natural treason and at least temporary *self-deportation to Isolationville*. Are we willing to pay the price for natural treason? We should ask that question every time we choose to act outside of *Natural Design* and take action to prevent or abort natural consequences.

It's natural, then, for a couple to embrace and kiss and fondle and unite. Then a couple is going with the flow; but when the connection is forced, or linkage is uncomfortable or without emotion, or contraception or abortion is employed to expressly ditch natural consequences, *Natural Design is flaunted*; and intercourse loses its natural dignity. Then man and woman become *strangers to Natural Design*, act to ignore it, lose an awareness of a natural connection, and lose their citizenship as dignitaries of the Universe while becoming *citizens of Isolationville*.

Indeed, we have come a long way since the Garden of Eden, but all we have to do to reopen the gates is recognize the initial instruction was in error. **Man and woman listened to a false lead telling them that they are better than all the members of Earthly creation and that all those members were created to serve mankind.** That was the first falsehood, an error that mankind believed in the beginning – and an error that mankind still believes. It was not a lie because it was and is a falsehood of true belief and not a tale told knowing it is not true; but lie or falsehood, it has led to trauma after trauma within our long human history.

In truth, Eden never existed because Eden, as a *paradise of truth*, cannot be based on a falsehood. It's a falsehood that man is better than the Universe or anything in the Universe. It's a falsehood that man is a rightful commander of the Earth – and the life upon it. Supposedly, God gave man the right to name and dominate the animals – according to the tale of creation in the book of **Genesis**. Man should never see himself or herself as rightful commanders anymore than the littlest monkey. That's the very falsehood that has caused our isolation and abandonment of natural fellowship and friendship; and when we stop believing it, and the little monkeys become our equals and friends, then Eden can at long last be realized. When that happens – and I believe someday it might – it will be *Bye, Bye, Armageddon!* And our death wish will be replaced with an eagerness to live as never before.

The Ideal of Solitude

I think so many people get into so much trouble and have to resolve so many complications by not concentrating on themselves as solitary reflections of perfection. I want to make this argument because I want to express a very important idea that when we

feel connected to the Universe and see ourselves as merely one of the gang, so to speak, we recognize the *fullness of our individuality*.

I am the same as you and you are the same as me. When I allow myself to note my connection within the Universe and within the vast world of wonderful Naturalings, I recognize that each individual – be it human or non-human – is like a perfect creation all to itself – even though it is not all to itself. Even if I were alone, however, as the only human being on this Earth, I would not be any less beautiful than I am being just one of many.

Knowing this, I have had a relatively easy life. I have never had to depend upon another for my sense of esteem. Why? Because I realize that the miracle that is me is just as important as any miracle in existence. This is important because it is expressive of the *possibility of solitude*. What is solitude? *It is finding in yourself what you may find in another*. Essentially, that's what it is. It is important that because of the *possibility of solitude*, one need never depend on another to be satisfied in life.

I think that so many never achieve happiness in life because they think that it is literally necessary to be with others to find satisfaction. For what it's worth, I wish that people would not limit themselves into thinking that one cannot find in oneself what one may find in another. I love my relationships in life and I cherish them; but wonderfully, I do not need any of them. When people say *I need you and I cannot live without you*, it is the same as saying *I am not individually perfect*.

I think that if one does not see him or herself as individually perfect – because he or she is an expression of a Perfect Nature and a Perfect God – then he or she will never sense real perfection with another either. Why? Because if I see me as imperfect, I will see you as imperfect too. When joining two imperfect beings, then just another imperfection can result. You can't make perfection by joining two imperfect beings. When someone argues *I'm only perfect when with you*, they make their perfection contingent upon another. That is truly a fool's way at looking at life because by demanding another for perfection, one's own perfection is denied. That is sad because it is so untrue.

Each of us is perfect unto ourselves because each of us is an expression of a Perfect Nature and a Perfect God or Divinity. Why is that? Because whatever Infinite Presence that exists – which personally I call **GOD** – being Infinite, It has to exist everywhere because that is the very definition of infinite – **WITHOUT LIMIT**. So, if there is truly an Infinite Presence, It must be in all things since it must be everywhere. Nature is part of Everywhere. Thus, Nature is part of Divinity. Since humanity is part of Nature – which is Divine – then humanity must be Divine. **Pretty neat, Huh?**

As I see it, I am one of many humans, but I am the same as all humans. I should be able to live alone on an island that lacks any humanity but my own and find as much happiness and fulfillment all by myself as with others. Why? Because I am the same whether I am alone or with others. *Because I am the same as you, I do not need you to find me. That is the Principle of Solitude. One person becomes many; and many become one*. So, because we are all alike, I am many; and when I respect me, I respect the many who are like me. Respect for one and all dissolves conflict and ensures peace; and I think, deep down, that is what we all want. Isn't it?

I have always been amazed with life and at life. It is quite a miracle. All life is. When I look in the mirror and see those eyes looking back at me, I say – Wow! Just look

at that. How could I be so fortunate? And when I look at my chest and know there is heart and a heart beating beneath it, again I say to myself – Wow! How could it all be? But it is – though I have no explanation for it – and it is only for me to be grateful it is. We are all the same. That is why in looking at me, you are there – though you may be a thousand miles away. *I don't need you to have you because in having me, I have you. Pretty neat, Huh?*

I hope you can see how easy it is – or can be; and maybe change to allow the individuals in your life all the freedom they should have to know they are perfect all by themselves. *Solitude – or self-esteem without others - is achievable – whether you live alone or with others.* The key to being the best you can be is act the same alone as with others. Act by yourself like you are complete – or perfect unto yourself. Act with another like you are complete. Then by your example, they may act like they are complete – and perfect unto themselves;

And a true Eden will result – not an Armageddon! Which would you prefer?

Thanks for listening!

F.W.B.

NATURAL MANIFESTO FOR HUMAN REFORM

- The End -

**IMPRESSIONS
OF
FRANCIS OF ASSISI**

(41 Pages)

By
Francis William Bessler

--- A Speculative Biography ---

Originally written in 1994.
Rewritten in 2006.

From thoughts gleaned from
A BIOGRAPHY OF THE SAINT OF ASSISI
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Francis William Bessler,
Laramie, Wyoming, U.S.A.
February, 2006.

Also, by the same author,
IMPRESSIONS OF WILLIAM PENN,
another *speculative* biography,
also originally written in 1994,
but rewritten in 2006.

INTRODUCTION

This is basically a rewrite of a single essay type work that I wrote originally in 1994 – based only on one biography that I read about Saint Francis of Assisi. That biography was called **A BIOGRAPHY OF THE SAINT OF ASSISI**, copyright by *Michael De La Bedoyere* in 1962. This rewrite is mostly a reorganization of my first writing. With this effort, I am dividing my original essay into chapters to give it a bit more structure. At least, that is my objective. I hope you find my reorganization useful and the entire work somewhat beneficial. I will add a few new comments here and there, however. It has been twelve years since I wrote the initial work; and like most folks, in the intervening time, I may have learned a few new things. I do hope so because for me life is like an eternal lesson. Surely, each of us learns some new things every day. Accordingly, I will offer some new ideas here and there.

Who was Saint Francis of Assisi? That is what this work is all about; but it is not all about Francis of Assisi. It's also about this Francis. I call this work a *speculative biography* because within it, not only do I speculate about the life of *Francis of Assisi*, who passed at the age of forty-four in 1226, but I also offer some of my own perspective of life. *That Francis* and *this Francis* have something in common – and perhaps a lot more than just something. We probably have a lot in common. Accordingly, this Francis relates to that Francis in more ways than one; but we also differ in more ways than one. It is OK to differ as it is OK to sympathize. We should learn from one another – both in sharing ideals and in not sharing them, in confirming the truth in one another and in disagreeing about the truth.

Francis of Assisi was a dreamer. So is this Francis. Francis of Assisi dreamed about doing right, regardless of what it took. So does this Francis – though our ideas of what is right is somewhat different. *Francis of Assisi was under the spell of the ages in seeing life as a battleground between good and evil*, between God and Satan, between true Christians and infidels. *This Francis sees no conflict between any of those things*, but rather imagined conflict between them all. *Francis of Assisi was at war with what he perceived was a real personal threat – Satan. This Francis sees Satan as only a representative of fear.* I do not see Satan as a real person out to get me, but rather real persons wrapped in fear for purposes of either sincerely looking for their own security or for controlling others – and sometimes, for both reasons.

Accordingly, since I interpret Satan different than Francis of Assisi, I also have to interpret Jesus in a different way. For Francis of Assisi, a *messiah* was needed to crush a real Satan. He found that messiah in Jesus. *For me, there is no real Satan to crush.* For me, Jesus represents a teacher who recognized Satan for merely the embrace of fear and tried to teach us how to remove ourselves from within the grasp of fear; but it is up to each of us to do that. No messiah can do it for us. Each of us must recognize fear for what it is and then resolve it in our lives, but not depend on another to do it for us.

So that Francis and this Francis see Jesus and Satan in different lights. Still, I see that Francis as just as much a brother of mine as I would if we agreed on Jesus and Satan and life in general. That, too, we have in common. Francis of Assisi believed that all persons are brothers and that each of us must treat every single person in this world as a brother and not a villain, regardless of disagreements. I do too.

Let us get on, then, with our review of a wonderful person whom I am personally proud to call *Brother Francis*.

Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming, U.S.A.
February 7th, 2006

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Young Dreamer – Chivalrous Knight

Who was *Francis of Assisi*? Was he really a saint? And if he was, did he really achieve sanctity by imitating Christ – as those who think of him as a saint would believe?

That may be getting ahead of the story for the many who don't know about Francis. So, perhaps I should introduce the man before I proceed to analyze him, though this treatment of one I personally consider a friend is intended in no way to be an exhaustive biography of the man. For that you'll need to read more detailed biographies of the man, such as the one I used to glean the information I have for this small treatise – one called **FRANCIS – A BIOGRAPHY OF THE SAINT OF ASSISI** by Michael De La Bedoyere, copyrighted by him in 1962.

Francis was born in 1182 in *Assisi, Italy*, but named *John (Giovanni) di Bernardone* by his parents, *Pietro* and *Pica Bernardone*. *John Bernardone* was nicknamed *Francis (Francesco)* either because at the time of his birth his father was in France or because his mother came from France and was French. His father was a prosperous merchant who traveled much selling fabrics. Not much is known about Pica, his mother, probably because in those times, women were not regarded highly to be known. They were housewives in a general sense and recognition was not important.

Early on, Francis dreamed of becoming a knight of chivalry and fantastic military deeds. I guess this is quite common among most boys. It certainly was for me. Like Francis, when I was a kid, I dreamed of putting on a gun and holster and walking down Main Street to flush out all the bad guys – and, of course, kill them dudes before they knew what hit them. That was this Francis. Well, the Francis of Assisi was a lot like that except he dreamed of carrying a brilliant sword to do his deed, unlike myself who donned a bright pistol.

Of course, part of all that chivalry is wearing something quite appropriate for the task at hand. Francis played that part well too as he loved to dress up to act the knight he wanted to become. For that bit of normality, he was well liked. It's the ones who have no imagination who are not liked in life; but Francis had a keen imagination that lent itself to kindly deeds, not mean deeds; and so he was well liked as he went about singing to express his gayety. His father expected him to help him in his business when he would mature. **Extremely rich due to his father's success as a cloth merchant, Francis was as generous with his money as he was with his kindness.** He was much more interested in spending money than saving it. He gave freely to friends and the poor as he could.

Due to not being born of nobility, however, the only way Francis could become a knight was through some deed of valor on the battlefield. In 1202, when he was twenty, Francis joined the men of Assisi to challenge the men of nearby *Perugia*. His chance had come to delight himself and the world with those *wonderful knightly deeds* of which he had dreamed as a kid. I'm not sure why the town of Perugia did not like the town of nearby Assisi – and vice versa – but I guess it was inevitable that they would find

something to dislike about each other; or else the men couldn't defend their town and become knights. That's the real reason why men become knights, I think, *for the honor of defending the old home town or old home country.*

In this case, however, the tale did not end like Francis had dreamed. He and fellow Assisians did not defeat the mean ole Perugians. It was the other way around. The battle was over before it started and the Perugians defeated the Assisians. **Instead of taking a prisoner, Francis was taken prisoner.** I guess that ended his quest for civic knighthood – or at least stalled it. My, how quickly we change when we find ourselves at the other end of our dream – the conquered rather than the conquerors.

So, Francis was taken prisoner and spent a year in captivity before he was released to pursue some different knighthood. I'm not sure why the Perugians held the Assisians as they did, but for whatever reason, they were detained in prison. For a good long time after that, Francis would walk with a cane for having been wounded in his legs in the original battle. While in prison, his health failed; and probably for that reason, the Perugians released him. Francis was a rather small person and was not really suited for militant activity. Though he wanted to do well, he was really too small. While in prison, however, allegedly, he was rather gay. When asked how he could be so gay in such circumstances, he responded that he was to become a great prince. *One day, the whole world will bow to me,* he said. It seems he was still capable of dreaming. Being conquered had not conquered that aspect of him.

Well, Friends, you would think that Francis would have learned his lesson that knighthood was not a likelihood for a man of his stature, but some fellow by the name of *Count Gentile* was aware of Francis's dream of becoming a knight and urged the fellow on in that same direction. Count Gentile convinced Francis that he could attain the respect and attention he desired by fighting along side someone who had already demonstrated great knighthood. There was some fellow of notoriety at the time who had done just that – someone called *Walter de Brienne* who had pierced many a man with his sword. Why not come with me, argued Count Gentile, and we'll find this real knight so that you too can become the knight of your dreams.

So, in 1205, when Francis was twenty-two or so, Francis and Count Gentile set out to find Walter de Brienne so that Francis could become a real knight. The details are unavailable as to why that journey was aborted some thirty miles from Assisi in a town called *Spoletto*, Italy. It has been conjectured that Count Gentile was playing a trick on Francis, leading him to Spoleto to abandon him there – to leave him behind to wonder what happened to his dreams. I guess you could call it a prank. It has also been conjectured that Francis fell sick again and could not proceed; but for whatever reason, Francis would never march any further than Spoleto in search for civic knighthood. **From Spoleto, he returned to Assisi – and began his quest for a different kind of knighthood.**

Pursuing a Different Knighthood - Becoming an Outcast for Christ -

That different quest would begin again with a dream. While in Spoleto, Francis had a dream and in this dream he is asked if a master or a servant could best help him attain success in life. A *master* was his response. *Why, then, do you run away from the Master Who is God and follow the mere servant?* - he was asked. *Lord, what do you wish me to do?* - he answered. And the dream voice replied – *Return to your native city and you will discover where your future lies.* From this point on, Francis would become a man of prayer rather than the playboy he had been previously. His dedication was to find and **do the will of the voice of the dream of Spoleto**, which he assumed had been God or a servant of God.

Being a good Catholic, as I'm sure Francis considered himself, the voice in the dream of Spoleto could be none other than *Christ* or a *prophet of Christ*. Accordingly, there could be no question as to who it was that he should serve. It would be Christ. It could be no other. After the dream in Spoleto, Francis returned to Assisi, convinced that he should imitate the life of Christ as the best possible way to do the will of God – and the best possible way to become a *Heavenly Knight*.

But how to begin this different knightly adventure? It had to start right – or there was no use in starting at all. Comparing a knight of Assisi with a knight of Sherwood Forest, Francis then reached back into his pouch of valor and pulled out an arrow that would do for a start. He did not want to play around as his conversion was real and not just imaginary. So, he needed to do something that would commit him to a new knighthood – something so sure that it could not fail. From his memory bank he drew the arrow of a kiss – no ordinary kiss, mind you, *but a kiss of true commitment*, the kiss to a leper.

In such manner, in 1205, at around the age of twenty-two, the new knighthood began. The Christ of his dreams had commanded in the Gospels of the **BIBLE** that those who would serve him must be willing to embrace all the sick of the world in his name. The Christ of Francis of Assisi was a Christ who embraced suffering – in himself and in others – and that was the Christ that Francis would serve because it was the only Christ he was ever taught.

In broad daylight when it could not be mistaken for anything other than what it was, Francis chose to plunge into his new commitment, his new knighthood, by doing as Christ had commanded him – *embrace the suffering*. Who suffered more than the lepers? No one. These were the poorest of the sick because their infirmity cast them into the lot of the banished of society. With their decaying flesh and their stinky and deplorable physical state, the lepers were the lowest of the low; and that's where Francis would aim his arrow – right smack into the center of the lowest of the low.

What a way to start a new commitment! Of this, I find myself in awe and in wonder of the man of Assisi; and for him, it was right, absolutely right. For many others, it would be right too, absolutely right, due to the Christ they know – or think they know; but very few of those who see Christ in this way actually do what Christ would bid.

Francis did. That is what sets him apart from all the would be Christ followers who think of Christ as a savior and a commander of the faithful. I do not see Christ in that light. So, it is not for me to have to kiss the lowest of the low. I see Christ in a much different way; but those who do see Christ as their commander, rescuing them from their lives of sin and guilt have a duty to do just what Francis did – *kiss the lepers*.

Feed the poor. Care for my sick. Suffer for my sake. The words are clear and cannot be misunderstood. This is what the Christ of the Gospels said to do. There is no mistake about it. *Feed the poor. Care for my sick. Suffer for my sake. Whatever you do to the least of these, you do also to me.* That is what the Christ of the Gospels said; but how many do? Francis of Assisi was determined he would not be among the masses who pay no attention to the Christ of the Gospels. Francis of Assisi was determined that there would be at least one who would do as he was bid. And so he began that new commitment by kissing a leper in broad daylight so that all of Assisi could see he meant business.

