

OUT IN THE OPEN

Volume 3 of 8

(Featuring works written from 1995-2004)

(202 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
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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

Onward! I continue with this compilation of my written works from 1963 to present – 2011. This volume covers works written from 1995 – 2004. Actually the two years of 1995-1996 are empty, so to speak. For some reason, I did not write anything in those two years. Not sure why. Maybe I was taking a writing siesta or something.

Beginning with 1997, however, I resumed writing to a fairly big extent. In that year, I tried to develop a concept or approach to learning about and living life that I defined as **Spiritual-Logical**.

Every now and then through my years of writing, I have tried to assign a label to a way of thinking. In the early 1980s, I came up with a label called *Divine Naturism* to apply, in general, to my evolved belief in life that **Nature must be Divine** because **God must be In it**. My thinking there is that if God is Infinite, then logically, that must mean that God is “without bounds.” That simply translates as “**everywhere.**” I was not aware – and am still not aware – of a better name to call my belief. I am a *Divine Naturist*. I do not think I am alone in that belief, but others are not aware of the name *Divine Naturism* because I coined it for myself. I do believe there are millions – if not billions – of *Divine Naturists* in the world because I think many have concluded to the same idea as I have. They just have not attached a label to their belief. Maybe, in time, others will hear about my label – *Divine Naturism* – and realize that the idea is also their own.

Anyway, I tried again in 1997 to coin a label that reflects an idea. The idea I wanted a label for this time reflects an approach to life that considers that the soul and body are equal and the soul only uses the physical it can see and feel and sense to express itself. It is strictly a positive approach, recognizing that if God is truly within everything that exists, then it is unlikely that God can be a person that can even deal with individual creations within It. That means that, in a way, God must be out of the picture in terms of each of us created things being able to find favor with God. If it is impossible that God can favor one thing over another – being in All equally – then our meaning should be decided – not in relation to God, but in relation to each other.

But if God is inside of us and has no need to dictate to us, how can we know how to act? That is where my term **spiritual-logical** comes in. We can know how to act by virtue of paying attention to our conduct and taking note of its consequences. If it hurts, don’t do it. If it is pleasing, then it is probably just fine. It is a “to each, his or her own,” of course, but spiritual-logical only means we can decide our own spiritual or soulful fates by taking responsibility for our own choices. Whatever seems “logical” to our minds, then, becomes the ideal course for our souls. We just have to take responsibility for caring for our souls and stop using either favor of God or threat from God as guide of conduct.

Accordingly, I devised a label to define that approach to learning about the so called “spiritual world.” That label is **Spiritual-Logical**. Perhaps someone can devise a better label for the process; but **Spiritual-Logical** only means **determining spiritual truths through logical means**. Look at the world about you. Observe conduct within it. Notice how that conduct plays out in the life we can see – and you can be reasonably sure

that it is the same in the so called, **spiritual world – or the world of the soul**. The assumption is that souls are equal to bodies and that souls only inform or dwell within bodies to express themselves. **We can find the answers we seek about the unseen – the spiritual - by looking at that which we can see – the physical. We can know the spiritual by dealing with the material because the spiritual is only an invisible manifestation of the material. That is what I mean by “spiritual-logical.”**

Anyway, in 1997, I wrote a series of essays commenting on looking at life in a **Spiritual-Logical** way. I wrote the essays for *Reader’s Digest*, but Reader’s Digest did not respond. I submitted 6 articles in 6 different months, hoping for some kind of response, but none was forthcoming. This volume, however, will begin with those 6 articles: 3 dealing with my **“spiritual-logical”** idea and the last 3 offering comments about **CRIME & CORRECTION** (16 Pages), **PARADISE ON EARTH** (9 Pages), and finally **THE SOLITARY WAY** (12 Pages).

Personally, I believe that Jesus was “spiritual-logical” in his approach to knowing about life too. In my essays, I offer my reason for believing that. So, I need not pursue the argument in this Introduction. For what it’s worth, though, the last “spiritual-logical” essay I wrote and am including in this volume is called **THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL CHRIST** (14 Pages).

This volume also features additional Jesus based articles – one that reviews what I think amounts to the terrible misuse of the crucifixion of Jesus and one which offers what the crucifixion of Jesus means to me. The one I called **THE AWFUL MISUSE OF THE CRUCIFIXION** (6 Pages) and the other I called **THE MEANING OF THE CRUCIFIXION FOR ME** (9 Pages). I wrote both of these in February of 2004.

Another prime idea I cover in this volume is the idea of **“Peace”** – and how **“Power”** relates to it. One can turn that around too. How does “Power” relate to “Peace.” **Personally, I believe the two are opposites and are mutually exclusive.** You can’t have Peace with Power; and you can’t have Power with Peace. Might sound a little strange, but I try to make the argument in this volume. Toward the end of this volume, I will comment on my ideas about Peace and Power through a couple of essays I wrote in 2004. One I called **CONFLICT IN THE WORLD** (3 Pages). Another was named **CHRISTIANITY AS I KNOW IT** (6 Pages); and the final one was called **PEACE WITHOUT POWER** (8 Pages).

I did not write any stories in this period, but I did write quite a few songs. So song will be scattered here and there. There is also an essay I call **A LITTLE ABOUT GOD** (5 Pages) that I wrote in 2001 and another about a mysterious spiral stairwell in the Loretto Chapel in Sante Fe, New Mexico – built by a mysterious anonymous artist in the 1870s. I call that essay **THE SPIRAL STAIRWAY OF SANTE FE** (11 Pages) – which I wrote in 2002.

During this period, my oldest sister, Dorothy, passed on January 9th, 2003 at the age of 74 and my Mom passed on May 16th, 2004 at the age of 96. I wrote a bit of a memorial to each on the day each of them passed – and those brief memorials are included in this volume.

The last feature I will mention in this Introduction is an essay I wrote in latter September of 2001 – shortly after the infamous destruction of the Twin Towers in New York – which happened on September 11th, 2001. I was shocked like everyone I know was shocked, but in suspecting that the Palestinian/Israeli issue was likely a big factor in

terms of being an issue on the part of the terrorists who executed the destruction, I decided to do a brief research of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. The result was an essay I called **MODERN ISRAEL – REASONS FOR CONFLICT** (12 pages). You might be surprised what I found out. I know I was.

That ought to give you a mini look at some of the contents of this volume. I think it would be safe to say, there is a good bit of variety. In summary, numbers wise, this volume features 24 essays – ranging from 1 page to 16 pages – and also 24 songs – as it turns out. Is any of it food for thought? I will let you decide that. I do not pretend to know it all, but I think it is a safe assumption that no one does. Maybe my ideas are crazy – and maybe not; but whatever they are, I am willing to share them.

Enjoy the ride, Everyone!

Gently,

Your *Spiritual-Logical* Guide,

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May 16th, 2011

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**THE
SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL
SENSE OF LIFE
&
SPECULATIONS ABOUT
THE NETHER WORLD**
(12 Pages)

An essay about life and virtue

By

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Laramie, Wyoming

Originally written: 3/1997; rewritten 3/2006

Note: Originally I wrote this in March of 1997, however I am rewriting it – and revising it a bit – in March of 2006. Originally, I wrote it for publication in Reader’s Digest, but Reader’s Digest ignored it. This is one essay of three dedicated to sharing what I call a Spiritual-Logical approach to life. This three part series is comprised of the following three essays Thanks so much! F.W.B. (March 7th, 2006)

1. **THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL SENSE OF LIFE & SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE NETHER WORLD,**
2. **THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL SOUL,**
3. **THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL CHRIST.**

Spiritual-Logical Sense

Perhaps it has been coined before – and perhaps by many – however, I am not aware of an instance. I have what is at least a new word to me that expresses an approach to life. That word is *spiritual-logical* and I mean it to mean **deciding the matters of the spirit or soul according to logic of the mind, according to the evidence of the physical.** It is an approach that senses that souls occupy bodies to use them to demonstrate spiritual truth. On that basis, one can decide matters of the soul or spirit based upon the reality at hand, knowing current reality is the schoolroom of the present.

The huge advantage of the spiritual-logical approach to life is that lessons need only be gained by the evidence at hand through the world at hand because the lessons learned within the bodily experience can be applied or translated to spiritual or soulful experience; and regardless of whether a soul is in or out of a body, all lessons learned apply. By spiritual-logical, I mean looking at the immaterial – or at least, invisible –

spiritual aspects of life according to the logic of ordinary sense, not according to some so called ‘scripture’. I mean it to mean finding the spiritual meaning of life by embracing the physical expression of life. I mean it to mean respecting what you can’t see by embracing what you can see. It is not a new way because it has been within the expression of man since time began; but perhaps it is a new title for an old way.

I guess you could say that spiritual-logical could be contrasted with scriptural. The scriptural approach to life is based on an assumption that so called matters of the spirit are strictly other-world oriented and that the truths of the spirit can not be gained except by indoctrination from that other world. Thus, to know anything about life in another world, one must depend upon scriptural agents who translate the truths of that other order to us. Without scripture, then, according to this view of life, all speculation that refers to life before an in-body experience or after an in-body experience is null and void. No one can know anything about it – unless given the information from outside this world. The spiritual-logical disagree.