The Painting of San Damiano

Of course, it worked. I don't know how large Assisi was at the time, nor do I know how large it is today; but however large, the word spread that the son of Pietro de Bernardone, the wealthy merchant, had gone down to the banished of the city and had embraced them, sores and all. This was something. Most who heard the same counsel of Christ as did Francis would not like it. How dare someone have the audacity to do what they all knew they all should be willing to do! This gave Francis notoriety, alright, but it also cast him with the outcasts. Francis did not mind that, however, because that too was part of his new role – *to be an outcast for Christ*.

Francis had always been a dreamer and dreamers are intensely conscious types who pride themselves in mental things and are disposed to concentration – or for concentration. So, concentration wasn't new for Francis upon his conversion to Christ and the battlefield of suffering. He had always been good at that. He was now only changing the subject of concentration, that's all. His new concentration was Christ as his former concentration had been civic knighthood; and he plunged into that with all the fervor of a kid with a chocolate sundae. This love for Christ was a feast and very worthy of his concentration and dedication.

I guess there were a number of chapels around the area that were somewhat rundown for their low maintenance. One such was one called *San Damiano*, not far from Assisi. Francis liked to go there for his new concentration; and he would kneel in front of a painting in that chapel which depicted the crucifixion of Christ. One day soon after his new commitment started, in 1206, Francis saw the lips of that painting move and speak to him. The crucified Christ said: *Francis, you see that my house is falling down. Go and repair it for me*. Francis interpreted this order to mean he should literally repair churches, like the ruin of San Damiano where the painting became animated to tell Francis what he should do.

Did the lips really move? Probably not, but for Francis they did; and then again, they may have. Who knows for sure? It could have happened either way. Our minds can lead us to see what is not there, but forces can also exist outside of us to make lips in paintings move. For Francis, they moved on the painting and not just in his mind.

Francis was so impressed that immediately he bought some oil for a lamp before the crucifix and determined that the lamp should stay lit – to symbolize an eternal flame of love – the love of Christ for mankind. To further finance this operation, he returned to his father's house while his father was off selling fabric in France or some such place. Taking some valuable scarlet cloth, he rushed to market to sell it for oil for the lamp of San Damiano. He also sold his horse at the market place and had to walk back to San Damiano. Returning to San Damiano, he offered all the money he had to the priest who resided there with instructions that it was to be used to buy oil as needed for the lamp in front of the painting whose lips had moved for him.

Conflict with Dad

All Hell done broke loose later when Pietro returned from his journeys making money for the family. *What? Francis did what?* He took my valuable cloth that I intended on selling for a fortune to do what? To buy oil for some church? You have to be kidding! No son of Pietro de Bernardone can get away with something like that.

Pietro was hurt, not so much that his son would do such a non business thing as he did, but because he would take something without permission. Pietro was right. Francis should have asked. It was not right that he did what he did, moving lips or not. But Pietro was not right to take it as far as he would either. In his fury, he railed at his son, alienating him even more. The new Francis responded by cutting his ties to his father completely, what little ties remained; but this too was probably part of Francis's new arrangement in life – *to love Christ more than he did anyone, including parents*. Again, the words from the Gospels: *Those who do not hate their father and mother for my sake are not worthy of me*. This Christ that Francis chose to serve was a very demanding one.

The father who was to be *hated for the sake of Christ* was not long in pursuing Francis. Once he found out that Francis was at the Chapel of San Damiano, not a second was lost. He would go after his wayward son and bring him back for rightful punishment; or else he had no right to consider himself a practical merchant. When Francis heard him coming, however, he fled the chapel and went into hiding for about a month or so – until he could settle on what he should do to handle this messy matter. Then he returned to Assisi and his father.

I don't know the situation, but upon his return to Assisi, Francis was taken into custody by his father who had not lost his own resolve to punish the boy for what he did. Francis was twenty-four and no longer a boy, but Pietro proceeded to conduct himself like Francis was only a teenager. He shut Francis up under lock and key in their big house and promptly left to do what he was supposed to do – make money for the family. But what mother worthy of being a mother can let her son be bound to imprisonment? Pica di Bernardone let her son loose while Pietro was gone selling cloth in France.

Needless to say, when Pietro returned and found that Pica had disobeyed his orders and let Francis loose, he was mad. In his rage, he decided to treat his son as a common thief since his son would not respond to his previous resolution of the matter and stay under lock and key until he was ready to let him go. He decided to use the law that would surely rule in his favor. Accordingly, he accused Francis of theft and appealed to the consuls of Assisi to arrange for a legal hearing.

Choosing between Fathers

Francis, however, had a plan of his own. He would disown his *earthly father* in light of his new found commitment to his *Heavenly Father* and refuse to appear in civic court. His argument was that he was no longer of the secular world, having assumed the role of a cleric. Therefore, a civic court had no rule over him. His life was now God's and not his father's. According to the legal custom of the day, his claim was valid and that meant that only the resident bishop could hear the case. Accordingly, the case was called before a *Bishop Guido*. Francis was more than willing to appear.

So, the case was heard before Bishop Guido who agreed that Pietro did deserve the return of his goods. Francis had come prepared to do just that. Some of the money the sale of the scarlet cloth had earned had already been spent, but some of it could be returned. Francis had the available unused funds in a pouch he carried and promptly gave it to his father upon the Bishop's bidding. Then he pulled a surprise. *Not the money alone, my Lord, for that belongs to him*, he said, *but all my clothes also I wish to return to him with a full heart*. Then Francis left the room to return naked a few moments later with his clothes drooped over his arms. He gave them to his surprised father, proclaiming as he did that he now had only one father – *God, to Whom he would dedicate his life*.

How could any father not be angry with that sort of behavior? Surely, Pietro was hurt very deeply by this son who refused him a simple little thing like honor. When father and son departed from Bishop Guido's court that day, the estrangement between father and son was permanent. Francis heeded the counsel of Christ that day to *hate* his father; but I think it would have behooved him to have listened to another counsel that said *Love one another as I have loved you*.

Committing to Lady Poverty

From 1207 or so, for several years after the case between father and son had been heard by Bishop Guido, Francis worked on various chapels and churches in the area of Assisi, repairing them as he thought he had been bid by the lips at San Damiano. I guess he became a rather good repairman and some of his work may still stand. For these first few years he worked and prayed, searching within himself and outside himself for answers as to how to conduct his life.

In 1209, on February 24th, Francis served Mass at a chapel called *Porziuncula*, which was one of the chapels he had restored. The sermon was about Christ's ushering his disciples forth to preach the gospel and care for the sick without concern for one's own welfare. Francis wanted to interpret these words as *be poor while you work for the service of the Lord*. After Mass on this day, he decided on a course in life. He would dedicate himself to the naked Christ, to the *Lady Poverty*, as he would refer to poverty. He began by taking off his outer cloak, leaving only an inner worn tunic. He removed his shoes so as to walk barefoot and threw away his walking stick that he had used as a cane since being wounded by the Perugians in 1202. Then he tied a small rope around his waist. This new garb was to be his *outer sign of poverty*. He had given away everything, just as his Christ had bid him to do. This was his interpretation of poverty. Now, he would be free to go forward and fulfill the way of Christ without concern for worldly possessions.

Beginning the Franciscans

Francis went about his preaching with a gay disposition, mixing message with song, and attracting significant attention. Shortly after his dedication at Porziuncula, he was watched and admired by a fellow Assisian who was a nobleman and a little older than Francis. **Bernard da Quintavalle** became curious about Francis and asked him to his home to find out about him. Bernard was aware of what Francis had done in regards to the dispute with his father and was impressed that a man of wealth – just as he – would throw it all away for poverty. Being the gay person Francis was, he managed to convince Bernard of his sanity. Bernard asked him to stay the night. During the night, Francis rose to kneel beside Bernard in his bed and prayed – perhaps for Bernard. After that, Bernard decided to join Francis in his chosen ministry.

Soon, a third would join the two; and a fourth would join the three; and a fifth would join the four, etc. By the end of the first **Franciscan** year of 1209, Francis had gathered at least a dozen companions. Though supposedly he had not desired any followers, once they started, the numbers increased rapidly. The third to join Francis was a fellow named **Peter Catanai**, who was also of a wealthy heritage – a lawyer, I think. The fourth to join him was a kind of dreamer like himself by the name of **Giles**. Giles knew that Francis had wanted to be a knight, just as he had in his youth; but being a **Knight of Christ** was even better. So, Giles decided to find Francis and join him as a fellow **Knight of Christ**.

At one of their early celebrations, the first four had prayed together and asked for guidance from Christ through the use of scriptures. Francis opened the book at random at three different locations. The idea was to take these random selections and make them the rule of their order. The passages selected at random were:

1. *If thou hast an eye to be perfect, go then and sell all that belongs to thee; give it to the poor so the treasure that thou hast will be in heaven; then come back and follow me.*
2. *Take nothing with you to use on your journey, staff or wallet or bread or money; you are not to have more than one coat apiece.*
3. *If any man has a mind to come my way, let him renounce himself, and take up his cross and follow me.*

Then Francis said, “**My brothers, such is our life and our rule.**” If they hadn’t done so before this little session, I’m sure that the well-to-do among them – Bernard and Peter – would soon obey the chosen rule and dispose of their considerable property. All of them would wear the same garb – the brown tunic tied with a rope symbolizing **Lady Poverty**.

Giles would be regarded by Francis as the **Perfect Knight of the Round Table** as he shared much of the same spirit. Like Francis, he did not like to compromise poverty. Some time after Francis’s death, Brother Elias, who will have assumed command of the **Franciscans**, was having a grand basilica built in the name of St. Francis. Francis would not have agreed at all with such extravagance. Giles supposedly commented to Brother Elias and some others: “**I suppose all you require now is wives. You have evidently abandoned Holy Poverty, so you may as well abandon Holy Chastity.**”

From 1210 or so, Francis and his swiftly growing circle of friends went about preaching the gospel as they had intended to do, going out two by two. They wanted to leave the cares of the world to the world so that they could dedicate themselves to spiritual matters. After showing themselves as beggars around Assisi for a time, as a ragged, dirty clan of penitents, some of the citizens started to object and asked Bishop Guido to have a word with these rascals who begged for food without earning it with labor. So, Bishop Guido responded and tried to get Francis and his troops to be a little more practical and try to earn a bit of a living to pay for their ways. Francis supposedly retorted: ***“If we had possessions, my Lord, we should need arms to protect them. Possessions cause disputes and lawsuits, troubles well calculated to destroy the love of God and our neighbor. That is why we are agreed to having no worldly goods in this world.”***

For the advantage and wisdom of poverty, I think Francis was more right than wrong. Possessing worldly goods in terms of possessing societal goods can be damaging to the soul, should these possessions distract you from paying attention to our natural blessings and being grateful for them. By having property we can allow ourselves to have concerns that are really not worth the attention – for they take time away from just being aware of life and of the greatness of life and the wonder of life. ***Lady Poverty*** can be quite an aid in reaching out for the desirable quests of a soul.

Unfortunately, ***Lady Poverty*** can become ***Monster Poverty*** too, if having no place to go and no food to eat can wear a body down to the extent that the body writhes in pain. We will see that Francis tried to overrule the normal pain rule too in that he was determined to use pain as a road to sanctity, but for many of us who have no need to prove to another that we love them, pain is absolutely useless – and beyond that, it is a distraction far worse than the distraction of owning property and having to mind about matters of society. In an ideal world, it would be absolutely lovely to be able to live in poverty, but that can only happen realistically if poverty – non possession of private property – is universal. If no one has to be concerned with having to own property, then it would be right for all; but if some own property, then the greater wisdom, I think, may be for all to own it so as to balance things out.

Then, of course, there’s the correct concern of Francis that to own property is to have to protect it as well; and that may mean injuring another in the process. It would be sad indeed to injure another in life – regardless of the provocation; but, still, one can own property and take a chance on not having to defend it. That could be a risk well worth taking. Personally, I may own property for the rest of my life, but hopefully at no time will I even consider making my ownership dependent upon defending it against would be intruders with the use of firearms. I could change my mind, but as it stands now, that’s the ruling for my own life.

I find it somewhat interesting, too, that souls like Francis of Assisi can justify exemption from having to work for a living, in terms of doing something worthwhile and getting paid for it. In the end, those who exempt themselves from these ***terrible processes*** have to depend upon those who participate in those processes – or else go hungry. Beggars don’t beg from other beggars; they beg from those who work for a living. Francis was a very good repairman – or became so for having repaired all the run

down chapels he did. Surely, it should not have been that great a step to do the same for a wage and not have to bother others for his livelihood; but, of course, if he and his *Franciscans* had worked for a living, they wouldn't have been free to go and convert all the *sinner*s they did in the name of Christ – for I guess, the benefit of Christ. It is amazing alright how one thing leads to another. Isn't it? Then there will be among those that Francis converted because he didn't have to work for a living who will have wished that Francis did work for a living so that they would have been left alone to continue *sinning*.

Gaining the Blessing of the Pope

As time wore on, Francis wanted to have his small order approved by the Holy See in Rome, then headed by Pope Innocent III, who led in times when the church was as much a secular power as a spiritual power. So, Francis and a companion, probably his ***Knight of the Round Table***, Giles, ventured off to Rome, which may not be much more than one hundred miles or so from Assisi, but still a good long trip when walking; and I suppose that *Francis* and *Giles* did walk.

After reaching their destination, apparently they took no more care to spruce up for the Pope than they did for anyone – always looking haggard and ragged. As such in the early summer of 1210, they arrived in Rome and sought an audience with a certain *Cardinal of San Sabina*, whom I think was informed about Francis from Bishop Guido. I guess the Cardinal was impressed with Francis for his joy and gayety. He seemed so unlike so many other reformers who concentrated more on condemning evil than praising good. Francis spent his energy on praising God and nature, not complaining about evil. This was probably why he was so well liked. He was fun to be with, always poking fun at himself and talking with animals and breaking out in song. He was indeed a breath of fresh air, in spite of his unkempt ways. I guess his hair kind of hung down over his ears and his eyebrows drooped. I suppose his hair and eyebrows simply imitated him in his don't care about the world attitude.

Anyway, the *Cardinal of San Sabina* was impressed with *Francis* as having great potential for enlivening the church through his *spiritual gayety*. He agreed to introduce Francis to *Pope Innocent III*, who after meeting Francis was not at all impressed. To Pope Innocent III, Francis seemed to be one of those idealists who might start out dedicated to serving Mother Church but end up challenging her via some heresy. Francis was too spiritual and not temporal enough to hold out in the long run of things. He was, in short, too simple and seemed to lack depth. Perhaps he was too jolly to expect a pope to take him seriously; and the rule he proposed for this new order was much too harsh to expect long term respect and obedience. The three passages of the Gospels that Francis and his first companions selected at random was to be the entire rule of the proposed order; and the poverty requested through those rules would not be easy. **Pope Innocent decided against approving Francis's proposed rule on the basis that it would be impossible to keep.** A realistic rule needed to be one that was more pragmatic so as to not lead to discouragement among members of an order.

Francis would have probably had to return to Assisi without the approval he had pursued if the *Cardinal of San Sabina* didn't make a second appeal, presumably after Francis was dismissed. The Cardinal argued that to disapprove of Francis and his rule because it was too harsh would be to **accuse Christ of being a fool** – for it was his rule they were trying to follow. Innocent could not disagree with the Cardinal and agreed to see Francis again.

In a second encounter, Francis had a parable of sorts ready to present to the Pope and did so; but I suspect that it was because of the Cardinal of San Sabina and his intercession that the second encounter was fated to succeed. More than likely, Pope Innocent III

would not have agreed to see him again if he was doubtful about granting Francis his request; but anyway, Francis offered his parable, which was about some king who had some children by some beautiful desert woman, not of royal lineage. Later after the children have grown, she sends them to the king with a message that they are really his and that he should care for them since she could not. So, the king embraces his lost sons and the parable ends happily. Francis drew some parallel between his gang of spiritual tramps and the desert children. He was trying to argue that his father who gave him birth would not forget him in his time of need. The father of the spiritual tramps would provide for the lost children just as the king did in his parable. I guess that was to make an argument that Pope Innocent need not worry about Francis's rule being too harsh because Francis was the son of a great king and the great king would not ignore him in his needs.

Like I say, I'm not at all convinced the parable had much to say to Pope Innocent III, but perhaps it allowed him to see a side of Francis as potential teacher and illustrator via parables like Christ used. I think the Pope had been convinced by the Cardinal, whom he trusted; and that is probably why Francis received approval by the Pope of Rome in that summer of 1210. **The rule of Francis of Assisi was to be the three gospel passages selected earlier – not much of a rule, but men truly in love with what they do don't need much of a rule.**

With the Pope's Blessing – Gaining Respect

After meeting with *Pope Innocent III*, Francis received much more respect as a true cleric and his reputation really took off in his home town of Assisi. He had now become a celebrity of sorts, much like someone today would become a person of honor and respect if he or she were to be welcomed into the home of some popular star. Nothing could have been more dear to a Catholic in those days than to be received by *His Honor, the Pope! The Franciscan Order* now began to attract even more recruits than it had before the trip to Rome. *To be blessed by Francis was the same thing as being blessed by Pope Innocent since Pope Innocent had blessed Francis.*

It would be well to keep in mind, too, that Francis was not attracting the irreligious. He was attracting fellow Catholics. Catholicism was pretty much the rule of the day in the area of Assisi. Francis was offering an outlet from within the church for fellow Catholics to use to attain spiritual valor. Catholicism needed a shot in the arm, though I guess shortly before Francis came on the scene, St. Benedict lived and founded the Benedictine Order that had become somewhat popular; and later in his life, Francis would meet another fellow who would be canonized as a saint. Dominic was his name, and, like Francis, he would also start an order within the Catholic Church. I guess all these different orders started by all these “holy guys” were like different rooms in the same house – like Christ’s prophecy that His Father had a house with many mansions. I guess disciples like *Benedict* and *Francis* and *Dominic* were just opening up some new rooms for souls already living in the same house. Or so it seems to me.

Clare & Catherine

Clare was some eleven years younger than Francis and was one of the many Assisians to be attracted by his way of life. Part of Francis's new celebrity status gained him invitations to give various sermons around the area. More than likely, Clare was among the audience of some of his sermons. Like Francis had been of wealthy patronage, Clare was too, as was a sister of Clare's by the name of Catherine, who was several years younger than Clare. **Clare and Catherine were daughters of a great patrician house**. Their father had died sometime before this time of intrigue in their lives; but I'm not sure about their mother. Nothing is said of her via the book I read to gain this knowledge of Francis. In time, *Clare* would become one of Francis's recruits and would establish the *Franciscan Order of Poor Clares*, as they came to be called.

It is my understanding that *Clare journeyed quite often to a chapel where Francis was staying and enjoyed celebrating in the spirit with him*. The chapel could have been Porziuncula or San Damiano or both; but for some time before Clare would actually commit to a Franciscan rule, she and Francis met rather secretly. They came to know each other intimately – from a soulful standpoint – sharing the same love of Christ.

Clare wanted to join Francis, but to this point, there were no women who belonged.

On the evening of Palm Sunday, March 27th, 1211, however, she made the break from her family and joined Francis in his order. As a symbol of her commitment to the new rule, she allowed Francis to cut her hair and clothe her with the same brown tunic that the men wore. **At first, Clare was escorted by Francis to a Benedictine convent** not far from Assisi; and then from there, she was moved to another convent, also in the area. While at the first convent, an uncle who disagreed with her leaving the family as she did, appeared with intent to drag her back home if necessary; but I guess the sight of her cut hair and new garb convinced him she was very serious about what she was doing, though **she was only eighteen at the time.**

As if it weren't enough to have one daughter leave a great patrician household, however, for a stingy, dingy, life in a convent, Clare's family received a double shock within weeks of Clare's leaving. **Catherine, though only fifteen or so, followed her sister and became the second Franciscan nun.** The uncle again ordered some men to go and retrieve her from where she had gone to the Benedictine convent where Clare was staying. **This they did and were in the process of dragging her down or up a hill amidst her screams and cries, when all of a sudden, they dropped her and decided that this one, too, was serious about joining Francis.** Clare's cries, too, probably reached these men, and, as it were, softened their hearts. In any case, Catherine was left behind to become a nun. **She would change her name to Agnes and later became an abbess in charge of nuns in a nearby convent.**

As for the early experiences of Clare and Catherine, they left the Benedictine convent very soon after arriving because the atmosphere was too worldly for them. They wanted to live in the poor spirit of Francis and the convents in which they had been temporarily housed were not suited to their desires. I'm not at all sure why, except that they loved Francis and in spite of claiming a true calling to a love of God, they were

probably committed to following Francis, not just any ole convent. From the Benedictine convents, Francis arranged through Bishop Guido, who heartily supported Francis and his rule, that the ladies should begin their new life at San Damiano where the painting of Christ had first spoken to Francis. **San Damiano, then, became the first Franciscan convent as Clare and Catherine became the first Franciscan nuns.** Though I know little more about Clare or Agnes, as Catherine was called after that, *Clare would later be recognized as a saint. She would become St. Clare;* so I suspect she must have been truly committed to the way of the spirit – and not just a blind follower of Francis.

Clare and Catherine would take in many recruits to their new way of life. *Clare rarely left San Damiano once she was established there.* After Clare was given San Damiano, Francis probably made the area around Porziuncula his headquarters; but his life would be comprised of a lot of traveling. It is not at all clear to me how either Francis or his male companions made their way or how Clare and her female companions made their way, but in any case, both males and females dieted mostly on spirit, ignoring the body and food to a great degree, but not so much that they didn't have to beg for some crumbs from those who worked for a living.

Sisters of Saint Clare – Brothers of Saint Francis

Regardless of cause, when souls of any sex gather together for the purpose of celebration in the spirit, there is a liveliness and a joy that probably becomes like their food. I'm sure that's how it was with the *Sisters of Saint Clare* and the *Brothers of Saint Francis*. There was probably a glow about them that served as their lamp to lighten their way. It would amount to quite a calling, to be aware that God is in your midst, to be aware of the Presence of God, to be aware that all life is holy because God is about. This is what made Francis sparkle. This is what made Clare sparkle. This is what made Christ sparkle. This is what allows any of us to know that we are truly children of God – and aspire to happiness.

The dreamer in me wishes, though, that Francis did not turn out to be such a fool as to ignore his friend, Clare. Maybe once before he would die, Francis bid the ladies to come on over for a little supper with the guys. Just once! If it had been me, I would have had them over at least once a week, and maybe once a day – not once a lifetime. The trouble is that Francis, with all that love in him, had no trust to go along with it. He probably felt that having the ladies over for supper would compromise his vow of chastity. It might have at that; but still, how could he know unless he tried? Then again, maybe Clare would have been one to turn him down if she was invited over. Or maybe he did invite her and she turned him down. There's so much we don't know – and will never know.

The Perfect Joy of Francis

The *Perfect Joy* of Francis, which would find full expression in his life was *penitence* – and the mood of penitence. **To be penitent is to be sorry for something you have done to cause another sadness or pain.** Francis was more in love with penitence than with anything else, seeing his penitence as perhaps the ideal penitence of mankind for having offended an Infinite Father – God. I can definitely sympathize with Francis in regards to being someone or doing something as representing an ideal that all should uphold, though I have no sympathy whatever for his choice of disposition – penitence.

What a waste of a good life – this thing called penitence! There have been so many mindless people in this world – and in this case, Francis of Assisi was at the head of the class – who have not taken the single moment it should take to know that ***it is literally impossible for a finite being to offend an Infinite Being – or Infinite Presence.*** To be able to offend someone is to be able to take something away from him or her or it that he or she or it can lose. **God can't lose anything because He or She or It has everything.** There is nothing that can exist outside of God, Who or Which can only embrace or contain all that is. That is what the notion of *infinity* is all about. ***God has it all.*** No one or no thing can take anything away from God – or else it is to say that some thing can exist outside of God. But ***there can be no outside of God because God is everywhere.*** It's so simple that a four year old should be able to understand it.

Still, otherwise sane people, like Francis, are concerned that they have offended God. ***God cannot be offended because He or She or It can lose nothing while embracing ALL;*** and yet they insist that they have offended God. They have caused the Great and Good God some horrible hurt by living; and for this, they deserve to be punished by that Great and Good God forevermore. ***What utter stupidity!*** There are things about Francis of Assisi which I admire greatly, but his obsession with penitence is not one of them. Penitence, for Francis, is being sorry for having offended God and begging for forgiveness. ***It would be grand indeed if it were needed; but since no one can offend God – including the mythical Satan – no one need beg for forgiveness. It's as simple as that.***

There's a story that I think is extremely important in terms of expressing Francis's love for penitence. Francis had several truly special friends among his companions. One was the third Franciscan – ***Giles*** – with whom he would travel much in his life to this land or that. Another was a ***Brother Leo*** whom Francis would call his ***little lamb of God*** because Leo seemed so pure. ***Another word for pure is innocent.*** Francis was a penitent by chosen profession; and yet he chose as a special friend a person in whom he saw purity or innocence. If only Francis had listened to Brother Leo, he would not have had to undergo the tremendous suffering in life he would. ***There is no suffering in innocence, for the innocent have no pain in them for which suffering can be an expression.*** I think that maybe Francis recognized in Brother Leo the saint he should have been.

If I were to have the choice of following a man of purity or innocence or a man of guilt or penitence, there is no question whom I would follow. Without a single moment's hesitation, I would leave **Brother Francis** in the distance and go charging down the road after **Brother Leo**. *Wait, Brother Leo, wait for me!* I'd cry to the top of my lungs; and I'd race like my salvation depended on it to catch Brother Leo and take his hand. If only Francis had taken Brother Leo's hand, the world may have long ago turned from *penitence* to *PURITY*. **It's sad, Brother Leo, you were a follower of Francis rather than he a follower of you.**

Oh, yes, that story about Brother Leo, the *little lamb of God*, and Francis. Francis and Leo had been walking for sometime down some road toward some location for which preaching was intended, enjoying the walk intensely. They had been talking about their dedication and their joy of sharing the gospel. Francis turned to Brother Leo and said: **Brother Leo, I want you to write down that in this is not perfect joy.** And they continued walking.

Later, Francis again turned to Brother Leo and louder than before, spoke again: **Brother Leo, if a friar minor could speak all languages and could know all there is to know in science and the scriptures so that he could prophesy the future and see the secrets of consciences and souls, write down that not in this is perfect joy.** And they moved on.

Still later, Francis said: **Brother Leo, suppose that a friar minor could speak with the tongues of angels and knew the courses of the stars and the secrets of all herbs; suppose that all the treasures of the earth were revealed to him, and that he had the secret of the birds and fishes, of all animals and of men, the trees, the stones, roots, and waters. Write down that in this is not perfect joy.** And they moved on.

A little while later, Brother Leo asked the question that Francis of course had led him to ask: **Tell me, then, in the name of God, wherein lies perfect joy?** Of course, Francis was ready with a reply. Let me paraphrase: **When we reach Santa Maria (where they were going), soaked by rain, covered with mud, desperately hungry, suppose we knock at the door and are turned away. Suppose he closes the door in our faces, forcing us to stay outside in the freezing rain and snow, cold and hungry through the night. If we bear with patience the wrong done to us and act like he who turned us out is really the God we serve, Brother Leo, write down that in this is perfect joy.**

The *perfect joy* of Francis was to suffer, then, as if it were a gift of God; and in a way, Francis would be right – it would be from God because all things come from God. There is no breath or death that can happen without God. If God were not, no one could exist to breathe; and if no one could live to breathe, no one could exist to die. So, indeed, breath and death come from God. But just as importantly, no thing is born to seek death and suffering, though such is experienced by most life. To argue that suffering is to be embraced simply because it happens and therefore is the will of God is to deny the blueprint upon which all life is based – to seek to live.

Brother Leo, if only you had known in that lifetime that God does not send death and suffering just because it happens, you could have offered your little tidbit of wisdom and saved your friend and mine, Brother Francis of Assisi, a lot of grief and

pain that would be so much a companion for the rest of his life. Brother Leo, you should have countered Francis with what I have just said. I'm sorry you didn't.

I hate waste as I hate error; and I'm angered in a calm sort of way that so many choose to be penitents in life when in reality there can be no need for penitence. *Francis, Francis, Francis, when you put on that brown cloak, you took off your intelligence and threw it away. Paul of Tarsus would be proud of you for doing that because Paul was the king of penitents and more than likely gave you a Christ who never lived who applauded his concept of penitence. Remember, it wasn't Christ who wrote about himself. It was penitents like Paul and his friends, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – penitents all – who wrote about Christ.* They had their perception of Christ; but who is to say their perception is right?

If I may, Paul of Tarsus, King of Penitents, you and your fellow penitents have a way of distorting the truth and leaving it outside in the cold when it should be the wood that fuels your fires of love. You penitents waste your lives believing in the impossible simply because you distrust the mind that God has given you to think things out. Penitence! There can be no greater waste of energy in a lifetime! And you guys make it your lifetime! Such fools! Instead of beating your chests and claiming unworthiness, a simple little prayer of gratitude would suffice nicely. Try on a prayer of purity for a change and leave your useless prayer of penitence behind. Here is a sample:

My Father, I sit before You now, aware of my worthiness. I cannot be unworthy because I am from You. I am from You and You are in me. That makes it impossible for me to be unworthy. How can I be unworthy when I'm like a little piece of You? Can You be unworthy of Yourself? How, then, can I be unworthy of You?

My Father, I close my eyes and am instantly aware that all is Divine, that nothing exists or can exist outside of You and Your Infinite Presence; and there is nothing I can do to add or detract from that. I cannot add myself. I cannot subtract myself. I can only submit to the process, though have no understanding of it. Should I try to understand that process, Father, I should fail because I am inside the process and cannot see outside of it. But I can know for sure that whatever part I play in the wonderfully unfolding scenario of a Moving Divinity that it is good. I'm not a puppet because I have been given energy to go on my own, but that energy could never propel me outside of You because there is no outside of You. I'm caught, My Father, and I cannot escape Your Presence.

My Father, I open my eyes and I'm bewildered for a time because I have stepped out of the womb I was in with my eyes closed. Now, it's for me to go forward by the power of life within me. It's for me to look with my eyes which are children of Your process, to feel with my hands which are children of Your process, to smell with my nose which is a child of Your process, to know with my mind which is a child of Your process. Nothing about me is outside of You; and so, nothing about me can function outside of You. In that bit of wisdom that comes from the mind that is one of Your children, I can know that I am safe to proceed in Your world with Your blessing.

I'm a little piece of You, My Father, My Mother, My Friend, My Love; and my body and my soul are filled with joy from the awareness that all I am is pure, having come from You. THANKS!

The Friars Minor

Continuing with the story of Francis, Francis called his growing band of clerics by the name of *friars minor* as an expression that they should be the **lowest of all friars** – or should look upon themselves in that light. I believe *friar* is another name for *brother*. Thus, I guess *friars minor* can be understood as *brothers minor*. I think that little affectionate term was derived mostly from a thought from the Gospels again – from a thought that Franciscans would be among the last who would become the first. Christ supposedly said that too. ***And the last will become the first.*** For Francis, that meant they had to take the last place and eat leftovers at best. He argued that all they needed to serve their Lord Jesus Christ was the crumbs that fell from the higher ups of society. He was intent on living this vision that the ***first in Christ had to be the last in society.*** Thus, Franciscans should call themselves *friars minor* or the *least of brothers*.

Thus it was that the Friars Minor of Francis went off to this land or that, two by two, to preach the gospel. That was in their rule – to preach the gospel of Christ to any who would listen. It's interesting to speculate on the probable fervor of the Friars Minor in their setting out to fulfill the rule. Having before them a notion of the Kingdom of Christ that would come at the end of the world according to the greater rule of the Church, they had to be an extremely enthusiastic bunch of pilgrims. The Lady Poverty they embraced was to keep them from being distracted from their rule and their commitment. **By the time that Francis would pass from this world, the Franciscans would be but seventeen years old; and yet their numbers would be in excess of 5,000.** Unfortunately, that would be 5,000 missionaries out to make penitents when true penitence is not needed.

Worth noting, and especially so, however, was the joy in which they went forward. Though supposedly Francis himself did not laugh a whole lot if any at all, the Friars Minor often burst out in laughter while poking fun at themselves in their odd looking caramel outfits. ***We are dressed fit for a king*** I'm sure they often said; and then couldn't help but break out in laughter at such a sight as they. I can't help but wonder where all those silly brown outfits they wore actually came from. I doubt they made them themselves. So who made them? Crazy little questions like that some time cross my mind as if they are questions never asked before.

Brother of All – Including Brother Wolf

In spite of his useless penitence, which took up most of his energy, Francis still managed a lot of light hearted love for nature and natural things. He loved animals and birds and called them *Brother this* and *Sister that*, as he did all things in nature. For all his wonderful wisdom in that light, I salute him and join him. Like Francis, I take great delight in looking at all things like they are my brothers and sisters, even the sand and the grass. At least Francis was moving in the right direction with this love for nature. Maybe in the next lifetime he could slip in and slip out without being a penitent; but more than likely that would be a feat that would take several lifetimes.

Supposedly, the animals loved Francis and he loved them; and stories are told of animals paying attention to his sermons. There is one story that tells the story of a wolf which was terrorizing a community called *Gubbio* in Italy by attacking the cattle and even some of the citizens. Undaunted, Francis went out to where the wolf was – and while others looked on in horror, the wolf attacked Francis. But Francis made the sign of the cross and bid the wolf to stop – which it did. *Come to me, Brother Wolf*, he said. *In Christ's name I forbid you to continue in your evil ways.* And after scolding the wolf, he continued: *I want you to make peace with the people so that they should no longer fear you.* Then he promised the wolf that if he made peace with the town, the town would feed him so he wouldn't have to kill to eat anymore; and he made the town promise to feed the wolf. The bad wolf was said to have nodded his agreement and put his paw in the hands of Francis. After that, Francis returned to town with the wolf following meekly behind him; and it is said that the wolf lived a long life and was mourned by all of Gubbio when he died.

It's all legend, of course, but Francis did have a way with animals and nature and naturalings. He bid the birds to sing because God had given them their chirps and they had much to sing about, not having to worry about what they would eat because God had provided for them all they needed in the seeds that fell to the ground. The point is he was close to animals and to everything in nature – except himself, I guess. He was to be punished for terrible aggressions against God; but I have said enough about that bit of stupidity.

Getting on in Suffering - The Stigmata -

The years would pass for Francis; and many of them would pass in suffering, just as he had predestined for himself so long ago when he committed himself to the suffering Christ. With all the denial that he practiced, dietary wise, it is no wonder that his body would suffer from malnutrition and the effects of such a malady. Christ could not save him from natural consequences, but, of course, Francis would not have wanted to be saved from those natural consequences anyway. He wanted and needed to suffer to fulfill his dream of being one with Christ in Christ's lowest moments – those of suffering.

On one of his pilgrimages away from Assisi – and he went on pilgrimages to France and Egypt and the *Holy Land* of Israel of his Lord, Jesus Christ – he was given a tract of land near *Florence, Italy* by some wealthy land owner by the name of *Count Orlando* who had been impressed with a sermon or two of Francis. **In 1224, when Francis was forty-two and in terrible health**, suffering from all sort of infirmities of the stomach, the liver, the spleen, the eyes, and I suppose the legs from his injuries of battle, Francis wanted to dedicate a period of time to prayer and retreat. He chose to go to *Mount La Verna*, to the tract of land he had been given by the wealthy land owner, Orlando, some years back. Orlando had given him that land, but I doubt that Francis really considered it a possession on account of his vow of poverty, though he did accept the use of it as his.