Though I am not Irish, the Irish sentiment in me would say, *Ah, ‘tis a fine word, it ‘tis*. Look at the world spiritual-logically and Heaven has already arrived because the spiritual-logical way of life assumes that life is meant to be known, not escaped. One does not need to go to some other world place to escape the reality of this one because life is meant to be known, not ignored. The spiritual-logical approach to life differs from most traditional senses of life in that most traditional senses of life assume that this life is only a prologue for some grand Heaven elsewhere. The spiritual-logical sense of life assumes just the opposite – that **THIS IS THE LIFE** we are intended to live for its benefits here and now without regard to some future helping of magnificence. It is only to say that this life is equally magnificent to whatever may be waiting in the future.

Infinity

At the base of this “new” spiritual-logical sense is the Concept of Infinity. How does the spiritual-logical sense of infinity differ from the typically religious sense of infinity? It differs by virtue of a sense of no separation between what is the Great Infinity and all existent entities. In other words, for the spiritual-logical, Infinity means exactly what it says – Without Limit. Anything without limit simply must exist everywhere and in everything. That means there can be no distance between that which is Infinite and that which is finite because the Infinite must pervade the finite in order to qualify as being everywhere. That means there can be no between God and man, between God and angel, between God and stone, between God and whatever – assuming that God is another name for Infinite.

For the spiritual-logical, there can be no sin or violation of God or the Infinite because there can be no separation between the Infinite and the finite. Violation of God depends upon the ability to break ties with God; but if you can’t separate from God because He (or She or It) is in you, neither, then, can you violate God or commit sin against Him. You can sin against your fellow man by breaking ties with him or her; but you can’t sin against God; and because you can’t sin against God, neither do you need to be forgiven by God. That’s part of the spiritual-logical vision.

Most traditional senses of Infinity have within them the basic notion that the Infinite must stand outside of man and that man must be submissive to the Will of an Outside

God. The spiritual-logical sense of Infinity is that the Infinite must be within man and man can't help but automatically submit to the Will of an Interior God. For most religion, God is exterior and rules with an iron hand. For the spiritual-logical, God is Interior or Immanent – not exclusively Exterior or Eminent. For the spiritual-logical, God rules only with the Miracle of Its Own Mystery.

Most religious souls look upon a rose and exclaim – Look at what God has fashioned! The spiritual-logical look upon a rose and exclaim – Look at what God is fashioning! God is always current tense, not past tense, for them. The irreligious look at a rose, too; but for them, God is of no importance. A rose is simply an accident of life that just happened to form as it did for whatever random reason it formed in the first place. For the irreligious, God – or the idea of Infinity – is of no consequence. They live, not to enjoy a beautiful Divine Mystery, but to fulfill some meaningless whim of fate. The spiritual-logically sensitive live to enjoy the Mystery of the Infinite Present – or the Present Infinity.

For the spiritual-logical, the Infinite is a constant flowing of life, a constant flowering, a blend of constant movement and rest, a mixture of constant life and death, a constant wave. For the spiritual-logical, God is not a being made from the image of man who holds in one hand, a hammer of justice and dark and in the other, a box of chocolates and brilliant light. For the traditionally religious, God is one of them in terms of being an advocate for them, a person among persons. For the spiritual-logical, God is simply in them.

Spiritual-Logical Versus Religious

Loosely speaking, to be religious is to be dutiful. They are religious who have a sense of owing something to another. I might be religiously dutiful to another human being or country and some think I can and should be religiously dutiful to God. Personally, I guess I can claim a sense of religious patriotism in terms of feeling I owe my country and my world something; but as a spiritual-logical person who knows that God is not an outside judge, but an inside happening, I cannot be spiritually religious. I owe nothing to God because God is living in me. That is, I cannot give God anything that He (or She or It) doesn't already have. So in that sense, I owe God nothing. You can only owe to another if they are missing what you owe. You can only owe to someone or something who can receive. God is not about receiving anything, but about Giving Everything.

Counting all step-children, I have six lovely kids, all grown. My youngest, Melissa, who was eighteen when I wrote this initially in 1997, told me then, **Dad, I think I agree with your sense of God, but I think the religious sense of God is good too because if man does not have a sense of a God outside of him to punish him, then chaos would be the state of life as no one would care about doing what is right because there would be no punishment for doing what is wrong.** When I was eighteen, Melissa, I thought that way too; but not anymore. To Melissa and all who may think that way, let me say, I disagree.

Both the religious and the irreligious inspire so much hatred and devastation in life precisely because they fail to sense an Infinite Presence within them. It is my deep

spiritual-logical sense that no one can do another harm or ill if they sense God is here and now, in them, and in the foe they might otherwise be willing to sacrifice. It is precisely because man does not think God and God Here & Now that man lives unaware of the mystery of life and of his or her part within that mystery.

The immorality of the world is as much based upon the notion that God is outside of us as it is upon the notion that God is nowhere. Immorality, I think, is basically due to unawareness. The religious unaware stomp on life due to false impressions that God is not in the life they stomp, though He does reside someplace else; and the irreligious unaware stomp on life due to the false impression that all life is meaningless.

I guess it would be safe to say that there is a religious immorality and an irreligious immorality. Both degrees of immorality, however, have as their base a false sense of Divine Absence. The religious immoral, having framed God out of themselves, often act without remorse because of a sense of forgiveness. They think that God will forgive them if only they plead for forgiveness by offering an apology in the end. They think God needs them and if push comes to shove, God will not damn them lest He be damning a potentially good soldier. So, the religious immoral often act with a sense of irresponsibility and care less than ideal about their fellow man, partly because, I think, they believe that God would never turn away a contrite heart. Such is the attitude of many who are spiritually religious.

The spiritual-logical have no sense of potential forgiveness, related to God, nor do they need it. They savor life because by it they can know joy – and without it, they can know nothing. Some joy is so much better than nothing. So the spiritual-logical skip through life, taking time to enjoy the butterflies flitting through the air because they know that the Infinite God that is in everything flits with them. To watch a butterfly for a spiritual-logically sensitive person is not to waste time looking at nothing, but to enjoy time looking at just one of a trillion little instances of Infinity. For the spiritual-logical, forgiveness for doing wrong to another is of no issue because there is never any desire to do wrong to another. **Only the religious need forgiveness. The spiritual-logical need only awareness.**

Why should I need forgiveness from a God Who or Which is Present within me? The spiritual-logical know that fear of God is as useful as wings would be for humans or feathers for a fish. I do not need to fly because the birds do that. The spiritual-logical do not waste life wanting to do themselves what another aspect of creation is intended to do. The birds can fly, but man can smile.

As a spiritual-logical person, I live my life aware of God in my lap because I know that, as Infinite, God must be in my lap as in the butterfly or as in the fierce warrior with hate in his heart. For the spiritual-logical, God is not about hate or love, in an emotional sense, but about being within those who hate and love.

It is said that God loves, meaning emotionally. What nonsense! God is not an emotion, but an Infinity that embraces emotion along with every other aspect of existence. The spiritual-logical do not seek so much to understand as to accept; and in their acceptance of Divinity within life or life within Divinity, they find true peace. Very few of the religious and irreligious can claim the same.

Spirit and Spiritual

It is also said – and it is the byline of all so called *scriptures* – **that God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit.** The spiritual-logical who decide by reason also know this is a stupid saying for a stupid outlook on God – for the most part. It is the law of those who want to place God outside themselves in order to bow down to something outside themselves or have something outside of others that can be used to threaten them into submission.

I think, in truth, the quip that God is spirit is an excuse to keep God out of reach and to keep all material creation out of touch with God. The spiritually religious start and end the day with prayers that this God in spirit will keep them out of harms way – meaning out of reach of the temptations of the flesh because, after all, God is spirit and could not be found in such a low state as the flesh.

The spiritual-logical, however, know this is not so. Though we know we can't define God any better than the spiritually religious, we also know that because the Infinite has to be everywhere, the Infinite – or God – has to be in the flesh too. Thus, it means little to say God is spirit and must be worshipped in the spirit. God is whatever He or She or It is; but whatever He or She or It is, He or She or It is in the flesh, giving the flesh, Divine Stature.

I may be wrong, but I suspect the souls who claim that God is spiritual are the very same ones who think of God as a man. Man is spiritual; and therefore, God must be too. I suspect that is the pattern of logic used to conclude that God is spirit and spiritual. Like man has formed God out of his own image and given the Essence that is God a personal character similar to that of man, he has also assigned to God the part of man that is spirit.

It is true. Man is spiritual; but that does not mean that God has to be, though on an Infinite Level, He or She or It may well be. Man is also limited to space and time, but God is not. Man laughs, but God has no vocal chords – as a being. Man sees, but God has no eyes, etc. Perhaps we all have our own idea as to what spirit and spiritual really is; but I think of spirit as being equivalent to awareness. I do not understand my awareness, but I know I am aware. It is my awareness that comprises my spirituality. Spirituality differs, then, according to awareness.

Is God aware? If He is, then I guess He's spiritual; but even if He is aware, His Awareness must be of the Infinite Type. Since I am finite, my awareness can only be of the finite type – or variety. So, if God really is spirit, I still could not understand Him or Her or It. So, it would still do me no good to worship Him in spirit as my spirit of worship could not begin to embrace the Spirit of God.

I can't relate to the Spirit of God – whatever that is – but I can relate to the spirit of my fellow created beings; and so that is what I should do. As finite, I can be aware that God is, but I can't be aware of what He is. There are many who would claim otherwise, receiving the lead from some in this world and from some in what I call the *Nether World*.

The Nether World

Welcome, My Friends, to the *Wonderful Nether World!* Like our experience as souls within a body, the Nether World experience – if there is such a thing – is quite the carbon copy. The only difference is the souls in this place are without bodies. Like the in-body experience, souls are neighbors with kind ones and with unkind ones at the same time. Sorry – I don't think the Nether World is any better of a Heaven than the one we have within the body experience.

I am guessing, but I suspect there is a Nether World, which is more or less a state of limbo between in-body experiences. That is what I suspect. Call it a hunch if you'd like. I can't prove it any more that the scriptural folks can prove their Eternal Heaven. It just seems sensible to me because I believe in the independent existence of a soul – or the independent existence of souls. So, it stands to reason that when my body and soul separate upon death, my soul has to have a place to go. That place is what I choose to call the Nether World. I will explain why I choose the term nether in a few minutes.

I suspect, however, it is this place of limbo where I will go and you will go for a time after we die and before we are reborn into other fleshly temples that also harbors those who try to make contact with souls within bodies. It is from this place – not Heaven – where Moses received his visit on the mountain. It is from this place – not Heaven – where Saul of Tarsus received his visit from Jesus – except it probably wasn't Jesus, but some opportunistic soul pretending to be Jesus. It is from this place – not Heaven – where Abraham was commanded to burn his son in sacrifice.

Have you ever stood in front one of those colored windows that allows those inside to look out but does not allow those outside to look in? Well, that is what the Nether World is like, except the opposite is true. Those in the Nether World can look into and upon, but those of us outside the Nether World can not look into their world. Accordingly, those in the Nether World have the rest of us at a significant disadvantage to ourselves and a very opportunistic advantage for them. Knowing we cannot identify them as being what they might not be, they can claim to be certain identities and we have no way to disprove the claim.

Imagine yourself walking down the street and all of a sudden you hear a voice – Psssst – Hey, you, I want to talk to you. You look around and see no one, but you can still hear the voice. Then you ask, who are you? And the voice answers – I am God and I want you to deliver a message for me. The ordinary person might suspect the voice is actually from God and the deceitful one from the Nether World could get away with the ruse; however, the spiritual-logical person could instantly recognize that the voice could not be from God because God is inside of the spiritual-logical person. Thus, the spiritual-logical one could tell the voice to go chase yourself, as my father used to say when he wanted to get rid of one of his eight kids – or all of us for that matter.

Now, add the dimension of magic and the spiritually religious ruse takes on tremendous impact. Personally, I know no magic, but I have witnessed a lot of magicians who pull rabbits out of hats, birds from pockets, humans from beneath table cloths, etc. I don't have any idea how they do it, but I do know it's magic, not Godly expression or the evidence of Godly Presence or Power. If I don't know how the magicians of this world do their thing, how can I know the capabilities of magic by ones so inclined from the Nether World? How many willing humans have been fooled into believing some act is

from God by virtue of some artist from the Nether World, pulling a rabbit out of thin air or somehow setting a bush on fire? I have no feel for magic in this world; and I certainly have no idea of its possibilities by ones from within the Nether World. Do you?

The religious could be fooled; and maybe even the irreligious could be fooled into getting religion; but the spiritual-logical cannot be fooled into believing that a voice heard must be that of God. It's all so simple to recognize something as from God or not if you know what God is; but it is impossible to judge a thing as being from God or being God Himself or Herself or Itself if you do not know what God is – or at least “where” God is. If you know where God is, then at least you can know where He or She or It is not. The spiritual-logical know where God is not – and that is – outside of themselves. That is to say God is not separate from them. So, if a voice – either inside or outside a spiritual-logical person – presents itself as separate from the subject, then that voice must be that of a scamp, pretending to be someone or something because of being able to impose without being acted upon.

In my opinion, this very scam has been played out upon the human race millions of times, if not billions. Some of these Nether World voices just want a little companionship and wish to involve no one but the selected one; but then there are others who want far more than just the attention of one person. They want the homage of some number, maybe even the whole human race. And so they pretend to be God asking for patronage and very often receive it too. At least, this I suspect.

The spiritual-logical proof that none of the many voices heard by various historical witnesses have been God is the idea it doesn't need to happen. It doesn't need to happen because a presence that is already at hand doesn't need to become at hand. Right? A voice that is heard has to come to the one hearing the voice; but if one is already in the person hearing, it certainly has no need to come to that person. Does it? That is spiritual-logical sense. Any who lack it can be fooled. Those who have it, can't. And keep in mind, anyone from the Nether World, who would be willing to pretend he is God to gain an audience, will certainly be willing to energize any movements started in His Name – that is, of course, in God's Name.

Membership within the Nether World

To repeat, spiritual-logically, I think it is reasonable to assume that souls go someplace when their bodies die, given that they exist or can exist independent of bodies. They can't go nowhere. Can they? So, they must go somewhere. I think it is also reasonable to assume that the “good” don't go to the right and the “bad” to the left because wherever they go, they probably just go where they go and end where they end. In all likelihood, the “bad” become neighbors with the “good” and the “good” with the “bad” – just as it happens here in the in-body world. I might be living between a scoundrel on my right and an honorable one on my left within society; and it probably happens that way in the Nether World too because it is unreasonable to assume that one place is different from the other. Like here, souls of a kind probably gather together in the Nether World, but they probably exist as strangers too – just like here on Earth.

Where is this Nether World? I don't know. Maybe when you leave it to come here to Earth, you leave memory of it behind until upon death, you reenter it and regain your memory – like the Earthly experience is but the sleep between experiences. I have no

idea. I am speculating about this just as everyone speculates about it, though some speculation is scripturally oriented and some is what I call spiritual-logically oriented. I don't know where the Nether World is; but no one does.

Maybe, it's here on Earth. I strongly suspect it is, but again that's speculation. Maybe my departed Dad is here in this room with me right now as I write this essay. I suspect he is – or at least has dropped in from time to time. A wonderful departed friend named Emmett might be here too. And then, it's possible, too, the visits end because the loved ones return from the Nether World to assume new bodies and different lives. Perhaps that's the circle of reality; and a father becomes a daughter. Who knows?

Maybe the man you kill today will become the neighbor you can't kill after your own execution because both of you will exist in the Nether World where no one can die for lack of a body to die. If souls really exist independent of bodies, then that is an entirely possible scenario. How would you like to be a Hitler brushing up against so many Jews he killed – or had killed – or allowed to be killed? I suspect it would not be very nice. There are so many mysteries I can never know, but notwithstanding the specifics of where it is, I think it is safe to assume that if souls exist independent of bodies – and I believe they do – there must be a Nether World.

As I see it, souls in the Nether World have the advantage of going incognito, not having bodies, but if souls exist outside of bodies – as all religion claims – then souls can exist independent of bodies and belong to what I call the Nether World – which may be nothing more than a world among us not visible to us. Perhaps when each of us passes away and sheds our body, we, too, will join the Nether World and in so doing, become among the observers behind the colored windows rather than among the observed.

I use the term nether to describe the world of observing souls because I think it fits. Nether means Under – and I think of the world of observing souls as the world underneath the souls of visible population, not over them, because souls currently within bodies come from the Nether World. As such, like sprouting from the sands of the Earth, we are all part of the world underneath us – from which we arrive or from which we are born or reborn. And when we pass on, we may return there, not go off into some grand celestial kingdom from which we will never return. If God is everywhere, there can be no better in terms of presence. One place can't be better than another because all places equally have God. Thus, it makes no sense that souls could find any greater advantage going somewhere else than staying put where they are.

Ethereal means Over – and implies better or superior to ones related to the ethereal. I do not believe in ethereal in terms of one entity being superior to another because God equally in all makes all equal. Though it sounds flattering to think of coming from and going to something ethereal, it really is not at all flattering because it deflates the in-between and implies the in-between is of less worth than the high and mighty ethereal – where, of course, the angels are claimed to live.

Neither do I believe in inferior because I believe all things are equal because God is Present equally in all; but under does not suggest inferior to me. It only implies source, though it may also suggest destiny. We should be comfortable with both our source and our destiny; for they may be one and the same. In that regard, it would not be ideal to say we come from the Nether World and go to the Ether World. It's likely we return to our source – like all natural things do; and thus I choose one word to describe both source &

destiny – and that word is nether. It is more Earthy and probably a lot closer to reality that some wished for ice cream castle in the sky. It is better to consider living in reality and not dream about the unreal as if the real is not worthy of applause.