In any case, Francis wanted to go to Mount La Verna for a much needed retreat and period of prayer. More than likely, he sensed his health was failing so rapidly that he wouldn't live all that long; and more than likely he was anxious for *Brother Death* to come and rescue him from his mad obsession – suffering. He went to Mount La Verna with his old friend, Leo; and so I suspect that it is from Leo that we get the following story.

Supposedly, Francis began his retreat by asking two favors: *the first was that before he died he should feel in his body as far as might be possible, the actual sufferings of Christ's sufferings of crucifixion; and the second was that he might feel the very love which had caused Christ to undergo his sufferings for mankind.*

When his prayer had ended, it is related by whomever is the source of this story – Leo or another – that something called a *seraph with six flaming wings* flew down toward him, and as it approached, the *image of a man hanging on a cross* appeared between the pairs of wings. It was the *figure of Christ himself*, and as it rested in front of Francis – barely bones at the time for all the suffering he had undergone – *darts of flame* imprinted on Francis's body the wounds of the crucified Christ. *His hands and feet were pierced with nails and on his right side was the wound of the lance.*

From the stories to be told, these marks called *the stigmata remained on the body* of Francis for the rest of his life, which would be an **amazing two years**. Most of us, including yours truly, would not have survived the night; and Francis would live for two more years. That is what you can call the *will to suffer*. I'd probably follow the way of the great Socrates and sip a little hemlock and be done with it, but not *Brother Francis*. The least of God's brethren was in it for the long haul.

Is this story true? I don't know. Who saw what is called a *seraph* – and what is a *seraph*? I suspect that the marks are true, but the tale of how they became true is not. Assuming, though, that the marks were true, it matters not whether some mystical figure coming down from a mystical cross put them there or not. **Regardless of how it happened, it couldn't have happened without the consent of Francis himself; and it is his consent for it to happen that made it happen.**

Sadly, Francis would go on to suffer another two years. His face around his eyes would be cut to try and eliminate some of the terrible pain he experienced around his eyes. That was likely the decision of others around him that had a bit more compassion for him than he did himself. For Francis, it was probably some wonderful idea to be drawn and quartered so that he could experience even more pain and suffering.

The End at Forty-Four

But thankfully it would end. I don't say, Thank God, it would end – just thankfully it would end. *God didn't have anything to do with it in the first place;* so, I prefer to leave that Infinite Being – or Presence as I prefer to consider It – out of the picture. This was between Francis and they to whom he had dedicated his life. Was that *they*, Christ? Maybe; but probably not. *Whether it was Christ or another he served, Francis finally died at the age of forty-four on October 3rd, 1226.*

The Providence of Francis

Did Francis go directly to Christ when he died. That is, did his soul go directly to Christ? Perhaps, if Christ was his providence. Francis of Assisi had a *providence* – and has a providence – like each of us does, I think. Some providences care about their children; and some don't, just like families and communities within humanity. Some care and some don't. **I'm sure Francis of Assisi had – and has – a providence that cares.** So, in that light, Francis returned to his providence when he died, regardless of whether it was a providence of Christ or not.

I'm sure that Christ and alleged images of Christ are used by a lot of different providences when attempting to convey messages to a subject. *Very few, if any, messages received in the name of Christ probably come from Christ;* but because his luminance is so universally understood, where it is known, Christ is probably used to keep various souls on the straight and narrow of their various experiences. At least, this I suspect.

There is no way to prove Christ or not Christ, in terms of something that originates from some *other world*. That's why Christ is so easy to be used. All you have to do to catch the attention of those looking for signs is to leave some hint that your connection might be Christ; and presto, you're in like Flint. The image of Christ lends itself to the paranormal since Christ himself was a bit paranormal – or outside the normal. *Providences wishing to control their subjects simply put Christ on their hooks and fish away.* It's all so clean, so easy, and so foolproof in terms of it can't be proved or disproved. *At least, this I suspect.*

Did the real Christ come to Francis and put those marks in his hands and ask of him greater suffering? Not the Christ I know. The Christ I know, which is not the Christ Paul of Tarsus knew, is a Christ who emphasized that all men and all things are of God. My Christ did not cling to a heritage to the exclusion of all others in terms of enjoying a life from or in God. He did not call himself *The Son of God* as much as he called himself *A Son of God*. He also referred to himself as a *Son of Man* intending to emphasize his equality, not some misleading superiority. *My Christ was and is not superior to me or anyone – nor did he express any such thing in his life.* He lived to preach perhaps, but **not to preach penitence, but to teach purity.** That is not the Christ told about in the canonized Gospels of the Bible, but it is the Christ I know.

Paul of Tarsus was visited by someone or something claiming to be Christ. That Christ knocked him off his horse and left him with a very definite impression that he was the real Christ who had been crucified not long before that. There it all started – so soon after the real Christ died, a providence was already using Christ as a hook; and Paul fell for it. How could he not? For he had not known the real Christ. See how simple it is? See how simple it works? It's foolproof – proof for fools; and the first fool was Paul – one of the first within Christian tradition. At least, this I think.

Paul was a Jew looking for a messiah. In Christ, he thought, he had found the fulfillment of his dreams and the dreams of his religion. The Jews did not believe that man and God are together. They believed that man separated himself from God by virtue

of some initial disobedience in the famed *Garden of Eden*. If, in fact, man could separate himself from God by disobedience, by just choosing to withdraw from His or Her or Its Presence, then the Jews would have had a case in thinking man did separate himself from God; but, once again, ***it is pure idiocy to think that man has the power to separate himself from God.*** He simply does not have that power, though arrogantly, he thinks he has.

The truth is man is not so powerful as he thinks he is. He has no power to separate himself from a reality that is *immanent* – or *in* everything. If he cannot separate himself from God, neither, then, does he need to be *reunited* with or *restored* to a Presence he can never leave. **Paul and his Jews were under the impression that God had left man or man had left God.** It was their entire purpose to be the medium through which God could *restore man to God*; and the needed vehicle of that restoration was a *messiah* – one directly of God so as to be able to *return to God* that which had been lost.

That would have all been wonderful – that a messiah would come and restore us to God – if it were needed; but because man has no power to withdraw from God, he could have never been separated from God. Accordingly, Paul and his Jews were looking for someone who was never needed. In Christ, they demanded the fulfillment of a prophecy they had proclaimed out of ignorance of the way things are. ***Christ was not their messiah because no messiah was needed;*** but unfortunately, Paul never met the real Christ when he had the chance to meet him during the life of Christ – though Paul and Christ were contemporaries. Paul confronted a voice from the beyond or the paranormal who claimed to be the Christ he needed, though whom he had denied to that point. Paul was converted by the voice as the unseen voice convinced him that Christ had really been the messiah for whom the Jews were waiting; and the real Christ was not around to object.

When a man thinks he's lost, he may as well be; for he will act the same. A man who thinks he's lost does not realize that the forest in which he's standing has the same quality fruit as does the one he thinks he's missing. ***He looks for an apple orchard in the midst of an orange paradise.*** Sure, an orange is different than an apple, but it is not better, anymore than an apple is better than an orange. If a man thinks he must have apples to be complete, he will be oblivious to the many oranges within his reach. And so it is with man who mistakenly thinks he's lost from the Presence of God by virtue of some misdeed performed a long time ago in another time and in another place.

Christ came to an orange orchard to those looking for apples. He tried to tell the masters of the orange orchards that the fruit they desired was right at their fingertips; but did they listen? Of course not. They were insistent that the apples they were missing were the basis of the paradise for which they searched. So, they let the oranges rot on the trees in their dreams of finding an apple orchard; and ***they killed the one with the message that oranges are as good as apples,*** claiming he was a fool unworthy of true wisdom.

The fools of the world, like Paul of Tarsus and my friend, Francis of Assisi, will always look for what's missing; and there will always be something missing. As long as they look to miss, they will. If they insist that Paradise is over there, they will never find it at hand, no matter how many wise men, like Christ, come to tell them otherwise. For a fool, Paradise can never be at hand because God is missing. They will interpret

opposites as the other end of Paradise. If they are in the light, the dark will be where God is. If they are in the dark, the light will be where God is. ***Wherever they are, Heaven will be in another place;*** and as long as there are providences who have a stake in claiming prisoners, there will be providences intent on keeping the ignorance alive and well so they can be ***the voice*** capable of keeping man in ignorance and in bondage.

The truth is, however, there is no place where God is not. He – or She or It – is just as much in the dark as in the light. Heaven is not light as opposed to darkness. It's darkness and light because God is there in the dark as much as in the light. Fools looking for Paradise in another time and in another place will always claim that God is in the light and is the light because they do not interpret the dark as good; but by claiming that God is in the light and is the light, they cannot dissolve God from the darkness. ***Wherever there is light, there is God; and wherever there is darkness, there is God. Why? Because there can be no place where God is not.*** The light is good because God is there. The dark is good because God is there; but like apples and oranges, one is not better than the other - related to God. ***They are the same; and that is the real meaning of Paradise – finding God in all things.***

Whoever it was that visited Paul of Tarsus may well be the same one who visited Francis and put fires in his hands and gut; and Francis fell for it too. How could he not? For he, too, had not known the real Christ. How do you go about proving that someone is or is not the real Christ? You can't. The hook comes out and snatches you – and just like that you become the fish in the hooker's net.

But it may be where you belong anyway because the hooker might be your own providence simply keeping you in line. So, don't stay awake nights fearing you will be visited by a false Christ. Regardless of your providence, it can't keep you unless you want to be kept. You choose; and they will have to respect that decision. But it helps to know the rules of the game, if you know what I mean. ***If you are aware of the process of providences, as opposed to the processes of God which can't be known, you stand a much better chance of staying out of an unwanted net. At least, this I think.***

Some Comments about Providence in General

For what it's worth, I have thought a whole lot about this thing called *providence*. At one time I was like most who interpret *providence* as *Providence*, implying it comes from God; but, sorry, Folks, it doesn't. At least, I don't think so. We have been wrong there too, just like we have been wrong in thinking that penitence is needed for resolving some inherited sin. Wow, have we been wrong on that one! And we have been just as wrong on the matter of *Providence*, which I think is really *providence* because it is different for each soul.

As I have come to see it, each of us has our own providence because each of our souls originates from our own special providence, which is like our soulful heritage. Our souls are probably not directly created by God anymore than our bodies are directly created by God. God doesn't sire souls anymore than He (or She or It) sires bodies, though God is Present in all souls like God is Present in all bodies. **Souls sire souls like bodies sire bodies; and our providence amounts to the soul or souls and related soulful families from which or from whom our soul originates.** Thus, each of us has a different providence because each of us comes from a different source; and, for the most part, when we die, our own little *heaven*, not *Heaven*, amounts to returning to our soulful source.

Accordingly, our *guardian angels* stem from our own special providence as well. We are not alone. At least, many of us aren't because we come from caring providences which or who are not about to let us wander around without protection. Each of us is here on Earth for our own special reason; and none of us are here as sent by God. We have been *sent* into this world by our own special providence; and when life is finished, unless we wander away from our providence while we live – which is possible – we will return to our origin when we die; and hopefully, we will be met with a grand celebration.

Did Francis belong to the *providence of Christ*? Perhaps, but it doesn't really matter anymore than it matters that you or I belong to the providence of Christ. ***I think Christ lived to try and free some souls from captive or imprisoning types of providences.*** Without question, there exists some mighty mean providences who have no regard for the truth and could care less about it; and children from these providences – *lost providences* – are the souls Christ was trying to reach in order to free them from their oppressive families and traditions and providences.

In the process of trying to free souls bound to mean providences, he talked about some souls being part of his *elect* and some not. He did not intend to suggest that those souls not of his elect are doomed to Hell, but he did intend to suggest that some souls on Earth do come from the same source as he and when they die, will return to that common origin. To be *elected* to a providence or by a providence, be it Christ's providence or not, is simply to have come from a providence and be intended to return to it. That's all it is.

But Paul of Tarsus and so many others within Christianity, who failed to appreciate the intended teachings of Christ, made Christ the sole head of a single *Providence* which they label *Heaven*. To get to this *Heaven* of Christ, all must admit being born in sin and

all must offer penitence for having offended Almighty God. That is not what Christ taught; but that is largely a gut suspicion on my part.

I have little doubt that Paul and his boys were very sincere in believing as they did about Christ; and so they can't be faulted as hypocrites; but I also have very little doubt that Paul and his boys completely missed the boat in terms of understanding, not only what life is all about, but what Christ was – and is – all about. In their ignorance, they passed on their beliefs as if everything they wrote was without taint of error.

If only they had listened to Christ, they wouldn't have damned themselves and those who listened to them to oppressive ignorance. If only Paul had known Christ in his lifetime – which he didn't – and had some understanding about him, he wouldn't have let some force pretending to be Christ lead him by the nose as he did. Having had no previous appreciation for Christ before being knocked off his horse by the blinding light claiming to be the Christ whom he was denouncing, he was completely in chains from the very beginning. He fell for it; and the world has been the victim.

It's mighty interesting to make the observations I do about Christ and his mission. Among other things, supposedly he warned that there would be false Christs who would spring up and try to mislead and betray his teachings. Paul and his boys were among the first to warn the world that there would be false Christs; and they were sincere in thinking they were not them. But if I am right about my suspicions, Paul and his boys were among the first false Christs. ***They turned out to be the very ones they warned others about. Or so it seems to me.***

Looking for the Real Jesus

Should you believe me in what I claim? Only if it seems sensible. If not, by no means, don't. It does sound preposterous, I admit, but to some extent, to a great extent, I think, there is a little Gospel that Paul and his boys never told us about that bears out some of the claims I am making. Any who are interested in the truth and who suspect, like I did, that something is missing in the four Gospels and letters of Paul, let me highly recommend the fifth Gospel – ***THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS***.

It was Paul and his boys – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – who wrote the known Gospels. They put into those works whatever they wanted; and no one could object. Again, I think they were sincere. It's just that they were so terribly ignorant, having almost no appreciation for Christ and his teachings, but having an awareness that he was special. **They didn't understand how he was special – just that he was special – and so they made their specialty his; and what was that specialty? *Belief in penitence!***

So, the world has been groping ever since for the real messages and teachings of Christ. We have been trying like mad to make sense of the senseless because Christ supposedly taught it. So we have been told; and the many providences who have wanted a convenience for keeping their own souls on Earth in line have been oh so willing to keep the ignorance going at full speed. Teaching that Christ taught penitence – it's been a great day for them. But eventually people will stop believing something just because somebody else said it was so; and they will stop trying to make sense out of the senseless; and then, ***Christ will have returned!***

Thanks in great part to that fifth Gospel that few know about – ***THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS*** – we may not be captive much longer. At least, some of us won't. There will always be those who refuse to use their minds as if they are the very tools of the devil. Those of us, however, who do not see the mind as the tool of the devil can take considerable pride that Thomas has something truly worthwhile to offer. This is the Thomas who was called the ***doubting Thomas*** by Paul and his boys; but the ***doubter*** has some mighty interesting things to say in his Gospel; and some of them support what I am claiming, like the ***doctrine of the elect, the teaching of purity rather than penitence, and a teaching that mastery is only understanding, not redemption by another.***

Why wasn't it known earlier? Who knows about that? Was it hidden to keep it safe? I don't know, but more than likely, yes. If those in control of Christ had access to it, you can be sure it would have been burned. So, yes, it was probably intentionally hidden to keep it safe. Where? In a jar in a cave off the Nile River in Egypt. The parchment that contains what has been translated was found by accident in 1945 by a peasant who stumbled upon it and has been carbon dated to having been in that cave since the 4th Century – from the time that Emperor Constantine chose to declare Christianity the state religion and chose to embrace only those gospels that were conducive to power. All of that parchment has not been able to be translated due to aging, but a good part of it has been – some 114 sayings in Coptic or Egyptian dialect attributed to Christ by someone who calls himself ***Didymos Judas Thomas***.

Is it really Thomas, the forgotten apostle of Christ? Perhaps not, but it is considered by archeological experts that it is the real Thomas who walked and talked with Christ; and much of that talk is not consistent with the four Gospels of the Bible.

In the end, it doesn't really matter whether it is or is not authentic as a work of Thomas; but the ideas offered in this wonderful little work are worth their weight in diamonds because – in spite of a lot of very confusing texts – they spell a truth that is finally consistent with logic. Paul and his boys declared logic to be useless because the logic of God is not the logic of man. Therefore, we have been captive to someone who has been in touch with God – like Paul and his boys – to receive the truth of God. It's been a long run for them – almost 2,000 years; and their run will continue for many; but for many of us, **Paul may be replaced with Thomas**. I encourage you to go to your bookstore or your library and request a copy of a truly worthwhile work – ***THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS***.

Regarding that, I have written an interpretation of the verses found in the Gospel of Thomas, basing my interpretation on perhaps the first English translation of the Gospel of Thomas, copyright in 1959 by a team headed by a fellow named A. Guillaumont. I have seen many translations since then and unfortunately some of the expressions have been changed from my earliest copy. I suspect some have been trying to fit Thomas more in line with the other gospels and have taken liberty to change text to accomplish this. Be that as it may, I call my own personal interpretation **JESUS VIA THOMAS COMMENTARIES**. It is unpublished as of now, 2006, as I rewrite this work written originally in 1994; but perhaps it will be available to those who might find it useful.

In 2004, I also discovered another mostly unknown Gospel that supports a lot of my thinking about purity versus penitence. It is claimed that Gospel was written by Mary Magdalene or a disciple thereof. It is much shorter than the Gospel of Thomas, but I have written an interpretation of it too that is also unpublished but may be available in time. I call it **JESUS VIA MARY COMMENTARIES**. I will leave it at that for now.