The world is full of escapists looking to find some ethereal reality. Many take drugs for that very purpose. With the aid of drugs, a subject can wind off into some totally unreal space where there is no responsibility. Likewise, multitudes of the spiritually religious find themselves happiest when totally enthralled with tales of a far away kingdom where labor will be no more and smiles will be constant. Be the escape drugs or religion, the result is the same – the participants don't have to deal with the real world for some temporary period of time.

As previously stated, I choose, too, to refer to the place from which souls come and to which souls go as the same Nether World to offset it from the traditional Heaven because the real Heaven belongs Everywhere – there, here, and everywhere – because God is Everywhere; and Heaven is only being where God is.

Regarding the origin of a soul into an independent entity that can come and go, I choose not to deal with that idea in this essay; though I do have some ideas about the birth of a soul and have written some on that matter. Let's just say, my thoughts on that are recorded elsewhere, including a major work I call *UNMASKING THE SOUL* and a minor abbreviated essay I call **THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL SOUL** – the latter of which is part of this three part series. Both works are unpublished as I rewrite this in 2006, but perhaps eventually, both will be.

For now, though, we can suspect that if the spiritual-logical concept of an Everywhere and in Everything God is true, we can know the Nether World need not be a matter of Heaven or Hell. In relation to God – or the Infinite – there can be no Hell because there can be no place where God is not. That is spiritual-logical sense. In relation to God, every place is Heaven because Heaven is only the Presence of God – or being where God is. If God is Present Everywhere, then it follows – spiritual-logically – that Everywhere is Heaven. Right?

The Spiritual-Logical Christ

Personally, I believe that is what Christ came to teach 2,000 years ago – ***that Heaven is at hand because God is Here and we need not go anywhere else to find God***; but, I think, the Anti-Christ Nether World – or Anti-Christ facet of the Nether World – proceeded to upend that effort immediately upon the death of Christ by claiming to be the voice of Jesus when Jesus was really not part of the scam. From that, the spiritual-logical that Christ favored was replaced with the age old traditional religion. The names were changed; but the practice of claiming fellowship and patronage by the Nether World remained the same.

Christ as Redeemer is, indeed, the traditional view of Christ. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all write of a redemptive Christ, who was here in this world on a mission from God. But those familiar with the story of Christ know of one called Thomas – who was depicted by one of the main four Gospel writers as the Doubting Apostle. Thomas was described as one who had to have proof that Christ was as he allegedly claimed – or was as his audience wanted him to be.

It is conjectured that the one called Thomas also authored a Gospel – maybe in Greek as it is speculated that Thomas was Greek – that was eventually translated into Coptic, an Egyptian dialect. In the 4th Century, Emperor Constantine assembled the Bishops of the Church together to decide on a canon of Gospels – outside of which no one was to teach about Christ. The four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were embraced within the new canon and several were banned. Among those Gospels banned was **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**. All Gospels that did not make the new canon were supposed to be destroyed, but the Gospel of Thomas and some others were hidden in a cave off the Nile River in Egypt near a place called Nag Hammadi. There that Gospel remained unknown until it was discovered in 1945, by accident by a peasant. The Gospel of Thomas has since been translated into many languages, including English. It is this Gospel of Thomas that will offer some support for my view that Christ was a somewhat different person than claimed by the spiritually religious Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; but let me leave that discussion for the other essay of mention – **THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL CHRIST** – which is the third essay of this three part series.

Some Final Thoughts

As a spiritual-logical person of sound mind, I don't have to concern myself with anything that has happened for whatever reason it may have happened. Did Christ die on the cross? Maybe. I simply have no way of knowing because the world is full of deceitful writers who tell what they want to tell to gain a following. Some claim that Christ died on the cross for the sins of man. He may have, indeed, died on the cross, but spiritual-logically, I can know that if he did, it was because of the sins of man, but not for the sins of man. Why not for? Because spiritual-logically I can know that because God is Everywhere, no one can be separated from God; and therefore, Christ as alleged Son of God dying to mend what was not broken cannot be legit. Man is broken asunder, but not because man is separated from God, but rather because he and she thinks they are separated from God – or that some of us are.

The world is full, I think, of the gullible who want desperately to believe this is not Heaven in order to salvage hope that there is a more Godly and happy world elsewhere. In so believing that, they walk through this world hearing only the cries and not the laughter, seeing only the pitiful and not the beautiful, smelling only the stink and not the fragrances, tasting only the bitter and not the sweet, feeling only the pain and not the pleasures of life.

It is a sad commentary on mankind that we have not been able to see through the smokescreen of the deceitful in claiming to be some particular chosen of God. I think so many who think they are of God think they are acting on behalf of God, but are actually operating as gullible at the hands of those who know otherwise. From their shelter in the Nether World, I suspect many deceitful bodiless souls encourage fellowship and patronage by using God as their excuse for domination. At least, this is a likely scenario. What can I say? It has happened. It is happening; and it will continue to happen as long as there are souls who continue to lie, cheat, steal, rape, and murder under the guise they have the right, being of the chosen of God, to wipe out this evil or that and to execute this infidel or that. For the executioners of the infidels, there is promised a special place in Heaven; but in actuality, that special place may extend no further than the Nether World

of which they are part, be it willingly via true knowledge or unwillingly via Netherreal ruse.

There will be many who will disagree with me. I realize that. I once occupied a chair in that disagreeable world. So, I know how hard it is to come to terms with the possibility I had been misled. It is not a nice thought. I have been through it, having started life a strong Catholic with instructions that to doubt my leadership was to put my soul in jeopardy. I struggled long and hard to get through the mist that kept me from challenging the irrational direction of my youth. It was not easy to break through the chains. And I may not be right in my suspicions about the Nether World. The world is large. I guess it can stand difference of opinion.

If I am right, however, that there is a Nether World, then it stands to reason that many within that world who have invested so much time and energy in deceit in order to command will continue to struggle for what they think is theirs. But if the Nether World is a reality, it has people like me, too, you know. Like this world does not contain only those who deceive, then neither is it likely that the Nether World contains only those who do deceive. Some of us love the truth – be it here or there or wherever. When we look at this world, we can see the probable variety within the Nether World because the Nether World – if true – is only us without bodies.

Spiritual-logically, I can know that if souls exist to go forward after death that they probably existed as souls before they came into this life; but if they do pre-exist a given life, then it only stands to reason that they must come from something and someplace; and if they go, they must go someplace. Since I can know that souls exist in Heaven wherever they are because God is there, then I can know for certain that if souls do exist, independent of bodies, the place to which they go, as the place from which they come, can be no more Heaven nor Hell than here. **Hell is only feeling an isolation from God as Heaven is sensing an all important Presence.** My soul cannot go to Heaven when I pass on anymore than it came from Heaven, meaning a Special Paradise where God exists. If it cannot come from and go to the traditional Heaven & Hell, it must come from and go to another place. It is that place – the world of bodiless souls – that I call the Nether World.

For many, it's a beautiful place because the beauty that is found there is also found wherever they are; and for many, the Nether World is as truly as much a Hell as the Hell they leave behind when the miraculous separation of body and soul happens. If in life we wander in pain and hurt and feelings of isolation, then after our souls return to the Nether World, they will likely continue wandering in pain and hurt and in feelings of isolation from an un-isolatable God. It's such a waste of a soul when the isolation is not true. Isn't it?

Life – wherever we are – whether on Earth or in the Nether World – is so wonderfully important because the lessons we learn in one place can be translated with us wherever we go. Judgment becomes nothing more than inheriting our own attitudes and loves and spiritual demeanors; and it is far more definite in the real world than in the imagined worlds of the traditional Heaven & Hell because God presides in the real world – not to forgive by chance – but to continue by Essence.

Thanks for listening!

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

March 7th, 2006

**THE
SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL
SENSE OF LIFE
&
SPECULATIONS ABOUT
THE NETHER WORLD**

THE END!

THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL SOUL

(9 Pages)

An essay about life and virtue

By

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Originally written: 4/1997; rewritten 3/2006

Note: Originally I wrote this in April of 1997, however I am rewriting it – and revising it a bit – in March of 2006. Originally, I wrote it for publication in Reader’s Digest, but Reader’s Digest ignored it. This is one essay of three dedicated to sharing what I call a Spiritual-Logical approach to life. This three part series is comprised of the following three essays. Thanks so much! F.W.B. (March 14th, 2006)

1. *THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL SENSE OF LIFE & SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE NETHER WORLD,*
2. *THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL SOUL,*
3. *THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL CHRIST.*

Spiritual-Logically Speaking

Imagine that we are sitting on a bank overlooking a shallow creek and can see very clearly to the other side; and because we can see the other side so clearly, we can see that the other side is much the same as the side we are on. We would not have to wade across the creek to confirm that the other side is really like the side we’re on. We can see it. It is plain. Though there may be some slight differences, in general, the other side is like the side of our presence.

Now, imagine you are sitting on a beach on the American Atlantic and are looking east toward the other side of the Atlantic – way across the Ocean, ending in Europe and Africa. Because the distance is so very far, you would be inclined to conclude that the other side is much different than the side of your standing; however, in reality, it isn’t. Is it? The other side has the same sand, the same rock, the same forestry – though varieties may differ, of course. In general, though, without ever stepping foot on a shore of Europe, we can know what it is probably like because of our awareness of our own shore.

It is true, then. The far side of the Atlantic is the same as the near side of the Atlantic; however, most folks would not conclude to the same. In fact, they would probably imagine vast differences and conjecture about how wonderful it must be to visit that **totally different** land across the sea. Many might even determine that they **must see**

the other side – and they would call themselves **adventurous** for the drive within them. And later, they might set sail across the sea, finally ending upon a European shore to realize they may have just as well looked at the shore upon which they had been standing; for the answers as to what makes a beach and what makes a tide and how it sounds to have waves crashing against a shore were there.

When I first wrote this in 1997, some thirty-nine adults had just committed suicide in California. Why? Because they were convinced somehow that the European shore of the Atlantic is totally different than the American shore of the Atlantic; and they had become convinced that fishing is so much better on the **other side**. They died because they felt they had to die in order to leave this life behind and be free to travel to a *Shangri-La* they were convinced exists that they called *Leria* – or something like that.

I know a lot of folks whose first judgment about that happening was that **they were crazy**; and yet, most of those same folks believe in a **version of Leria** for themselves too; and like the young Californians, they are convinced that they have to die to get there. So, all of a sudden, **the crazy boat is filling fast**. Isn't it? Most religious people believe they have to die to go to *Heaven*. These young people believed they had to die to go to *Leria* – if that was the real name of their imagined destiny.

A View from across the Creek

Do you want to see *Leria*? *There it is – across the creek*. Do you want to see *Heaven*? *There it is – across the creek*. Do you want to see *Paradise*? *There it is – across the creek*. Do you want to see *God*? *There It is – across the creek*. Do you want to see the soul? There it is – across the creek. It is rather amazing, and most have failed to realize it, but that for which we yearn so much is not only across a small and shallow creek, but essentially is right where we are because where we are is the same as where we are not – across the creek.

As a youngster growing up, I was told a big fat untruth, though it was not a deception in that the teller of the tale – my parents – were not aware that it is untrue – or that it probably is untrue. I was told that my soul is a totally different reality than my body and that I can't begin to experience the truths of the soul by looking at my body. The body and soul live in two different worlds – I was told – and only disciples of the soul from *Leria* or *Heaven* or *God* could tell me what I needed to know. The people who told me this were like the people who feel like the other side of the world must be totally different than this side – that the far side of the Atlantic must be totally different than the near side.

Then one day in August of 1980 I was walking through a park in Denver, Colorado – where I lived at the time – and while walking at the edge of a creek, I looked over such a small distance to the other side – and found the answer for which I had been looking for years. On that walk on that day, while walking along, I was not just walking; I was looking for the answer to my soul – or of my soul.

As I walked and pondered, I saw a mother duck waddling about on the shore of a lake in the park with all its little ducklings following close behind. The visitors were feeding the ducks pieces of bread. As I watched the little ducklings seeking to follow the example of their mother and try to grab bread bits thrown to them, it hit me like the proverbial lightning from the sky that my soul is probably like those little ducklings.

In what way? In that we are both probably children of parents who are just like us.

For so long I had sought for an answer to my soul that involved an explanation that was distant and mysterious and elusive when all the time the answer was not at all an unattainable one found across a deep ocean, but a profound and simple one found across a shallow creek. There I was, walking in the park, on the bank of a small creek leading to a lake where a mother duck and her ducklings were waddling about on the lake's shore – and I think I discovered the answer for which I had sought all my life. Well, it wasn't like I was an old man at the time, however. I was only thirty-eight; but regardless of age, the answer to my soul for which I had been searching turned out to be a short wade away. Like so many others, before then, I had been looking across the ocean for the answer – when it was only across a creek.

Ducks & Souls

In a previous essay, I introduced a really important word – *Spiritual-Logical*. It's a big word, but it has a simple meaning – **we can find the answers we seek about the unseen by looking at that which we can see. *We can decide matters of the so called "spirit" by matters of the body. We can determine spiritual truth by everyday logic because the physical that we can see is only a visible manifestation of the soulful world we can't see. We can determine answers to the soul – which we can't see – by concluding them from what we can see – or concluding to them from what we can see.*** The rules are the same, though the species may vary.

Spiritual-logically, I can be fairly confident that my soul is like a duck in that both duck and soul must respond to the same rules of Nature. Now, the duck cannot know what it is like to be me and to be human; and I cannot know what it is like to be a duck; but I can know that all ducks come from other ducks and all humans come from other humans. Following the simple rule of all Nature, then, all souls must come from other souls.

Now, of course, we are assuming that souls exist like ducks and humans exist. If the soul does exist and is an independent entity that somehow abides within a body – or can abide within a body – then that soul must have originally come from another soul. That is the general rule that applies to all beings that we can see; and thus, spiritual-logically, it must be the rule that applies to all beings that we can't see, too.

As I see it, spiritual-logically, all things that exist that I can see come from something else – not themselves – and come from something that is like them. The existence of the soul, then, must abide by this rule. Least-wise, it probably does. I can insist that it doesn't apply all I want, hoping, perhaps, for a different answer, but hoping won't make it so. Will it? The truth is – it is very unlikely that there are any exceptions in reality. All things must come from something else and must come from something that is like them. Thus, like ducks come from ducks, deer from deer, fish from fish, human from human, souls must come from other souls.

Other Claims

The most popular claim for the existence of the soul is that **God creates each soul – out of nothing – and gives each soul its own special destiny**. This view presupposes a God outside of reality in order to create things within reality. Most people do not stop to think about what that means. Sitting at the edge of a creek and looking over the very short distance to the other side, I can know that whatever God is, God is inside of me because God – being Infinite – must be Everywhere. How, then, could God be the Creator of my soul like He is an entity that exists outside of me?

It is unrealistic to conclude that the soul comes from God in some created fashion as if God is one in my image making another in my image. The world has fallen in love with that idea; but spiritual-logically, it can't be so. God must be Infinite; and being Infinite, He or She or It must be undefinable or without form or limits and therefore, can't create something with form and with limits while still being inside the form and limit that is created. It is, I think, one of the strange but true aspects of being that most people take not a single second to ponder in life.

If the Infinite can not relate to the finite beings within Its Being or Presence, neither can It make any of those things because to make them, It would have to relate to them. Ah! 'Tis such a wonderful mystery and one I personally find inspiring and thrilling as I find it also liberating. Knowing that God can't be separated from any finite being, I exist without fear of God. Being finite, I cannot know God - Who or Which is Infinite; but just the same, I'm in love with this God that I cannot fear.

I believe very strongly in the right of freedom. Like I wish to be free to think as I will, I am willing to allow others to think as they will. If people choose to believe that God made them and is not in them, then let them believe as they will. I choose to believe the realistic idea that an Infinite God is in me, has always been in me, and always will be in me; but, just as importantly, that same Infinity is in everyone else too – always has been and always will be.

If the thirty-nine who died in California in 1997 had realized that God is here, do you think they would have had to go to *Leria*? People get so confused when it comes to ideas of God. I don't think of God as being in one special place, dolling out special favors to this one or that one, for this reason or that one. I think of God as being The Creative Juice of All Things. I don't claim to understand that wonderful Creative Energy, but I can know that whatever It is, It is right here, right now, as It is Everywhere for all time.

But if God did not make me the individual I am, neither can He judge me. You are right. And the thought should liberate you, not distress you – just like it liberates me. As it is, however, most are distressed that some one cruel person will get away with his or her atrocities in life if there is no special place where he or she can be punished. Thus, the proverbial Hell is created as a place where men who are guilty of crimes must go. In my view, from sitting on the edge of my little creek looking over to the other side, just a pebble's throw away from the answers, I do not have to allow for a Hell for others who might hurt me. By hurting me, they create their own Hell.

Judgment of Continuation

Like the natural rule that all things that exist come from something else and come from something that is like them, there is another natural rule – **an action must continue until stopped**. It is rather simple. Isn't it? Why should I concern myself with insisting that another who offends me should go to Hell when by his attitude and having to continue his attitude of peace-less-ness, he has to live in Hell no matter where he or she goes? The Judgment of Continuation and having to continue what is started is the basic judgment of life. Most do not seem to realize that. I don't need God to judge me or my fellow man. Life judges them because as each deals with life, life goes on. It is entirely up to each of us to choose Heaven or Hell – being at peace with the Universe – or being friendless toward it.

Straying Souls

Then, there is the claim that souls originate from God, but for some reason stray away from their source. In this view, souls spiral through experiences trying to get back to their original source. Having strayed from God, however, the only way they can be restored to God is for God to come to them and lead them to Himself. What these people who believe this do not consider is that the Being that they supposedly left out of their lives can not be left out of their lives. Thus, the redemption they have been led to believe they need is not needed. Sorry! This view can be resolved or dissolved by once again sitting on the edge of that little creek and realizing that since God is Everywhere, no one can leave God; and if no one can leave God, no one needs restored either. Need I say more?