Purity & Brother Security

So much of the reason why Francis of Assisi dedicated his life to pain as an expression of penitence is due, I think, to not having the truth. He had what Paul and his boys gave him. ***He didn't have Thomas – or Mary.*** So his blindness – and the blindness of multitudes of well meaning people who really want the truth – has been due in great part to the great deception that left us Paul and his boys in the place of the real Christ. I may have done the exact same thing as Francis of Assisi if I had the same source of so called **truth**. ***It is not truth that God requires penitence. It is truth that purity of mind and gratitude of heart are the ways of true wisdom.***

Let me now conclude this small treatise concerning my thoughts on my Friend, Francis of Assisi, with a discussion about security – ***Brother Security***, as Francis might call it.

No man makes a commitment to something except that it represents security.

Francis committed himself to suffering because he saw in it, security. He must have; or he would not have done so. Why was there security in suffering for Francis?

We seek in life what will protect us – or what we think will protect us. I seek the protection of nature, knowing that my release within nature is my safest way to go. I consider nature my home and often capitalize it to signify its importance to me. I have not done so in this treatise, but I often do. Nothing can go wrong for me as long as my concentration is on nature (**Nature**) and paying attention to the world that is. I glory in just being part of a fantastic design; and my joy comes from being aware that I am a child of nature and infinity (**Infinity**). I see nature and infinity as one and God and nature as one. So I really see God and Nature as one. They are the same for me. ***Nature is my security; or within Nature is my security.*** I am happy when I am aware of being natural. So, it is wise for me to seek that awareness as much as possible. ***In my awareness that I am a perfect font of Nature is my security.*** So, I try to dress myself in awareness of the natural – which is also divine (**Divine**) – as much as possible. I do not wish to chance being without protection by being unaware, if that makes sense.

For Francis, it was no different. He also wanted protection to be sure that he would be safe in the end; but for him, safety was in loving a man, not a mystery such as my love. I love a mystery – **Nature**. Francis loved a man – Christ. But ***I love my mystery because I think that within my mystery I am safe.*** Francis loved his man because he thought that within his man he was safe. Of course, he thought his man – **Christ** – is also **The Son of God**, but that doesn't really matter. ***He was still in love with a man, not an idea like the one I love – that God is Present in All!***

So, being in love with a man, he could only trust that being loved by that man could only be secured if he acted toward that man as he would have that man act toward him. Francis imagined that true love for another ideally requires complete dedication to that man; and the proof of that dedication could only be demonstrated through that which is difficult, not easy. Thus, he had to suffer as much as life would

allow under a spell of obedience to prove to his man that he does indeed love him so as to secure an eternal life with him. ***The harder the effort – the greater the proof. That's how Francis saw dedication.***

For Francis of Assisi, then, suffering unbearable pain was ***Brother Security*** because through the demonstration of dedication in spite of hardship, true love was expressed. And no one who is the recipient of true love can turn the lover away. So, know that Francis and those who choose to suffer and undergo pain know something that the painless do not – or at least they think they know something (or someone) the painless do not. There is something to be gained through pain and hurt that cannot be attained through ease; and so it becomes their joy to suffer, feeling that without it, they would be insecure.

As for this Francis, my security will remain in my awareness of being a *Natural Child* and being as wonderful a miracle as anything or anyone in existence simply because God as Infinite Presence has to exist in all, making everything and everyone equally perfect and equally Divine. My security will remain in my awareness that life itself is a tremendous wonder that could not happen without an ***Infinite Presence***. My security will remain in my awareness that no man is more or less than any other man – or better, no person is more or less than any other person. My security will remain in knowing that life goes on as it should; and there is nothing I can or need to do to assist the process; and most of all, my security will remain in my **acceptance** of life as it is without attempting to fault it – or myself within it – with a false and utterly contemptuous sense of shame.

Sin and shame are tools of devils, ignorant and unaware of their perfection as mysterious expressions of an ***Infinite & Perfect God***. **Devils don't so much deny the God that is outside them. They deny that God is inside of them; and in this, they are blind.** ***Purity is the tool and admission of angels***, knowing the tremendous and uplifting and entrancing truth that God is everywhere – and therefore, also in themselves. ***Purity, and an attitude of purity and acceptance, is the only condition of enjoying a truly secure heaven.*** To be aware that wherever God is, there is ***Heaven***, is the only condition of achieving a heaven on Earth or anywhere else. Where there are heavens, there are angels. My security will remain – ***living in a heaven of my own, being an angel.***

In this, Brother Leo, there is Perfect Joy!

Francis William Bessler
Originally – November 8, 1994
Rewrite Completed – February 7th, 2006

**IMPRESSIONS
OF
FRANCIS OF ASSISI**

The End!

***IMPRESSIONS
OF
WILLIAM PENN***

(39 Pages)

By
Francis William Bessler

--- A Speculative Biography ---

Originally written in 1994.

Rewritten in 2006.

From thoughts gleaned from
WILLIAM PENN – APOSTLE OF DISSENT,
Copyright by Hans Fantel in 1974

This work is Copyright by
Francis William Bessler,
Laramie, Wyoming, U.S.A.
January, 2006.

Also, by the same author,
IMPRESSIONS OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI,
another *speculative* biography,
also originally written in 1994,
but rewritten in 2006.

Introduction

Initially, I wrote this in 1994, but I am rewriting it a bit in 2006 as I translate it from typed page to Microsoft PC file. I am also adding a bit more structure to it by dividing the single essay of 1994 into chapters in 2006.

I consider this a *speculative biography* – as opposed to a strictly *historical biography*. For the most part, it is based on a work by Hans Fantel called **WILLIAM PENN – APOSTLE OF DISSENT**, copyright in 1974; but in speculating as I tend to do about this event or that event, or this act or that one, I choose to call it more of a *speculative* biography than a *historical* one. I strongly recommend your reading Mr. Fantel's actual work if your main interest in William Penn is mostly historical.

As you will see, William Penn considered himself a *Quaker*. What is a *Quaker*? As I see it, at the base of Quaker thinking is the idea that whatever God is, God is in everything and everyone. In that light, I am also a Quaker because the idea of the **IMMANENCE OF GOD** is the very foundation of that which I believe. Indeed, I would probably make a wonderful Quaker if Quakerism – if you want to call it that – is a system of thought and conduct based on the principle of God being **Immanent** or **In** all things. I do not know much about the Quakers other than that they believe that all is Godly and therefore, in God; and we should all be **Friends**; but my interest in William Penn is mostly about his own Quaker experience.

For the most part, it seems to me that William Penn was an ideal Quaker and tried to emphasize the need of all to listen to the *inner light* within them, without dictation from without; but I think he slipped now and then, too. At times, later in his life, he became far more intent on demanding obedience than understanding and became somewhat of a **Puritan** in that regard; but overall, I very much appreciate the life he led. Given that his life in the 17th Century was led amidst a sea of religious intolerance, his life was a great accomplishment. Indeed, he may have become somewhat intolerant himself at the end; but that intolerance relative to the intolerance of his upbringing was not that much of a mark against him. I am sure that William Penn himself would be the first to admit that he could have done better; but he did much good. Perhaps it is for me to try and do better, given my advantage of a greater religious tolerance than that enjoyed by Mr. Penn.

With that, I hope you enjoy this somewhat historical, but far more *speculative* journey of an earlier champion of individual liberty – *William Penn*.

Francis William Bessler
January 14th, 2006

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1. PENN'S BACKGROUND

Briefly, William Penn was born on Oct. 14th, 1644, in London at his parents' home at Tower Hill. His father, Admiral Penn, was a professional sailor who rose to command the British Navy, first under Charles I, then under Oliver Cromwell – who overthrew government by Royalty and King Charles I in the 1640s.

Cromwell was a Puritan who wished to make his own rigid moral view the law of the land. After leading a Parliamentary revolt against Charles I, he had Charles I beheaded in 1649. Englishmen of lower and middle classes supported Cromwell because they thought the King was monopolizing industry and they were not profiting like they thought they should. Under Cromwell, it was no better as Cromwell taxed business interests to pay for his Puritan reformation, So, when Cromwell died in 1659 and no successor had been dictated, England chose to return to rule by Royalty.

Admiral Penn, in exile in the annexed land of Ireland for being suspected by Cromwell of conspiracy to overthrow him, returned to England after Cromwell died and ran for Parliament. He won a seat there and aided the return to rule by Royalty, leading a naval expedition to Holland to fetch the assassinated king's son, Charles Stuart, who became Charles II.

The Penn family had been given property in Ireland out of respect for the Admiral who fought bravely at sea against England's enemies, including the Dutch. Property in Ireland had been confiscated by the English after defeating the Irish in battle. Attempts were made to institute Anglicanism under Charles I and Puritanism under Cromwell in Ireland following the suppression of the Irish.

That's a very brief look at the times in which William Penn grew to manhood.

William Penn received his first major education at Chigwell, which is like a suburb of London. The Penn family decided to move to another residence other than that of Tower Hill, which they still retained, because the Tower Hill part of town was becoming downright slum-like for all the poor who had to move to town after losing whatever property they had – first under Charles I, then probably under Cromwell.

While attending primary school at Chigwell, William became an avid student, wanting to learn to satisfy his intellectual curiosity. The Captain – or Admiral – or whatever – was gone a lot in those days, defeating all sort of English enemies at sea. So, William had a lot of time to read; and I suppose that desire was fully supported by Lady Margaret, his mother. Lady Margaret was much more interested in social status than in being a mother; but then William didn't need much mothering, being an eager student and having little time for mischief.

William did have a sister and brother, too, besides parents, but I do not know much about them, other than his sister, Peggy, was about eight years younger than he; and his brother, Richard, wasn't even born at the time William was in early school. Richard was born around fifteen years after William, I think. Peggy would grow up to marry some rich fellow and become a lady of status, I suppose; and Richard would grow up to be

somewhat of an apathetic fellow, squandering himself and his money on loose ways.
More than that I do not know about either the brother or the sister.

2.

PENN'S EARLY SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

At Chigwell, or during that time, when William was eleven or so, he had his first major *directorial* experience – or experience that would serve to direct his life. As an avid reader, he read much; and one of the books he chose to read was a spiritual/philosophical volume by an eccentric of the day called *John Saltmarsh*. The book was called – or perhaps still is called – **SPARKLES OF GLORY**. It offered William much food for thought in terms of the soul and its journey and all that. The key idea that William would collect from his reading of the book was that God is in all things, or **God is Immanent in all things**.

William was lucky to have discovered such a book at the age of eleven; for in that thought that God is in all things lies the greatest wisdom of all. The attitude of English command and English law and English religion was completely at odds with that idea, however, and William would soon find that true though an idea is, it may have universal scoffers. William was so moved by Mr. Saltmarsh's work that he even experienced a vision – or paranormal experience, I suppose. When telling of this period in his life, he would later claim that *the Lord first appeared to me* when he was reading Saltmarsh.

While the younger Penn was reading Saltmarsh, the older Penn was engaging in an order by Cromwell to go get some island in the Caribbean called *Hispaniola* and defeat the natives to get it. Cromwell wanted the island as a stronghold for reaching out to the new land of America for the purpose of colonizing it for the British. Of course, the French and the Spanish and the Swedish wanted to do the same thing. The race was on.

As it happened, however, the natives – which turn out to be Haitians – defended their island successfully. Captain Penn was a navy man, not an army man. He knew nothing of gorilla warfare. Expecting proper formation battles, he and his men were ambushed by hit and run assaults. I have no idea of the losses experienced, but Captain Penn withdrew from Hispaniola without conquering it. Rather than return to England and Cromwell empty handed, however, Penn and his co-commander, General Robert Venables, decided to take another island, which turned out to be *Jamaica*. Should be just as good as Hispaniola. Right? Not in the eyes of Cromwell.

When Admiral Penn returned noting the actual success of the voyage, Cromwell suspected that Penn was telling a lie. It was his suspicion that the natives of Hispaniola had really been defeated by the English, but Penn had conspired with Royalists on the island to overthrow Cromwell and keep Hispaniola for themselves. So, instead of receiving accolades this time from a grateful superior, the elder Penn was imprisoned for treason; however, Cromwell was smart enough to know that he could not imprison a national hero for very long without risking public support for his policies. So, he stripped Penn of his titles and removed him from command. That is the lead in to the next *directorial* event in young William's life.

The former Admiral Penn decided to leave England for a time after the “court martial” by Cromwell, which had stripped him of all command and honor. He had some estates in Ireland that had been given him by none other than Cromwell himself. So,

that's where he would take his family, to a place called *Macroom Castle*, which had been laid to ruin by the British years before like so many properties in Ireland. But there came by the castle a certain itinerant preacher who became the second major *directorial* influence in young Penn's life.

Thomas Loe was his name. He was a Quaker missionary and preacher; and he was the first Quaker, I reckon, that young Penn heard preach. The surrounding neighbors warned the elder Penn about this "heretic" near his estate, but the elder Penn had just come from an experience of being judged and convicted without a proper hearing. With this experience so new, he could not possibly do to another what had been done to him. So, he allowed Thomas Loe to visit Macroom Castle and speak his mind.

When he spoke, Thomas Loe reiterated some of the thoughts that had been planted by John Saltmarsh. There is no Hell and damnation. In his words, there is *only light and an air of healing and forgiveness*. Thomas Loe spoke of the need to pursue what he called *the inner light*, which is a **direct mystical communication with the Infinite**. This comforting doctrine was at least something about which to be anxious and eager. It was something that William Penn could tuck away in his mind that could be recovered and examined with the passing of time – like the **Immanence of God** doctrine espoused by John Saltmarsh earlier.

When an idea reaches out to you, you may not know its precise validity at the time, but you can imagine, if you will, that an idea does or does not have *possibilities*. Thomas Loe spoke words of possibility and encouragement – words that William Penn yearned to hear; and he heard them because his commanding father allowed a "heretic" to speak them. If the senior Penn only knew that when Cromwell would die, he might become a British admiral again, he may not have been so willing to further open a door through which his son was fated to pass – the door that opens to liberty.

Shortly after William Penn's favorable encounter with Thomas Loe in Ireland, back in England, Oliver Cromwell died in 1659, leaving England without a successor. The elder Penn then moved his family back to England and ran for Parliament. He won a seat there and from that position aided in the negotiations to decide upon a new ruler. Having been disappointed by Cromwell and his anti-royalist policies, many in Parliament wished rule by Royalty; and a leader of those ranks was none other than Sir William Penn, the English Naval Commander who had been disbarred by Cromwell. The Parliament agreed to restore Royalty and commissioned Admiral Penn to sail to Holland and retrieve Charles Stuart, who would have been the rightful successor to Charles I, whom Cromwell had beheaded. Thus, Charles Stuart of the Stuart family became King Charles II.

Worth noting at this time is the new religion of Charles II. While in exile, he had abandoned Anglicanism and had embraced Catholicism, an act that would place him and his family in considerable jeopardy in time because the English were not at all pleased with Catholicism and there was considerable fear that the Pope in Rome would try to gain control of England again. Catholicism and all religion not pledged to the state religion of England was held in suspect by a majority of Englanders. Because Charles II, before he became King Charles, embraced an enemy faith, his rule and the rule of his Catholic successor – James – would eventually be challenged by the English Parliament; but more about that later.

Back in London when William was just sixteen or so, after the Thomas Loe experience in Ireland, William Penn received his third *directorial* experience. He had been attending Oxford University for about a year or so and grown quite fond of the dean, *Dr. Owen*, who though appointed by the narrow minded Cromwell, was actually quite tolerant of other faiths and taught the need to be so. When Cromwell died and King Charles II was enthroned as King of England, Parliament – or what ever did those things after Cromwell – fired Dr. Owen and hired a Royalist and Anglican to be dean of Oxford.

There were a number of students, however, including William Penn Jr., cavalier son of Sir William of the Royal Navy, who liked Dr. Owen a whole lot better than his replacement – a Dr. Fell, who flatly forbid his students to engage in any religious pursuits other than the established religion of Anglicanism. William Jr. and a few of his classmates disregarded Dr. Fell's edict and secretly met at the house of Dr. Owen to hear about what he had to say about this and that. William Penn Jr. could not stand coercion, especially when it came to religion. He refused to obey the new dean and subsequently was expelled from Oxford at the age of seventeen.

Sir William and Lady Margaret were absolutely outraged at their son for his behavior. Sir William saw in his conduct behavior that would exclude him from being a man of command someday, be it a statesman or a navy captain. Lady Margaret saw in his conduct behavior that would cause her to be excluded from polite social circles. At this time in his life, neither parent cared about what William Jr. wanted or why he did what he did. All they saw was *disobedience* and horrible consequences in terms of potential impact on their own lives. Sir William even flogged young William and sent him away with a directive to never return; but Lady Margaret thought the better of the situation and retrieved her son and brought him back for possible healing. Sir William reluctantly agreed to let him come back home, but he was not to be allowed in Sir William's presence. Young William was restricted to his room upstairs.

3. OUT OF GRACE IN FRANCE

Then Lady Margaret got an idea – why not send him to France? There he could be out of sight and out of mind of the English while hopefully he was learning some proper courtly conduct. With some degree of suspicion that it wouldn't work, Sir William agreed to Lady Margaret's plan; and young William was sent off to France – to encounter his fourth major *directorial* experience.

Was that experience a meeting with King Louis XIV of France? No, but he did meet with King Louis through an encounter arranged by Sir William to give William Jr. exposure to courtly things. Was that experience a joust with a French swordsman? No, but he did have an encounter with a Frenchman begging to fence an opponent to death.

It was night, I guess, and William was walking with sword in sheath, as all gallant Frenchmen were expected to do, and some fellow begging for a fight and a reason to “defend his honor” accused William of failing to say hi or doff his hat out of respect or something like that. So, William had to defend himself or have a sword through his gut. In the end, the arrogant Frenchman was disarmed by William and his life held at the end of William's sword. According to the strange custom they practiced in those days, it would have been perfectly suitable for William to put his sword through the other fellow, since he was the victor, but William had no taste for that sort of thing and let the other go.

Anyway, what was the fourth major *directorial* or shaping experience of William Penn's life that happened during his stay in France? It wasn't meeting a king or running a scoundrel with a sword. What was it? Perhaps it was falling in love. No. It was an encounter with another on the basis of religion or philosophy.

While in Paris and thereabouts, Penn was exposed to Catholicism and its rigid structure, but he still yearned to hear a teaching that would comfort and console, not intimidate with threats of Hell for disobedience. He was looking for something that John Saltmarsh might teach; and he found it in a Protestant theologian by the name of *Amyraut* who was teaching at some Protestant university in France.

I have no idea how he found out about Mr. Amyraut, but he heard about him somehow for sure and liked what he heard – enough to enroll in the university where Mr. Amyraut taught. I guess it was respect at first sight because the two became great friends and even companions. Amyraut was saying what William longed to hear – that God is not a capricious God who can decide to damn some by birth and save some by birth simply by virtue of his Almighty Will. That was the mad teaching of John Calvin; and it was rather rampant at the time.

The *Calvanists* – and the *Puritans* who probably came from the Calvinists – were a sour dour group of souls looking to regiment life into saved and not saved camps. The rightful question to be asked if the Puritans and Calvinists are right is – why try to live a morally good life if you are among the predestined for Hell?

Be that as it may, young William was smart enough to know it couldn't be that way – the way of John Calvin and Oliver Cromwell. God has to represent something much different than simply lawful obedience or predestination. Amyraut taught something

much more sensible – **that personal liberty is the key to the morally responsible life**, not pre-formulated divine rules. Liberty itself is at the seat of holiness; and the practice of liberty without stepping on another's liberty is the prerequisite of Heaven. Amyraut was telling the truth; and William Penn Jr. recognized the truth when he heard it.

Then, after two years or so of exposure to and companionship with Amyraut, the relationship and the lessons ended. Amyraut took sick; and early in 1664, he died. William, however, would not forget him, nor the time he spent with him. Though it wasn't what Sir William and Lady Margaret had hoped would be his experience in France, it did, in fact, urge him along his chosen path of championing freedom and denouncing rigidity and intolerance.

4.

BACK IN GRACE IN ENGLAND

After France, William returned to his parents and England. It was a good reunion because all wanted it to happen. Young William was intent on practicing the tolerance Amyraut preached; and Sir William was eager for a chance to get close to his son again, after literally throwing him out years before. All was well for a brief time. Peggy, now thirteen, was terribly interested in hearing about William's French experiences; and young Richard, only six or seven, was anxious just to get to know his brother; for he was so much younger than he. Lady Margaret liked what she saw too – a gentleman who dressed like a gentleman and could act like the cavalier his father was. William liked colors in his garments; and I guess he was quite the dashing looking gentleman.

Sir William enrolled young William in law school, still with hope that young William himself could become a Sir William in matters of state; and that could not happen without a law degree. So, William started law school – and then Admiral Penn was once again called upon to thrash some naval enemy or other – the Dutch again, I think. He took William with him to expose him to command at sea and to use the opportunity to have William have an encounter with the king – King Charles II. That was his plan for taking him on the voyage and taking him out of school. He would use young William as a messenger between him and King Charles II. And so it happened; but I doubt that the younger William paid much mind to it. He was still eager to get on with his soul searching, in spite of dallying awhile with his dad to get to know him better.

Admiral Penn was a victor again, but when he came home to London, the plague met him instead of an honorary guard to announce the coming of a hero. The plague, comprised of rats and raw sewage and whatnot, took London by storm in 1665. When it was over, 70,000 Londoners were dead; and a city was in mourning; but perhaps in this dreary scene, young William was further impressed that intolerance is stupid and unjust.

The Quakers, who he knew only by sight and impression at the time, were dealt with very unfairly. In uncommon selflessness, they volunteered to aid the sick not of their faith; but so often those who received their aid and may have died without it still turned on them because they were not Anglican. In fact, many accused the Quakers of causing the plague by virtue of their making God angry for their unfaithful ways. They would beat the Quakers for their “ungodliness” in spite of just having been saved by them. All this stupid intolerance must have confirmed William Jr. even more in his fated path to champion freedom, especially freedom of religion.

5.

MANAGING FOR HIS FATHER IN IRELAND

As it happened, shortly after this, young William was to receive the fifth major *directorial* experience of his life. William was now twenty-one and of age. So, he could act in the place of his father in legal matters in Ireland. Because Sir William was incapacitated due to a swollen foot, young William was asked to go in his father's stead; for there had developed some legal matters that needed attention.

The former owner of Macroom Castle wanted his property back; and the former owner was a loyal Royalist who had been just one of Cromwell's many victims during his reign and his purge of Royalists – in England and in Ireland. It seemed a fair request since Sir William was also a Royalist. King Charles II suggested that Macroom be given back to the former owner and Sir William would be granted some different property, another castle called *Shanagerry*, with 7,000 acres. All parties agreed to the deed; and young William was to serve as his father's legal authority in the signing of the papers.

So, off to Ireland he went, leaving the destruction of London from the plague behind. When William got to Ireland, he encountered a bit of a rebellion on the part of some Irish, attempting to gain their independence from the conquering British. For some strange reason, William acted somewhat out of character and joined in battle on the side of the British and served so well as a militant that some duke suggested that William had a knack for militant activities and should consider a career in the military. William actually considered it and wrote to his father, requesting he be given command of the troops stationed on or around the new estate; but Dad Penn was reluctant to give him command, perhaps knowing William at this moment better than William knew himself. One skirmish in the military does not a militant make; and Sir William lacked confidence that William would have the heart to pursue a military career on a permanent basis. Thus, permission was denied.

With his short lived "military career" behind him, William was now ready for that encounter that led to his fifth major *directorial* experience. He was on his way to town to buy some necessities when he chanced upon an old woman who was dressed in the garb of a Quaker. Before the woman could get riled due to being recognized as a nonconformist Quaker, William mentioned his experience at fifteen when he met Thomas Loe on that same property just deeded back to its original owner. The woman's eyes lit up; for it was obvious that the encounter – and the tale of it – had left a positive impression on William. Then she offered William a big surprise. That same Thomas Loe was in the neighborhood and was to speak at a meeting that very night. Would he like to come?

Of course, the answer was 'yes;' but this was not the encounter that would amount to William's fifth *directorial* experience, though it did lead to it. William felt an instant rapport with Thomas Loe and his Quaker friends. At the end of that first meeting, Thomas Loe said he had to go forward on his travels. Knowing that he could use a fresh mount – and William had such an animal he could offer, an Arabian horse – he offered it to Thomas Loe; but Thomas declined the offer saying that such a fine horse wouldn't be suited for his kind of travel.

After that, William started meeting with Quakers at secret meetings. In practice, he became one of them. It was at one of those meetings and the aftermath of that meeting that amounted to William's fifth major experience.

At this time, Quakers were denounced by law and Quaker meetings were illegal wherever they were held. Quakers were often imprisoned and beaten for attendance at secret meetings. All such nonconformity was against the law. Thus, William Penn, the son of Sir William, a staunch and loyal Royalist and Anglican, was breaking the law when attending Quaker meetings.

At one such meeting sometime after the second encounter with Thomas Loe, some English soldier happened to discover the Quakers in unlawful assembly. Not only that, but this soldier immediately recognized William Penn who quickly disarmed the soldier, pushing him toward the hallway. His fellow Quakers were horrified at the event and pleaded for William to let him go, which he did. Predictably, of course, the soldier tattled on the group and all were arrested, including William.

Arraigned before the Mayor's Court, William stood along side his fellow Quakers. The Mayor – or Judge – recognized William as the “Cavalier” son of Sir William and apologized to him for his arrest, commenting that surely there was some mistake. This could be no common outlaw. He told William he could go free, but William stood his ground and informed the court that no mistake had been made and that, indeed, he was a Quaker. The Mayor had no alternative, then, but to imprison William with the rest of the Quakers; and this event is what turned out to become William's fifth major *directorial* experience.

When a man stands up for his principles in the face of adversity, when other alternatives are clearly available, that is an event of a lifetime; and on September 3rd, 1667, when Penn was caught red handed and refused to take the easy way out, that was a day that would live forever in his life.

6. A SUCCESSION OF IMPRISONMENTS

I am not clear as to the exact locations of his many imprisonments, be they in Ireland or England, but subsequently, for many years, from the first imprisonment in 1667 to around 1682 or so, when Penn would be free to go to America, William Penn constantly argued for the Quakers and religious freedom and was constantly thrown behind bars for long periods of time. It was not a good time in England and Ireland for religious freedom. William was constantly jailed for advocating freedom of religion. It became his battle cry; and he paid dearly for it; but while paying for it, he also wrote about it.

It seems curious to me that he would be imprisoned for speaking for freedom of religion, but then allowed to write articles about the same in prison where he had to be supplied pen and paper to do it. Perhaps his jailers felt that his writings would amount to nothing and perhaps they weren't even smart enough to understand or appreciate his arguments; so, perhaps they thought it was *much ado about nothing*.

After many imprisonments, there was one particular event that stands out as quite ludicrous. William was arraigned for nonconformity and illegal assembly along with a fellow Quaker by the name of *William Meade*. As allowed by law, the two were to be tried by a jury, led by a fellow named Bushel. The prosecutor was one called Sir Samuel, who from the beginning of the trial attempted to deny the two Williams any right to defend themselves. It was an open and shut case as far as Sir Samuel was concerned. Since William Penn was not allowed to speak freely on his own behalf, he constantly volunteered his arguments and was, of course, constantly pronounced out of order. This was one unusual defendant who knew his rights by law and needed no lawyer to speak on his behalf. With Sir Samuel and against Sir Samuel, he stood toe to toe, offering tit for tat, not letting anything go by without a response, angering not only Sir Samuel, but the Judge too; however through it all, he seemed to delight the jury who were by law the final jurors of the case.

In time, the jury retired to determine a verdict. Upon return, the question was posed. *How do you find the defendant?* – expecting the answer to be guilty of inciting rebellion or some such; but Mr. Bushel responded, *we find Penn guilty of speaking at Gracechurch Street* – which in itself was not a verdict of inciting rebellion. “Is that all?” demanded Sir Samuel. “Yes” was the answer.

And it went round and round, the same question was asked with the same answer being reported. Finally, the Judge demanded the jury retire and reconsider until they could arrive at a “just” verdict. So, the jury was taken away and even starved until they could return a “just” verdict. But the jury held its ground and never wavered. There's more to it than that, of course, but that's the gist of it. In the end, on this occasion at least, William was set free and no conviction was attained against him. Later, however, Sir Samuel, incensed by his defeat, would trump up other charges and some of them would stick.

Throughout all these years of imprisonment, Sir William was upset with his son for his conduct, but he learned to gain a respect as well. He learned that William was a man

of integrity; and for that, he could always be proud. William Penn was no coward, though he was incarcerated many times for challenging an unholy and unwise statute declaring man should think and believe in just one way, without freedom to define his own ways and make up his own mind.

In line with his fellow Quakers, the younger Penn also spoke the new language of the Quakers – peppered with *Thee* and *Thou*. The Quakers chose this new language, I'm sure, to aid them in concentrating on spiritual issues. They wanted to highlight the so called, *spiritual*, and turn off the light on the more secular things in the world. Thus, they chose to speak in a different way than most folks to demonstrate that concentration. They were not so much looking for attention by the use of *Thee* and *Thou* instead of *You* and *Your*. Though I may be wrong in my assessment, I think they just wanted to emphasize to themselves that they strode a different road than most. It was a speech of distinction – or a speech that distinguished them.

When the younger Penn became a Quaker, he embraced the speech too, angering his father even more. It may have made young William *distinguished* in the presence of his fellow Quakers, but it seemed a matter of disrespect to the older Penn for his son to insist on using *Thee* and *Thou* when addressing his father.

7.
WILLIAM & GULI

And there was a romance that came along too. *Guli* and William were both Quakers, though Guli was not near as staunch as William in the defense of it. They met in around 1670 or so after William had been writing defenses of Quakerism for some time. They shared the same faith; and though because of William's intermittent imprisonments, they couldn't share all the time they wanted, they did marry in 1674 or so, some eight years before the journey to America by William and his fellow Quakers. I'll get into that episode next.

Unlike William, who was strong and athletic, Guli was somewhat weak and frail. Because of this, supposedly, she did not want to make the trip to America that William would make. She and the children would stay behind. Guli also had a terrible time with childbirth. Of seven or eight children that William and Guli would have, all but three of them died in some premature fashion; and those who lived were not all that healthy either. The oldest son was named *Springett*, after Guli's father, William Springett. He was born in 1675. Then came *Letitia*, born in 1678 – and last would come *William*, born in 1680. At the time William and his fellow Quakers would make their voyage to America, the children would be seven, four, and two, respectively.

8. PREPARING FOR AMERICA

Before William Penn settled on going to America, he had put behind him quite a few journeys outside of England. Every once in awhile he would take a jaunt to Holland or Germany to gain sympathy for the Quaker cause or speak on behalf of Quakers. So, when he speculated about making a trip to America in 1681 or so for the cause of religious liberty, it was nothing new for him to plan a trip abroad. Granted, the other trips were very short in comparison. The voyage to America would span over 3,000 miles – and none of the other trips even came close; but still, Penn was accustomed to traveling abroad – always without his wife who stayed home, first alone and later with the children. I guess she always supported William in his exploits, but she just seemed too frail to make the trips.

So, why did William decide to go to America? What brought it about? In general, of course, it was the pursuit of religious liberty – but it was also a trip that the king, King Charles II, and he mutually agreed upon for each one's respective motive. In England, William was always stirring things up, asking for this privilege or that against the spirit of the day. He favored religious tolerance where there were laws on the books making practicing anything other than Anglicanism a crime, though there were many Catholics from the old days who still practiced their faith without oppression and there were some Protestant sects who did likewise; but in practice, as well as by law, some strange religions like Quakerism were denied. The King was always having to deal with friction between Royalists and Quakers. William was always arguing for greater freedom and the Royalists were bent on suppressing religious freedom. They considered any attempt to preach something other than Anglicanism nothing more than a *backroom Papist Plot*. Once that new religion would get started, the Pope in Rome would take over; and there would be war.

Knowing how much a thorn the Quakers were in the side of King Charles II and England, in 1681, William approached the King with a plan. Why not allow him to lead an emigration of Quakers to America? That way, many of them would be out of his hair; and the Quakers could establish their ways free of stepping on their fellow Englishmen. Surprisingly, King Charles II offered no opposition. It would be a way where he could grant religious tolerance without chancing Parliamentary opposition and overthrow. The issue of religious tolerance was indeed a terribly thorny one; and besides, he must have had some degree of sympathy for William on account that he, the King, was a non-Anglican too, a Catholic; or at least secretly he was so.

On the double count, then, of some sympathy for non-Anglicans like himself and wishing to rid himself of a terrible thorn in his side, he agreed to William's plan. He would grant to William the territory he requested – and perhaps even more. Penn asked for territory between Maryland and New Jersey, but he was granted territory roughly corresponding to the state of Pennsylvania. By the King's decree, *all persons settled or inhabiting within the said province do yield all due obedience to the said William Penn*. In short, Penn was to be somewhat of a sovereign ruler – or could be.

Elated that he had been given the approval he requested, Penn immediately went to work on a *Frame of Government* to be used for what he called his *Holy Experiment*. Basically, that document, though modified many times before he would be satisfied with it, allowed for the precious freedom he and his Quakers had been refused in England. There was more to it than that, taking many thousands of words, but by and large, that was the gist of it. In the new land, which the King called *Pennsylvania*, meaning *forests of Penn*, liberty would reign; and with true liberty, hoped Penn, true holiness and peace would also follow. Such was the aim of his *Holy Experiment*. In a letter to a friend, Dr. Tillotson, Penn wrote, “*I abhor two principles in religion, and pity those who own them. The first is obedience upon authority without conviction; and the other the destroying of them that differ from me for God’s sake.*”

9.
**PENN'S FIRST TRIP TO AMERICA
- AMIDST THE MUCK OF PURITANISM -**

In 1682, then, William Penn and several hundred Quakers set off on an ocean voyage that would take them nearly two months, as was expected in those days. Their ship, called the *Welcome*, reached its destination in late October, 1682. Penn was thirty-eight.

Penn and his fellow sailors were greeted with a good deal of enthusiasm, even from among the Indians who had been told of the great one, William Penn; and they were anxious to find out about him. For the most part, it was a friendly start. Off the shore of the Delaware River, near what is now Philadelphia, the *Welcome* anchored. Penn named the city, *Philadephia*, by combining two Greek words – *philia*, meaning *love* and *adelphos* meaning *brother* – resulting in the city of *Brotherly Love*.

There were there in the land already a number of citizens, including Quakers who had known Penn in England; and there were Swedes and Dutch too. I'm not sure about Puritans, however. They came to America with a totally different objective than Penn and his Quakers; and many of them had been firmly established by the time Quakers arrived; but I am not sure how firmly established they were in Penn's Pennsylvania at the time that Penn landed, though they were fairly well established to the north of Pennsylvania in Massachusetts.

The Puritans came to stamp out evil and prepare the way of the Lord so that the Lord could come back and take over a *Holy City*. Evil had to be eradicated, in thought as well as in action. The Puritans saw a connection between evil deed and evil thought; and so they considered it their "holy obligation" to stamp out evil thoughts or *purify thought* by whipping the flesh. What a tremendous difference there was between the Puritans who saw America as an evil empire that needed saved and the Quakers who saw America as a chance of freedom.

I can't help but wonder why it couldn't have been otherwise. Why couldn't William Penn have been the first to set foot on the new land? Why did it have to be those who had such a warped sense of good and evil? Why couldn't the *Holy Experiment* have been the first experiment before devils presuming to be angels terrorized the new land with their angry shouts of disgust and hatred? What chance did a *Holy Experiment* have to survive when surrounded by worshippers of false ideas like those the Puritans held? Why couldn't John Calvin's ideas have been the ones that were refused by ones claiming to love God? Why couldn't men like George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, have been the first to try the American dream? What a difference it may have made!