Right behind this view that souls originally come from God but stray and need to get back to that from which they strayed, there is the view that some Soul Star exploded and scattered little souls throughout the Universe. All these scattered souls have as their destiny to live through levels of experience – called strata – to get back to their source. What idiocy! If the original Soul Star exploded and scattered all its citizens, there would be no original Soul Star to which to return. It amazes me that people live their lives thinking stupid things that have absolutely no potential for correctness. Amazingly, if something sounds stupid, you can bet some one will make a religion of it.

Confusion from the Nether World

The problem with allowing others to think stupid things without trying to correct them is that because of their stupidities, they harm me and my loved ones. In the name of God, how many have punished others and maimed others and killed others? It is true that their judgment is to continue their stupidity, but they also continue to violate me and my loved ones. At least partly for that reason, it is unwise to keep my ideas to myself.

In the first article of this spiritual-logical series, I wrote about the probable existence of a Nether World, which – in essence – is a world of bodiless souls, quite likely right here among us. Such a Nether World presupposes the existence of independent souls, of

course; but given that souls do or can exist, independent of bodies while waiting to abide in them, there must exist a Nether World. That is only spiritual-logical sense.

From this Nether World – which contains good and bad souls – it is likely that misleading comes. Like the world of the visible has countless souls who think they must command others and deserve slaves, it is likely that if a Nether World exists, there are countless souls there who do likewise. By believing in stupid things, we allow ourselves to be led like lambs to the slaughter by those in the Nether World who care nothing for the truth but care only to enslave by misleading. If human beings took more care to think logically, they would not be so subject to dictators and tyrants who operate from this world and the Nether World, but whose operations depend upon the ignorance of the potentially enslaved.

If you think your soul was created by God and must oblige this God, then you are open to listening to every deceitful one that comes along who claims to be from this God. That is likely one thing that the Tyrants of the Nether World love – notions that there is a God who not only creates, but obliges obedience. Many claim to be God – or of God – for the advantage of enslavement by blind obedience. Those who don't obey are threatened with eternal punishment. That is a stupid thought because no God Which lives within can exist from without to punish for all eternity. It makes no sense. At least, Spiritual-Logically, it doesn't. Does it?

The Natural Soul

Considering the birth of the soul, I am not any more aware than anyone else of the details. Are souls clones of other souls? I don't know; **but I can know that because of the natural rule that all things that exist come from something else and come from something that is like them, they must come from other souls – or a soul.** Naturally speaking, they could not come from God anymore than the body comes from God in that a single Infinite Being cannot give birth to another Infinite Being.

It may seem deep thinking, but it really isn't. There can only be one Infinite Being. So, God cannot give birth to anything because to do so, He or She or It would have to generate a Being Equal to Him or Her or Itself. All beings that are born are equal to their parent – or parents. Since two Infinite Beings are impossible, God cannot give birth to anything, especially to me since I am finite. Since I am a finite being, God cannot be the source of my birth – be it my body or my soul.

At some time, however, I can know that some soul – or souls – gave birth to my soul. It did not just spring into existence from nothing. It came from something as all things must. What is the process of the birth of a soul? I don't know; but, then, no one does. Do they? At least I know that my soul must have originated from another soul – or souls – if it is really an independent entity that can exist outside a body. That's a lot more than most know.

As a simple soul walking at the edge of a creek looking over to the other side, what does that mean? It means that, like the little ducklings in the park on that August day in Denver, ***I have a parent soul who probably cares for me;*** and that is a lot to say. ***I am not alone;*** and that is a lot to say. ***I am loved by another;*** and that is a lot to say. Even if that other is a scoundrel rather than a saint, that other gave me a chance to live – and for that, I should always be grateful. And if my parent soul is a scoundrel and not a saint and

gave birth to have a slave, then let my parent soul know that it will have to have another if it wants a slave; for I am not one.

The concept of the *Natural Soul* offers much for exciting thought and much for direction. **It says that my attitude may be explicable as that which originated from another similar attitude.** Whatever it is that comprises attitude and awareness must go into a child as it goes out of a parent – just like all natural things and processes. You wonder why I am as I am? Look to my parent soul – for there may be the answer. If you cannot know my parent soul, neither, then, can you understand why I am as I am. Do not judge me for what another has made of me.

By the same token, once generated, each soul has its own obligation to carry on as it should. Though it is nicer to have been born of a caring parent who wants freedom for his or her or its child, I can still choose to be that kind of parent myself – even if mine was not – just like bodily parents can. My mother may have been fat; but that does not mean I have to be fat, too. Realistically, however, it will be more difficult for me to stay lean if the habits of my mother are passed on to me. That is life; and I can't change the rules, even as I can deal with it better knowing what the rules are.

Do you have a soul mate living in the world? The idea that souls are born of souls would lend a lot of credibility to that notion. Who's to say that a soul could not bear two souls and send each on its way via embryo inspiration? I suspect that happens a lot and may explain why two souls born worlds apart immediately recognize each other upon eventual rendezvous. I find that thought as intriguing as I do probable.

To *inspire* is simply to *go into*. When a soul *goes into* a body or embryo, then it could be said to *inspire* that body – to *breathe into* that body. There is nothing to say that one soul could not give birth to two souls which could then *inspire two different vessels, worlds apart*.

There's also nothing to say that two souls might not try to occupy the same body. If that happens – and it probably does some – then the resulting **person** could be said to be **schizophrenic** or one person with two different personalities. At one time, the **first** soul could be **in charge**. At another time, the **second** soul could be **in charge**. It's really quite intriguing. Isn't it? And the *Parent Soul Concept* would lend so much credibility to all possibilities.

If this is an answer to schizophrenia, then I would think the solution of the situation would be for one of the multiple souls to consistently take charge, allowing no room for an alien soul to slip in; and hopefully, the one soul that does take charge is the one that would benefit society the most. That should go without saying. Right?

How can physical twins turn out so different when reared by the same loving parents – with one of a pair respecting others and the other defying others? How can it happen? Is the answer in the genes? Or the souls? Perhaps there are far more answers in souls than genes concerning our conduct and attitudes. Perhaps Jim's soul originates from a completely alien source than that of Joe – though both Jim and Joe have similar physical bodies and traits, being identical twins. Perhaps one's DNA can foretell physical development; but perhaps only one's soul can determine attitude. Suppose?

Something Bigger than You & I

I wrote this originally in April of 1997. At that time, something quite spectacular was happening in the sky. I looked up into the sky and saw a delight that allegedly comes our way only once every 4,200 years or so. I can't describe my excitement at seeing the Comet, *Hale-Bopp*, named after its discoverers, a *Mr. Hale & a Mr. Bopp*. There it was in the northeastern sky, some 83 million miles away, sparkling in the sky and bathed within a beautiful glowing tail. I don't know much about comets – or any celestial body for that matter – *but when I see such a sight, I feel like I am part of something so much bigger than me.*

We can get so caught up with concerns about our own worries and frailties that we lose sight of the overall picture of existence. No matter how we may have been reared, it is within us all to take time out to look at the Miracle of Reality. Hale-Bopp won't come around again for another 4,200 years, I'm told, but the rivers and the lakes and the mountains and the sands and the forests and flowers and the wild life of our Blessed Earth are here today and will be here tomorrow. Our souls – whatever they are – are privileged to live and love within this wonderful Mystery of Life.

I think it's good that we think of souls – like our bodies – as stars in the sky traveling where they are going, based upon some greater schema of things. Call it destiny if you like; but know that you don't have to know how it all began and whence you came to travel in joy – like a comet across the sky. That comet doesn't know where it's coming from and knows not where it is going. We should be like the comets – traveling through life and leaving a small glimmer of hope that others can see in the tail we leave behind.

We should recognize that we are part of a much bigger picture and take delight in that reality. We are part of a wonderful world, whether we are souls in bodies or in the Nether World. We are part of a world much bigger than ourselves, but no more miraculous than ourselves; for in each part, there is a reflection of the whole. *So, take delight, Dear Soul! Whatever you are, you are worthy!*

The Destiny of the Soul

I wrote this article as a kind of an abbreviated or condensed version of a larger work on the soul I wrote in the early 1990s. Last year, 2005, I rewrote that larger version and named it **UNMASKING THE SOUL**. At this time, in 2006, it is unpublished, but perhaps, in time, it will become published and I can share with those who wish it a more extensive look at the soul explained naturally.

The Natural not only fascinates me. Thoughts about it put my soul in overdrive. Perhaps it is because I see only the Natural that it impresses me as it does. Seeing God in all things and making all things equal because of the Divine Presence of God, I have overcome an earlier need for a Supernatural. That is like saying that there is a lower God and a higher God. As I see it, there can only be one God because there can be only One Infinite Being. You can't have two Infinite Beings because if such were so you would just have two beings occupying the same Infinite space. In occupying the same space, the two would really only be one. So no matter how it comes out, there can be only One Infinite Being – that just so happens to have to be in all. So, how can there be a Supernatural if everything is equally of God?