I know little about *George Fox*, except that he emerged from Calvinism and Puritanism. He was troubled in his early years about sin and evil, but later found his way clear to believe in more positive things. In the days of Oliver Cromwell and the Puritan Revolution, George Fox was a young man in his twenties, starting to speak out against that in which he had formerly believed. He discharged from his mind thoughts concerned with stamping out evil and turned instead toward the idea of the *INNER LIGHT* – the

inner light that Thomas Loe had adopted after hearing George Fox – or at least after hearing about him. That’s the difference between George Fox and John Calvin. Calvin preached we should *hate the inner darkness* like Paul of Tarsus had 1500 years earlier. George Fox preached we should *love the inner light*.

Evil begets evil and love begets love. It’s as simple as that. If you spend your life *stamping out evil*, you become evil because that is your concentration. People become their focus. If you spend your life *pursuing the light*, you become the light. **You become your focus.** Men like Calvin and Cromwell experienced great power in their day. So they thought; but in comparison to one little fellow like George Fox, in time, they will disappear from the horizon, like mud into a lake of fresh clean water; but when William Penn and his Quakers were starting their *Holy Experiment*, they had been preceded by the mud of the Calvinists. It would take some time for it to settle at the bottom of the sea.

Be that as it may, William Penn did come and he did start – or at least continue – something good. Before he came, the Quakers were strictly on their own, having no previous grant from the King and disposed to manage where they could manage in the midst of hateful Puritans. The clashes were inevitable. As Hans Fantel argues in his fine book, **WILLIAM PENN, APOSTLE OF DISSENT**, those clashes were really the first American Civil War. The Quakers felt obliged to argue their cause and consequently put themselves in grave danger at the hands of those who felt obliged to wipe them out. How can you speak of good when there is so much evil about? That would be their response to the Quakers and the good of their *inner light*.

In the mindset of the Puritans, before they came to America, America was the land of Satan and Satan’s stronghold. In their ignorance of the true God, the Indians were Satan’s devils. Witness how they acted – going about naked. That alone proved they were the devil’s disciples; and the devil’s disciples had to be destroyed.

The innocent Quakers came among this muck. As they felt obliged to preach the good word, the Puritans felt obliged to punish them because of their ignorant ways. They were stripped naked and whipped with knotty whips to make the hurt go deeper. They were set afire at stakes to burn out the Satan within them. They were tortured in front of citizenry to demonstrate what would happen to the disobedient.

To the Puritans, freedom is evil because the inherited evil nature of man can only do evil if free to do so. Freedom can not be allowed because man was born to be obedient to the spirit and forsake the ways of the flesh and independent ways. The ideal state or government commands obedience to the law of God and cannot permit any degree of disobedience without punishment in order to correct the wayward one. Accordingly, even a man’s thoughts are not free. Since their deeds are originated by their evil thoughts, it is the duty of government to seek out those with evil thoughts so as to punish them before their evil thoughts can turn into evil deeds. Thus, if a person was suspected of an evil thought, he or she had to be whipped until he or she admitted the evil thought so as to be purged of it. *This was early America.*

Anyway, as it happened, the Puritans came first. The Quakers came second. We’ll never know what it might have been like if the opposite had been true; although, ideally, it would have been terrific if the Puritans had followed John Calvin to Hell instead of

making their way to America where they demanded freedom of religion only for themselves.

10.

DISPUTE WITH LORD BALTIMORE

About a year after William Penn had landed, a dispute arose between himself, the rightful leader of Pennsylvania, and Lord Baltimore – who had been given a grant by the King in neighboring Maryland. Lord Baltimore began to chant that some of Pennsylvania belonged to him. In fact, the part he wanted was the part the Quakers were settling – Philadelphia. Things had been peaceful for over a year and no disputes had arisen in Penn's Pennsylvania, the land of the *Holy Experiment*, that required the use of force; but now here was a neighbor who was challenging Penn's new grant.

Though he tried to discuss it with Lord Baltimore, the man was not willing to discuss the issue. So, Penn decided it would be best if he went back to England and let the King decide. And, too, he was lonely for his Guli and his children. Guli had continued in her frail ways, but William hoped he could bring his family back with him when he returned. He was having a house built at *Pennsbury*, about twenty miles from Philadelphia off the Delaware River. There he would settle with his Guli and his children upon return from England. That was his plan.

There was also a rumor in England that William Penn had died. Perhaps that rumor was intentional on behalf of Quaker haters in England to discourage additional believers. Penn thought that if he appeared, such a rumor would be quelled. So, having spent less than two short years in America, the founder of Pennsylvania set sail to England in the summer of 1684. He had come with fellow Quakers on the *Welcome*, but he returned without his fellow Quakers on the *Endeavor*.

11. TO RESOLVE DISPUTE – BACK TO ENGLAND

Upon his return to England in 1684, Penn soon found that things had not improved in terms of religious liberty. Nonconformity was even more suppressed and punished than before. It seemed now that the Quakers' only hope for freedom lie in the colony 3,000 miles away. That made it terribly important to Penn to secure his legal rights to Pennsylvania to thwart the attempt by Lord Baltimore to take some of his granted land. Unfortunately, Lord Baltimore had proper cause that southern Pennsylvania really belonged to him; for in review of his grant that was issued before Penn's was issued to him, indeed, southern Pennsylvania (including Philadelphia) had been granted to Lord Baltimore.

Penn then resorted to another claim. He argued that Pennsylvania had belonged to the Dutch at the time it was granted to Lord Baltimore. Since England did not have possession at the time of Lord Baltimore's grant, any grant by an English king of territory he did not own could not be legal. At least, that is the way I read his argument. He argued, too, that it belonged to the Duke of York, James, the brother of Charles II, the King. In that regard, too, according to Penn, it was not for Charles II to dispose of property that was not his.

Legally, it seemed that Lord Baltimore's claim was the right one; but on account that a charge of Lord Baltimore, a Colonel Talbot, had murdered one of the King's Royal custom collectors, sympathy seemed to side with William Penn for a time. No decision, however, was to be quickly decided because there were far more important matters to resolve at home – namely, potential revolution that would strip Charles II of authority like the Cromwell Revolution had stripped Charles I of authority and had left him without a head.

12.

DISASTROUS ALIGNMENT WITH KING JAMES II

The King need not have concerned himself with being murdered, however, as in February of 1685, he suffered a stroke and died soon after. The throne was passed to James, the brother of Charles II; and Penn's situation should have significantly improved as James and William Penn's father, Sir William, had served together in the Royal Navy. James thought much of Sir William – and his son, the Governor of Pennsylvania.

Unfortunately for Penn, it did not work out that way because it would become a disadvantage to be considered close to King James II. For a time, James would rule, but that rule would pass; and after it did pass, friendship with the kind of ruler James turned out to be did not fare well with subsequent authority. James was ruthless, fearing deposition and execution at the hands of his enemies. Like Charles II, his brother, he knew it could happen because it did happen to their father. Thus, he attempted to crush any opposition. The liberal Whigs were his chief victims, outside of nonconformist religions like the Quakers. In retrospect, it was not at all wise for William to side with such a madman, in spite of a past friendship; and William, of all people due to his idealism, should have known that.

Instead of leading worthy opposition to King James II and his policies, Penn chose to stay within the favor of the throne – perhaps with the sake of Pennsylvania in mind. And, too, by siding with the King, who was an open Catholic – unlike Charles II, who professed Catholicism more discretely – Penn was putting himself in position to reap the revenge of the King's enemies. It wasn't his war. It wasn't his cause; and he should have known better; and, even if there was a little chance of revolution against the King, there should have been less chance that Penn, an idealist who had championed religious freedom, should side with a man who was clearly not tolerant of those with whom he disagreed.

All this intrigue was long in the making. It just didn't happen overnight. Before the death of Charles II, the Whigs in Parliament had voted to exclude James, a Catholic, from Royal succession. Now, as King, James was in a position to take revenge – and he did, brutally murdering any opposition. Like Charles I had done, James invited rebellion by claiming for himself a notion that had become very unpopular – the divine right of kings. The argument: *no one has the right to oppose a king who receives his authority from God*. There were days when that was the rule, but that time had passed. James had little chance of reviving such an unpopular idea as that in a land that feared the power of Rome to rule and govern with the kind of mercilessness that James attempted to impose.

It's important, though, to note that William Penn probably thought that within the King's court, he would have more influence and more of a voice to challenge Royal policies than he would have outside the Royal Court. It would have been difficult to fault him for that from a political point of view; but, still, it was a mistake, I think, of gigantic proportions. After compromising his voice for religious freedom by silencing it for a time, he could only lose much of the respect he had garnered as a champion of the poor

and inflicted. By actually living in the same court as a man who thought nothing of execution to still the opposition, William Penn imperiled himself and his *Holy Experiment*.

And the peril would come – all too soon. James Stuart (King James II) did a lot of bad things, but he did one that became the final straw. He impregnated his wife. If the baby was a boy, that would mean, in time, another king not of the faith of most Englishers. It would not be allowed – not even the chance of such a thing; and to make matters even worse, James was making it look like he intended to turn England over to Rome by appointing Catholics to important posts while harassing and imprisoning Anglicans on trumped up charges. The King had to go.

13.
**NEW ROYALTY – MARY & WILLIAM
- THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION -**

Through secret emissaries, the opposition leaders in England conspired to offer the Crown to another of the Stuart family – strangely enough to James’ own daughter, Mary, who was married to William, the King of the Netherlands. Accordingly, the Crown passed to William and Mary with James and his family going into exile in France, where King Louis XIV was attempting to stage his own *divine right of kings* nonsense; but with the so called *Glorious Revolution* that passed Royal authority to William and Mary, our friend, William Penn, stood to lose by virtue of his past alignment with a very unpopular fellow.

In truth, this turned out to be one of those crazy ironies of history, I think, where friends of a cause seem as enemies because of past alignments. Even though James was her father, Mary did not much agree with the way James had led. After all, she was one of those Protestants he opposed. There should have been another William and Mary, other than the William and Mary of the Crown. There should have been a William and Mary of William Penn and Mary Stuart. This, indeed, would have been a great marriage of ideals; and it could have happened if William Penn had not sided with someone so opposed to his own ideals. If only he had remained true to his ideals and stayed out of politics, he would have not been so compromised that when his golden opportunity would come, he would be viewed as opposition rather than as friend.

But that’s what happened. William and Mary called for the arrest and imprisonment of a should-have-been friend for fear that Penn could help the exiled one return to power from abroad – perhaps with the aid of the French King Louis XIV. William and Mary were actually in favor of religious freedom and moved to have such freedom established in England. That is exactly that for which William Penn had so earnestly strived.

William and Mary had been in the Netherlands before assuming the Crown of England; and religious freedom had been an achievement there, though it had not come to England yet. With the *Glorious Revolution*, their openness and tolerance in Holland migrated with them to England. Where was William Penn when this new freedom was granted? He was in jail for *conspiring with an enemy*. For sure, there’s more to the story than that. There always is. There are many details I am omitting, but I think the gist of what I am saying is correct.

William would be set free from one charge, then indicted on another, mostly out of fear of conspiracy, a conspiracy that, in fact, was not true. William would no more covertly act to bring back the murderous James than Mary would have to bring back her murderous father; but the fear was there. William would spend years in hiding to avoid jail, going from one source to another to avoid being apprehended.

He redeemed himself a little, however, by his writings while in hiding. He wrote about international tyranny and the way to avoid it was a *Parliament of Europe* that would have the authority to act against its members for unjust and aggressive acts. That would be an idea that would eventually be enacted in the form of the **United Nations**

Charter after World War II, except it would include more than just Europe; but the idea originated from William during this time of hiding.

I'm not at all sure why William didn't just walk up to William and Mary, thrust out his arms, and say – *there, put the shackles on me if you really think I'm deserving of it.* Surely, that would have been the better course, given the new air of religious freedom that William and Mary helped to coauthor. For what reason did he think hiding would be better? I don't know; but I do know – or sense – it was a waste. He fell out of line at a crucial time and had a terrible time getting back into the graces of what would turn out to be a rather benevolent power. His properties in Ireland were confiscated as the properties of an outlaw and he was really almost in financial ruin.

14. CEDING PENNSYLVANIA TO A FRIEND

Then, fearing that Pennsylvania might be a property that would be confiscated as well, William agreed to the plan of one he thought was a friend – one called *Philip Ford* – who was a trusted Quaker whom Penn had relied on for years. Perhaps it was the confiscation of the Irish property, which Ford probably counted on in his retirement, that led him to, in essence, betray a friend; but, in fact, that's what he would do in time; but I'll mention that later. For now, Mr. Ford proposed to William that his American property might be in jeopardy too – like the Irish property – and it might be best for him to deed his American Pennsylvania to the care of Philip Ford just in case there was an attempt to confiscate it too. If it didn't belong to Penn, it couldn't be confiscated. That way, it could be saved for Penn and his family. So, following the suggestion of a “friend,” Penn affixed his signature to some paper drawn up by Ford by which Pennsylvania was to be deeded to Ford.

As it turned out, it wouldn't be necessary. Penn would be absolved after sufficient time had passed to soothe the fears of the Crown; and he would be awarded the claim for which he had returned to England to fetch – all of Pennsylvania; and his property in Ireland was restored to him too; but it will have taken ten long years to achieve it.

15.
**THE DEATH OF GULI
- MARRYING HANNAH -**

Freed from indictment of treason and sedition, Penn was free to return to his wife, *Guli*, whose health had continued to decline. Penn even refused requests from Quakers to meet at this convention or that in the last winter of Guli's life so as to be with his wife. On February 23rd, 1694, she succumbed to the frailty she had long known. At least William was on hand for that. He wanted so much to take Guli and the family with him to America – the land of his *Holy Experiment*; but for Guli, it would never happen. She was forty-eight at the time of her passing; and William was nearing fifty.

During his years of hiding and refusing capture for the indictments of sedition and conspiracy, William Penn stubbornly resisted any notion of pardon, because, to him, that would have implied he was guilty of those crimes. He was not guilty and nothing less than exoneration would be acceptable. Eventually he got his wish; and in addition, William and Mary also confirmed his earlier grant that awarded him all of Pennsylvania as personal property – including the long ago contested site of Philadelphia. On August 20th, 1694, they signed a royal paper of some sort that reestablished Penn's dominion; but to regain his rule, he would have to make a few concessions. He had to contribute to the common defense of the American colonies by establishing a small militia or hiring a mercenary army. Penn didn't much care for the stipulation, but it was better than the alternative – to be denied Pennsylvania completely. So, he agreed to the condition.

Thus, he started planning his return to America, though he was determined not to make the trip alone this time as he had the last. This time he would have a wife – and his children, if they'd go too. His oldest boy, *Springett*, was around nineteen. His daughter, *Letitia*, was around sixteen; and his youngest boy, *Billy*, was thirteen or so. They all missed their mother but were likely sympathetic to their father's wish to marry again too.

Like it was a campaign of sorts, the father then proceeded to find a wife from among the Quaker villages he knew. In time, he would settle on a thirty year old by the name of *Hannah Callowhill*, after some six months or so of looking for a mate. In March of 1696, he and Hannah would marry; but a little sadness happened along with the event.

During the trip from the wedding site at her parent's home in Bristol, England to William's home in Worminghurst, *Springett* continued an illness that had started some time before. Like his mother before him, Springett was not in the best of health. Hannah would spend a good part of the honeymoon nursing the sick boy; but on April 10th, like Guli before him, he would pass to the next experience, having lived but twenty-one years in the one just finished. William, of course, was beset with grief.

16.
BLACKMAIL BY A FRIEND

Before sailing back to America, William would have another one of those *mutual understanding* meetings with Philip Ford, who, of course, would care for his property in his absence; but Mr. Ford wanted something more. He would stay silent on their secret contract in which Penn signed over Pennsylvania to his friend when it seemed he might lose it by confiscation for his outlaw ways. Ford would stay silent *if Penn would pay him rent*. There's another name for a transaction of that sort. I think it's called **blackmail**. A true friend would have said – *I'm glad you didn't hang, my friend. Pennsylvania is yours again. I hold no claim to it.*

But Mr. Ford, though still pretending to be a friend, was not one. He wanted payment, probably urged on by his greedy wife; and then there was a stack of alleged bills that Ford presented to Penn too, saying he needed compensated for having paid them when Penn was in hiding or gone previously to America. The stack, I guess, was huge; and the whole thing kind of overwhelmed Penn. I'm not sure of the outcome of that, but I suspect that Mr. Ford pressed Penn for another signature. Unfortunately, Penn trusted that Ford was a friend and never questioned what he was signing. It was a kind of payment in the future since Penn had no money to pay him now. I guess it's called "credit."

17. RETURN TO AMERICA

With all that behind them, the Penn family set sail for America on a ship called the *Canterbury* in September of 1699. William Jr. – or I guess it would be *William III* – had just married and stayed behind, but *Hannah* and *Letitia* joined *William* for the voyage. It had been fifteen years since he last sailed the Atlantic – fifteen long years; and in fifteen years, a lot can happen.

It took them longer than two months this time because the *Canterbury* got lost and wandered about several months before finding her destination; but when he arrived, Penn hardly recognized his old province. It had grown so much. Philadelphia alone claimed over 10,000 citizens; and all sort of good looking homes scattered the landscape. Penn had been very partial to trees when there before, planting lots of them that he had brought with him from England. Many of those trees had grown to full size by the time Penn returned. Thanks to Penn's encouragement of emigration to his province, it had truly become cosmopolitan too, in addition to being populous. There were nearly as many Dutch and Germans in the land as there were English; and the number of religions was many, making up a kind of religious patchwork.

The non Quakers were invited by Penn to attend Quaker schools. In fact, he made it compulsory that boys and girls under the age of twelve attend school, regardless of religion. It was a kind of public school system with rather primitive school rooms with only a single teacher per school, but it was a start. There was opposition, of course. Many of his fellow Quakers resisted school and learning on the basis of school being the *devil's playground*. Quakers needed to restrict their religious training to home where it could be supervised effectively; but on the other hand, the system was Quaker. So, maybe it would be alright. Anyway, Penn prevailed and got his way. Schooling was made compulsory to a certain age, at which time the young were encouraged to adopt a skill or craft of some kind.

For sure, there was much good in what *Governor Penn* tried to do with and for his fellow Pennsylvanians, but, too, it was not the same Penn as before. By the hard times in England and by his being crushed by others and by himself, Penn had become more of a **Puritan** than a *Quaker*. At least, it seems so to me. Whereas *liberty* had been his main thought for his first visit to Pennsylvania, *obedience* had become his main thought now. As Puritans had long believed that one must *obey for the good of all*, Penn had become a dandy Puritan. He even omitted *Thee* and *Thou* from his discourse, considering it a rather useless gesture; and he insisted that all be obliged to obey civil law as God's law. Does that sound like a Puritan or what?

I doubt, though, that William Penn was even aware of his decline of moral habits. I guess those in power automatically see things in a different perspective once they reach the position of power. It's easy to criticize public leaders and public authorities as oppressors of freedom; but when you get the chance to become one of them, all too often, their former bad habits become your good rules. I guess that's what happened to Penn.

Before Penn became governor or businessman, I doubt that he would have even considered owning a slave. That would have been a terrible outrage and injustice to hold another in bondage; but when he had the chance of owning a slave to help perform the needy work that had to be done to keep up a province and a household, he acquiesced to a growing American tradition – slavery. Penn, the *Idealist*, had become Penn, the alleged *Realist*. Before Penn became governor and businessman, he would have resisted any notion requiring obedience to religious oriented rules; for such would have been a violation of an individual's right to find his own *inner light*; but when he had the chance of being the one to make the rules, he quickly transformed from *individualist* to *governor*, claiming that God's laws are to be obeyed by all, lest God be invited to take revenge against all for the deeds of one. Penn, the *Quaker*, had become Penn, the *Puritan*.

I can't help but wonder what happens to an idealist like Penn when a change occurs *down the road* in life. What is it that happens that changes an idealist into a practical one – or as they might claim, a *realist*? Why do so many former idealists who champion freedom on the way to power change to become dictators after gaining power? So often, those who start out as idealists, rejecting certain behavior as unjust, change to adopt the very behavior they rejected when they were young. It happened to Penn; and it happens a lot.

I think the explanation can be defined by a four lettered word – *loss*. When we are young, we have in our possession what we will *lose* when we get older. So, idealists are born when in possession of all their talents. Alleged realists and oppressive dictators emerge upon the *loss* of those talents. Suffering from the loss of whatever it was that seemed important in their youth, they begin to argue with themselves that whatever it was they had is really unimportant. Then not being able to handle that others are still in possession of all those natural talents they no longer have, they *progress* to turn *unimportant* for them into *illicit* for all. If they can no longer enjoy the body functions they have *lost*, then no one should be allowed to do so. Thus, *illicit* becomes *immoral*; and *lost idiots* like John Calvin and Paul of Tarsus translate their own personal *loss* into a moral system.

It is truly sad to see a true idealist become an alleged realist – or a dictator. It is sad because their perceived *loss* is not a loss at all. It is only a natural happening that eventually happens to all. *Diminishment* of natural function should never be perceived as a *loss*, but rather as a *natural occurrence* – and even, *natural blessing*. Those who become *uncomfortable with natural processes* become "*Supernatural Moralists*." The John Calvins and Pauls of Tarsus try to legislate against nature because they insist on living outside of nature, seeing nature as somehow below them and unsuitable for their *real* spiritual souls. In confining themselves to a city outside of nature and natural progressions, they see *losses* instead of *progressions*.

Unfortunately, when an idealist *loses*, we all *lose* because the next step in their predictable course is to turn *loss* into *unimportant*, then unimportant into *illicit*, then illicit into *immoral*. Who are these *idealists-become-realists* anyway to think they have the right to direct anyone outside of themselves? It's OK to be an idealist and to have a dedication to a particular system of behavior and enjoyments for oneself; but no one has

the right to impose his or her own choice on another. **Be an idealist with talents! But never, never, never, become a realist with losses.**

Back to Penn. During this second stay in America, Penn's personal life was rather placid and happy. Shortly after returning, a child was born – the *first American Penn*; and they named him *John*. For all his changing to seemingly Puritan ways, Penn still retained a good deal of his open handed friendship. There were constant visitors to his stately mansion; and when they came, they were treated royally, offered ample meals and hearty brews from Penn's private brewing house. It was almost like a regal setting, I guess. *Pennsbury*, as it was called by Penn, was a happy home for a time for the Penns; but it was only for a time that it lasted.

Within two years of Penn's coming back to the shores of America, a new crisis would arise. France began threatening the English colonies; and for purposes of defense, England considered the revocation of Penn's charter. I suppose it was with the idea of unifying the colonies under the Crown of England – and perhaps the allowance of private ownership of individual states did not seem to be a good idea. Besides, Pennsylvania had not turned out to be a concentration camp for the socially ill and castaways, as perhaps Charles II had envisioned. It had become a very fashionable and industrious place indeed. For whatever real purpose the Crown was considering the revocation of private property, Penn thought he better handle the matter in England where he could face his objectors.

In planning his trip to England, Penn hoped it would be brief, unlike his previous experience. That visit was also intended to be brief, but Penn would be gone fifteen long years. This time he wanted it to be different. He wanted his wife and daughter and little son to stay behind; but *Hannah* and *Letitia* did not share his desires. They welcomed the chance to get away from their new restrictions and return for a time to the informalities they had left behind in England; and *Letitia* had a special reason for wanting to go. It seems there was a young anxious and annoying would-be suitor pursuing her that would not leave her alone. He insisted on courting, but she did not care for the idea, nor for him. So, for *Letitia*, it would be a way to get away from the rather persistent lad; and maybe while she was gone, he could find another to annoy.

On November 3rd, 1701, *William Penn* boarded a ship called the *Dolmahoy* at Philadelphia – with *Hannah*, *Letitia*, and *Little John*. It was approaching winter in the world of the seasons; and, as it would turn out, the Penn family would never know another spring in America. **When Penn waved goodbye this time, it was for the last time. He will have spent only four years on American soil, spanning two separate stays. As a farewell act, he set his slaves free; but it would have been much better if he had never owned them in the first place.**

18.
**BACK TO ENGLAND – AND CHAOS
(TO SETTLE ANOTHER DISPUTE)**

The voyage back to England would take only twenty-six days, amazingly swift for the year of 1701. Penn would return to trouble again. He had intended on being in England for only a short time, but while he had been off to America, his worthless son, **William Jr.**, had been partying and carousing and ignoring any sense of responsibility, leaving his wife and two kids alone while he went out and had a good time, piling up tremendous debt for his father. When Penn returned, that was the first thing he had to confront – how to pay off young William’s debts.

And then there was his “old friend,” Ford – good ole Philip Ford who managed Penn’s estates in Ireland alright, but bilking him thoroughly while doing so. Penn would trustingly affix his signature to some document purported to be one thing – and it would turn out to be another. The only trust that Ford had in Penn was that because of their friendship, he trusted Penn would never review what he was signing. I don’t know the details, nor wish to know them – but the result was fraud. Penn’s properties likely produced a lot of income that would have sufficed to pay Penn’s debts, but good ole **Philip Ford** and his scheming scoundrel of a wife, **Bridget**, stole that income, then told Penn there had been losses instead of income, and that Penn owed them for payment of their own indebtedness when they had actually made a profit. What scoundrels these two turned out to be!

That was bad enough all by itself, but then the “nice” one of the two died. Philip had at least kept the details secret that had passed between the Fords and the Penns. It was supposed to be more or less a **Gentlemen’s Agreement** – and Penn would honor it as he could. He had agreed to pay Ford “rent” for the Pennsylvania property. While Philip lived, at least the contract was personal; but after **Philip** passed, **Bridget** made the whole mess public and demanded that Pennsylvania was hers. So, now Penn had returned to England to resolve his proprietorship of Pennsylvania, intending to plead that England not take it from him; and he confronted a witch who was willing to push Penn for all she could; and unfortunately, she had the title to prove it. Pennsylvania was hers; and at the very least, Penn owed her for the rent of it.

To make the story short, English courts would decide in favor of Penn for proprietorship, probably not wishing to cede anything that important to a disrespectful bitch; but Penn was obliged to pay back rent. Before it was all decided, however, Bridget would complicate matters by trying to engage some financial minded Americans to become her partners; however, I will pass on that.

To try and maintain some kind of family presence in Pennsylvania while this crisis played itself out, since Penn couldn’t go himself on account of needing to be on hand for legal matters in England, he sent his wayward son, **William Jr.**, to act for him. That, too, would prove to be a huge mistake. Though he asked his deputy in Pennsylvania, James Logan, to watch over young William, young William would not prove anymore responsible in America than he had in England. Soon, though he had wife and children

back in England, he was out cavorting and carousing and mounting up debts again. Eventually he would dishonor his father and end up a defendant himself. Of course, that in itself would not be dishonorable; for Penn himself had been a defendant many times in his life; but the elder Penn's problems were always due to defending the public's right to religious freedom, not getting into personal brawls. **The younger, brasher Penn had no regard for principle.** He just went about using his father's name and belongings to spew disrespect for all for which his father strived. In the end, this young William was requested to leave Pennsylvania; and he agreed to do so, not wishing to confront a public that had learned to despise him.

By 1705, young William was back at Worminghurst in England; and from there I know nothing about him. *Hannah* was continuing to prove fertile during these years back in England; and before she finished, she would give birth to *six additional children*. Penn was eventually charged by the courts to pay Bridget Ford rent, though her claims of proprietorship were not settled in her favor. Venomously, she had Penn drug out of a Quaker meeting for the nonpayment of debts in 1708 or so; and Penn was arrested once again. **Having no money to speak of for all that had happened to him, he was basically in financial ruin and could pay Bridget nothing. So, Bridget insisted he be sent to prison. What lovely friends the Fords turned out to be!**

Penn was too old – in his sixties – to be treated so roughly; and so he was put under house arrest until his debts were paid. The Quaker community rallied around Penn, gathered the sum of 7,600 Pounds demanded by Bridget, and freed Penn from house arrest.

Free at last, Penn's remaining concerns were for the future of Pennsylvania and the financial security of his heirs. On several occasions, he tried to convince the Crown to take Pennsylvania in exchange for *certain agreements* and some financial compensation. The certain agreements centered around keeping Penn's established system of rules and regulations he had fostered to keep Pennsylvania orderly; but the Crown would refuse, mostly because of the *certain agreements* part of his proposed arrangements.

Through it all, Penn had invested heavily in Pennsylvania and received practically nothing for it. When his own renters couldn't pay, he put no pressure on them to do so. Because money, as cash, was practically nonexistent in young America, Penn agreed to settle on payment by produce - or barter, as they called it then. He would agree to take flour, pork, beer, tobacco, whatever, in payment for the rent due him. This started out well enough, but then France and England would get into it on the high seas and plunder each others ships. Knowing they could blame losses on alleged raids, dishonest sea captains would pilfer Penn's payments of produce; and so that ended poorly as well.

On October 13th, 1712, Penn was writing a letter to his trusted agent in Pennsylvania, James Logan, when he suffered a mild stroke. *Hannah* would finish the letter and send it off, claiming he had suffered a "fit of lethargish illness"; but after recovering from the mild stroke, Penn suffered a major stroke about four months later. He would live some six years after that, but in a much diminished state. Eventually, he would lose his memory and could do nothing for himself; but I guess he died a peaceful man with *Hannah by his side* on July 29th, 1718. He would have had

seventy-four years of life, most of them fraught with struggle; but in the end, he lived a worthy life.

After Penn left the scene, his Pennsylvania would cease to be *private property*. I'm sure the Penn family retained some holdings there, but soon after Penn passed, the thirteen original American states, one of which was Pennsylvania, would band together in one union – ***THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA***. The English Crown would be separated from control of any of the states by virtue of ***THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE***.

Once before, Penn had suggested to the Crown of England that the states of America be confederated into one union with one *Congress* or *American Parliament*, with each state being represented within that *Congress*. Of course, America would still be a possession of England under his plan. As it turned out, the states of America were confederated into one union, alright; and the *Congress* envisioned by Penn came about too; but there was a certain revolution called ***THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION*** that altered Penn's final design within that picture. America became independent from England altogether; and the Crown lost out. If England had chosen to pay heed to Penn and organize the *American Confederation*, rather than being subject to it, who knows what may have turned out? It's a real guessing game, I guess, like the speculation about what would it have been like if the *Quakers* preceded the *Puritans* and whole lot of other *might-have-been* scenarios.

19.

FINISH – PERSONAL LETTER TO PENN

Let me finish this very brief account of William Penn's life with a message to a friend I have never met. **Thank thee, William Penn, for coming to Pennsylvania!** Yours was a dream so many of us have – to be able to live and practice our own religious, or spiritual, desires without conflict and without reprimand from others. I wish you had not lost sight of your earnest and lofty principles as life proceeded for you; but I do not hold that failing against you.

You started out with such a magnificent idea – the idea of **George Fox** and **Thomas Loe** that commented on the **inner light** that each of us has, but for which each of us must strive ourselves. Man needs no redemption except to know that he or she has an **inner light** that needs only to be accessed to be turned on. In your younger days, you sensed how to turn on that light, **my friend**, but I don't think you ever fully realized the process. You never fully grasped the procedure; and that is likely why you lost sight of the ideal itself so often along the way.

The **inner light** cannot be turned on by laws and rules and regulations. You knew that once, but you let it get away. You turned out the **inner light** when you turned on the Puritan behavior of trying to regulate an individual process that cannot be enhanced by social pressure. No one of us is responsible for another, **friend William**. Each of us can only live within an **inner light** if we reach in and flip on the switch ourselves. If only you had not lost sight of that principle, I think you would not have struggled to maintain property and consequently would not have wasted so much of your time pleading for rights that mean little in the end anyway. All that time you wasted in England fighting for property rights and borderlines! Was it really worthwhile?

But never mind now. That's history. We can go on from here, **friend William**, because you came in the first place. We can succeed where you failed and make your efforts of religious freedom a reality. We can choose to be inspired by the good you did, not the failures you allowed. We can be inspired to think of a concept like **THE IMMANENCE OF GOD** that you heard about from **John Saltmarsh** when you were eleven. We can know that the thought was valid then, is valid now, and will forever be valid. **Friend William**, you were so close to realizing the truth. It is the fact of **THE IMMANENCE OF GOD** that accounts for the **inner light**. You were so close; but you lost sight of it, perhaps due in part to all the social pressures against such a simple idea at the time.

Friend William, the **inner light** and **THE IMMANENCE OF GOD** go together like bedmates because bedmates they are. You can't have the prospect of one without the other. If you have light, you sense God is there. If you sense God is there – or here – you have light. That's all there is to it; but, William Penn, I thank thee for coming to Pennsylvania with such a lofty ideal in mind. When I walk barefoot in the grass and look into the skies to find my meaning, I will know that the answers are not in the skies alone, but in my own bare feet and intelligence that reflects the presence of an **IMMANENT GOD**. **Thomas Loe** was right; and **George Fox** was right; and **John Saltmarsh** was right; and the French Protestant, **Amyraut**, was right.

So, now we have *Saltmarsh* and *Fox* and *Loe* and *Amyraut* and *Penn* like a string of pearls shining around the neck of the world. Your *Holy Experiment, Friend William*, was not for naught.

THANK THEE, WILLIAM PENN, FOR COMING TO PENNSYLVANIA!

Francis William Bessler
September 8th, 1994

***IMPRESSIONS
OF
WILLIAM PENN***

THE END!

EPILOG: *FRIEND OF ALL*

That will complete Volume 2 of 8 of my writings series. You may have noticed that in between features, I may have lacked some consistency regarding format, but hopefully I have been consistent where it counts – ***respect and gratitude for life***. Personally, I think those two character traits – if you want to call them that – allow for the greatest security in life as well as for the greatest happiness in life.

We all want security – both in this life and in any life that may follow. I think that most of us are driven by that idea in life – though, of course, we tend to differ in what we think may attain and maintain security.

It should be obvious from my writings that I find security of soul by embracing the great gift of life in as wholesome a manner as I can. I believe strongly that all life is equally sacred and that no life should be dismissed as less sacred than another life. That tends to make me a ***pacifist*** as opposed to a ***warrior***. I strongly believe that ***Jesus Christ*** was a ***pacifist*** in the same light that I am a ***pacifist***. ***His security and mine, I think, are based on the same idea – that life – all life – is sacred. If you really believe another is as sacred as you are, you cannot treat him or her as an enemy – even if he or she treats you as one.***

It is said that Jesus offered that when someone strikes us on the left cheek, we should turn to him our right cheek. I think that is only to say that our response to violence should not be returned violence – or we will be adopting violent behavior for ourselves in the process of defending ourselves. In essence, to strike at another – especially in some planned and intended way – is to become like that other, given that the other we attack has attacked us first. ***In other words, by assaulting an enemy for having assaulted us, we become the assaulter. We become the enemy we despise.***

Be that as it may, this ***friend of all*** and ***enemy of none*** thanks you for joining me for this volume of my writings – and I invite you to come along for the rest as well.

See you next time!

Gently,

Francis William Bessler
May 4th, 2011

OUT IN THE OPEN

Volume 2 of 8

(Featuring works written from 1985-1994)



THE END