Accordingly, I look to Nature for all my answers. I think that is the way it should be for all. Nature is as Godly as an imagined Super Nature would be. So, why not embrace Nature for its own Godliness and dismiss this Super Nature and Supernatural stuff? It only prevents us from knowing our true wonder and our true mystery and our true worth by suggesting that there is something better than us out there. ***How can there be anything better than us if God is the Presence Parent of All?***

That brings me to the conclusion of this article. **Where am I going as a soul?** Where does a ***Natural Soul*** go when it's done with life – or with life in a body? Personally, I do not know; but wherever it is, it is very unlikely – given my attitude of embracing all for the Divinity of All – that I won't like it. I'll go back to the ***Nether World*** for awhile, I guess. Maybe I will give birth to another soul – as one (or two) once gave birth to me; and maybe I will pass on giving birth to another. Like human parents can choose to bear or not to bear, I guess a soul can do the same.

Maybe I'll give birth to a progeny soul and watch that progeny as it passes through the experience of abiding in a body – perhaps a girl, maybe a boy. I have no idea what commands the process. I have no idea how souls choose or how they travel – or anything like that. All I know is that if they do exist, and I act like they do, they must come from other souls and give birth to souls – all within the natural process from which realistically no finite life can be excluded.

Or maybe I will come back and choose another ***Leo & Clara Bessler*** – through which to experience another life. Maybe this. Maybe that. I suspect, however, that I will return many times. I will not have to go anywhere else to find ***Leria*** or ***Heaven*** or ***Shangri-La*** or ***Paradise***; for ***Paradise is here on Earth as it is where Hale-Bopp goes or where Jupiter resides. Heaven is wherever God is.*** The wise know that.

As long as I know that the Infinite God that is in Everything is also in me, I will enjoy whatever life I have wherever I am; and I will sit at the edge of a creek and find all the answers I need. That's the Spiritual-Logical in me, I guess.

Thanks for listening!

Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
March 14th, 2006

THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL SOUL

THE END!

THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL CHRIST

(14 Pages)

An essay about life and virtue

By

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Originally written: 7/1997; rewritten 3/2006

Note: Originally I wrote this in July of 1997, however I am rewriting it – and revising it a bit – in March of 2006. Originally, I wrote it for publication in Reader’s Digest, but Reader’s Digest ignored it. This is one essay of three dedicated to sharing what I call a Spiritual-Logical approach to life. This three part series is comprised of the following three essays. Thanks so much! F.W.B. (March 21st, 2006)

1. **THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL SENSE OF LIFE & SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE NETHER WORLD,**
2. **THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL SOUL,**
3. **THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL CHRIST.**

The Traditional Jesus

Who was Jesus Christ? That’s the big question for so many of the human race that are intent on realizing some spiritual value – including me. People want to have more beyond this life in which they can believe. Essentially, or Imaginatively, Jesus Christ satisfies that need, though each of us who views Jesus Christ as the embodiment of spiritual value may see and interpret him in his or her own way according to his or her own need.

When I was a child, I needed a Jesus Christ who could be there for me. I needed a spiritual hero upon whom I could count to vanquish all would be spiritual enemies. In fact, I didn’t really need a Christ. I needed a Jesus. Jesus means savior; and it was a Savior that I needed – or wanted. So, it was a Savior that came to me and comforted me – and scolded me, too, when I thought I needed it. It was a Savior that I needed as an object for my kneeling in prayer. So often, with my little hands embracing one another and my head bowed as an expression of humility, I’d kneel in front of My Jesus and receive his loving care and counsel via the Books that told about My Hero.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote about this Jesus that I needed, but they also gave me a hint of the Christ I would come to love. The four traditional Gospel writers talk about Jesus Christ as if the expression can be uttered in one word; and I think they

knew Jesus-Christ as one word. I did too – until I grew up and began to see two different personas in the one Jesus Christ.

Jesus means savior as Christ means one who sees clearly. Something is Christ that is clear. Jesus implies I cannot live without a savior. Christ implies that I can live without a savior if I, indeed, like Christ, can become one of clear vision. Jesus offers me no chance whatsoever to become a man of clear vision by myself, enabling me to become a man of sensible independence; but Christ does. For the most part, until this time in history, Jesus has been the survivor; and Christ has been restricted to the shadows.

In truth, Jesus Christ is a contradiction. The two cannot live in the same breath; for one would have you an eternal dependent and the other would have you an immediate soul of liberty – or soul of an immediate liberty. The one says you cannot do without him; the other says you can do as well by yourself, given that you share the same vision. The one says he can defeat Satan for you while the other says there is no Satan to defeat. Unbelievable! The two are at odds – Jesus versus Christ; though the world, in general, recognizes only a Jesus-Christ and pays no mind to a contradiction.

Early in life, I saw Jesus Christ only as Jesus. Like the masses, I did not see a contradiction; though I probably sensed one from as early as age seven or so. The man on the cross is the one I saw because all around me insisted that should be my gaze. Before I knew there was a Christ who had no meaning hanging on a cross, I was besieged with the impression of a Jesus who could not but hang on a cross. But even as I knelt before the image, I begged to myself that he should be taken down. I realized that 2,000 years is way too long for a man to hang on the cross; and the other half of the image, Christ, agreed with me. And so, the cross was stripped of its corpse and the cross itself was discarded to make way for the hidden survivor – Christ!

Jesus is a completion of the notion of sacrifice. Beyond that, the concept of savior has no meaning. Jesus – without the Christ - cannot be viewed apart from a particular history that requires him as an essential element of that history. Christ belongs to the ages without historical dependency. Jesus is sacrifice. Christ is essence.

In the times preceding Jesus, men of the world believed in the need for sacrifice as a way to demonstrate to one god or the other how much that god was needed and respected. As a sign of their respect, they believed it was expected of them to offer the finest of what they had in some kind of symbolical tribute. So, they took the finest of their livestock – or living beings – and offered them to their god in sacrifice.

Only the ignorant can believe such a thing is useful – to waste a life to appease a god. In my twenties, I realized the stupidity of traditional sacrifice in terms of acts intended to appease some imaginary god; and it was in my thirties that I realized that if the traditional sacrifices of the Jews to their god was as meaningless as the sacrifices of the Pagans to their gods, then the sacrifice of Jesus must be equally meaningless because those who claim the sacrifice of Jesus as meaningful are the same ones who hold that the sacrifice of lambs – and people too – was at one time meaningful. Jesus is the supreme lamb – the supreme sacrifice – the ultimate appeasement offering. But if no appeasement is necessary – or useful – then what does that do to a tradition that has acted within the rule of sacrifice?

Why is all sacrifice meaningless and why, then, is the particular sacrifice of Jesus meaningless? Because the god – or God – to whom we would offer our sacrifice in order

to connect to him or her is not where we think. That god – or God – is not out there at the end of some distant reach, but rather within each of us as Infinite Presence. This latter realization is the realization of Christ – or a Christ or “one who sees clearly.” If, indeed, I see clearly, I am a Christ, not The Christ, but a Christ; but, then, you are a Christ, too, if you see clearly and therefore, act in wisdom.

Hello, Jesus via Thomas

Was the man that history refers to as **Jesus** also a *Christ*? I do not know that he was, but I do suspect it – not due in main to the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – but at least in part due to the unknown Gospel of Thomas – and to the mostly unknown Gospel of Mary upon which I will comment later. I don’t think those writers embraced and included in the **BIBLE** knew Jesus very well partly because they viewed him within the context of history rather than from within the context of wisdom – which has no dependence whatsoever on history. True wisdom includes history, but is not dependent upon it. Jesus is an historical conclusion – and therefore probably not much of an expression of wisdom.

Something deep inside of me believes that a tradition that believed in the worthless act of sacrifice could not possibly see clearly to see Jesus in any different light. If Jesus was not essentially a sacrifice to appease a god – or God – then did he have some other meaning? Apart from the probably false tales of writers who were writing about a man they thought completed the notion of sacrifice, is there a tale that might paint a different picture? I think so.

In the mid 1940s, there was discovered jars of papyrus in a cave in Egypt. Within those jars was found a work written in Coptic – an Egyptian language. That work, carbon dated to at least the 4th Century A.D., was itself a translation of an earlier work (or works), perhaps written in Greek or Aramaic. The Coptic work has been translated by scholars into English – as well as into other languages; and the result is **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**. It is called such based on an introduction in the work that *These are the secret words which the Living Jesus spoke and Didymos Judas Thomas wrote*.

Was this author, Thomas, the same Thomas who was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus? I do not know. It is assumed as such; however, it is not important one way or the other. Whoever it was who wrote this work had a considerably different vision of Jesus than the four we know about – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and regardless of the source, be it from the real Thomas or another, the logic of it appeals to me; and that is why I embrace it.

In my opinion, the works of the four can only be taken within the light that they believed in the need for sacrifice and that eventually a human sacrifice would be needed to complete their misguided tradition. They could not but define Jesus within this poor, confused perspective. Man’s notion that God exists apart from man is the basis of the belief in sacrifice and the basis of the belief in a messiah. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all believed in a messiah; and so, their works define the one we call Jesus in that light.

Did Thomas do otherwise? Some would approach **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** as if it is but a **fifth Gospel** and would look in it to find support for

tradition and traditional teaching. They may find the support for which they look; but, on the contrary, I find glimpses of a different man – one who had no interest in being an historical messiah. In fact, it is entirely possible that during his life, Jesus was not seen as a messiah here to connect a wayward humanity with God. It is possible that he died first; and then, in retrospect, stories were devised or contrived to support various notions – legendary stories that may not have happened in reality.

I will cite but one example; and then I will get on with my work at hand – to suggest that Jesus may have also been “a” Christ. I know so little about the timing of the Gospels, but what I do know is that John’s Gospel supposedly was written last. There is some conjecture about the order of Matthew and Mark. Some believe Mark wrote his story first and then Matthew followed, but there seems to be no confusion about the order of John’s Gospel in the four-some of the Gospel writers. Previous to John’s writing, however, the other Gospels were written decades before. All three before John talk about miracles that Jesus is supposed to have performed as illustration of his power; yet only John – the last writer – tells about the greatest miracle of all time – the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

You be the judge. How likely is it that three could write about the same man and not mention something so fantastic as the raising of a decayed man when they all wrote about Jesus restoring others to life who had only been briefly dead? Allegedly, Lazarus had been dead three days before Jesus raised him from the dead. All the other resurrection incidents recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke dealt only with persons dead for a few hours before resurrection – not three days.

Can any realistic person think that Matthew, Mark, and Luke could know about something so astonishing as the raising of Lazarus and not tell about it? In truth, in all likelihood, only John probably reported it because only John contrived it. That is the only evidence – strictly circumstantial I admit – using the Gospels of the **BIBLE** themselves that I will offer that stories of Jesus within the Gospels of the **BIBLE** may have been at least partially contrived. Sadly, if any portion of it was contrived, there is no way of knowing the limit of contrivance. When one item is suspected as contrived, the general credibility of all is weakened. Isn’t it?

Jesus according to Thomas – or me

Like so many, I am a person who has some very definite notions about life. As all definite notions people do, I tend to color things as I find myself disposed. We all do it; but I admit I do it; and I admit that the interpretations of the following selections from **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** may have more of **me** in them than either **Thomas** or **Jesus**. It’s hard to say when a subject of interpretation ends and the interpreter begins; but I think it is fair to argue that in cases where an interpreter finds him or herself in alignment with a subject of study that the two merge in some degree. Just keep that in mind as I present the following interpretations.

In general, I personally believe in the various thoughts I will present; and I believe that Jesus may have believed in them too, based upon the selections I will offer from **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**. I do not, however, believe any of the things I will write about simply because another does – or did, be that other a Jesus or whomever. I am what I call a Spiritual-Logical person in that I think matters of the spirit

or soul can be decided based upon the evidence of the material. I believe the material world is only a reflection of the so called spiritual world; and therefore, to know what is going on in the spiritual realm of things, all one has to do is look at the evidence of the material. I do not believe anyone has to depend upon some spiritual source for ideas about the spiritual because the spiritual or immaterial is only an *invisible expression of what is visibly manifested*. Thus, you can know the spiritual by the material. That is what *Spiritual-Logical* means to me; and I just happen to believe that Jesus may have seen the world in like manner. Accordingly, I will argue.

The version of **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** that I will feature is perhaps one of the first – if not the first – English translation since the Gospel was discovered in a cave in Egypt in 1945. My copy was copyrighted in 1959 and is by a team of translators headed by a fellow named **A. Guillaumont**. There have been other translations since 1959, but I think **Mr. Guillaumont** and his team of scholars represent some degree of pristine authenticity because their translation is from the original Coptic to English – not as some later versions are – translations from English to English – which perhaps modify some ideas presented in the process.

I suppose it is worthwhile to note that the Gospel of Thomas has not always been locked away in a cave. Before Constantine became the Emperor of much of Europe and part of Asia in the 4th Century, there were many gospels. The Gospel of Thomas was among them. To unify his empire, Constantine decided to make Christianity the state religion, but he did not like the various conflicts among Christians that ensued because of different beliefs about Jesus based upon different gospels. So he bid the Bishops of the Church to assemble and decide on a canon of acceptable gospels. Later, those not accepted by the Bishops were not only to be banned, but destroyed as well. The accepted Gospels became part of what is now known as **THE BIBLE**. The Gospel of Thomas – as well as the Gospel of Mary upon which I will comment later – were among the gospels banned and commanded to be destroyed; though the order of destruction may have been commanded by the Bishops after Constantine died, not by Constantine himself while he lived.

It seems, though, that somebody disobeyed the King's Order – or as I say, the Bishops' Order. Rather than destroy the Gospel of Thomas, he or she hid it away in that cave near Nag Hammadi in Egypt; and there fate kept it until a day in 1945 when a peasant rummaging around in a cave off the Nile River stumbled onto a jar that contained lots of ancient manuscripts – among which was the banned Gospel of Thomas.

It is interesting to conjecture, however, that it could have been otherwise. Those Bishops could have decided in favor of the Gospels of Thomas and Mary and rejected the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I think they decided in favor of the Gospels they did because they could be considered to be Power Gospels – or gospels favoring authority and the rightness of authority – which is what an emperor would have favored and what bishops would have favored as well.

The Gospels of Thomas and Mary are not authority oriented and insist on personal integrity rather than bowing to power outside oneself; and that is probably why they were rejected. Still – though it is a stretch – they could have been embraced and the others rejected. In the end, any selection process is arbitrary. I think it is good to keep that in mind when assessing the value of any work. Just because a work is not considered acceptable at one time in history does not mean it will be rejected for all time. Does it?

Be that as it may, the formerly banned Gospel of Thomas is comprised of 114 sayings attributed to **Jesus** by someone called *Didymos Judas Thomas*. I will cite just ten of them in this work in order to keep this essay of reasonable length; however in 2009, I compiled a full-blown interpretation of the **Gospel of Thomas** – including all 114 verses – that I call *JESUS VIA THOMAS COMMENTARIES*.

Let us begin:

Verse 2: *Jesus said: Let him who seeks, not cease seeking until he finds, and when he finds, he will be troubled, and when he has been troubled, he will marvel and he will reign over the All.*

Interpretation: If there is meaning to this verse – and I think there is – it is to say that life should be for seeking answers to things, not treating knowledge like it is some sort of obstacle to spiritual truth and spiritual worth. On the contrary, seek after knowledge while keeping in mind that when you find the answers to that which you seek, you may be troubled because those answers may conflict with the opinions of others.

It is always unsettling to discover something to be true that a trusted one has told you is false or something to be false that a trusted one has told you is true. It is troubling; but go through the trouble anyway and after you do, you will marvel at the truth of it all. The truth will then set you free to approach life with a new perspective and it will be as if you are reigning over the All – which is to say, you will be the king of your own world and be in control of your own life.

It's hard to know what the original text in Aramaic or Greek reported. Perhaps the original said that you will reign over all your life, but it may have been translated in this fashion: you will marvel and you will reign over the All. Who knows about that? I certainly don't; but I can appreciate what makes sense and seeking after knowledge for the benefit of translatable spiritual-logical wisdom makes sense to me.

Verse 3: *Jesus said: If those who lead you say to you: "See, the Kingdom is in heaven" then the birds of the heaven will precede you. If they say to you, "It is in the sea," then the fish will precede you. But the Kingdom is within you and it is without you. If you will know yourselves, then you will be known and you will know that you are the sons of the Living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you are in poverty and you are poverty.*

Interpretation: The Kingdom of God is everywhere. It is both in you and outside of you. It is not just this place or that place – as in the air and not in the sea – or in the sea and not in the air. It is within you and without you – or outside of you. All things come from God. The wise know that. If God is Everywhere, then all things come from God and are in God. To know that is to know you come from Divinity and to know you come from Divinity is to know that you are a son of the Living Father. To be unaware that all is Divine is to be ignorant and to not know yourself. To not know yourself as a son of the Living Father is to be in poverty (of the spirit) and to be poverty.

Verse 4: *Jesus said: The old man in days will not hesitate to ask a little child of seven days about the place of Life, and he will live. For many who are first shall become last and they shall become a single one.*

Interpretation: This tells the tale of reincarnation to me. An old man nearing death should not hesitate to ask a child just starting out about what's going to happen because that child just preceded him in the process – and the old man is about to succeed the child. The old man in days is about to die, but he's also about to be reborn and start all over again – in a new flesh perhaps. The comment about the old man and the new child becoming a single one is to say that life goes on; and the old man of this life is about to become the child of the next. I'm not sure if Jesus meant it to be taken literally that an old man is about to become a child in terms of renewing life through another incarnation, but I think it is fairly clear that he saw passing through the door of death as being the start of a new experience; and as such, it should not be feared.

Verse 5: *Jesus said: Know what is in thy sight, and what is hidden from thee will be revealed to thee. For there is nothing hidden which will not be manifest.*

Interpretation: This is the code of what I call a Spiritual-Logical soul. Know what is visible; and because the visible is a manifestation of the invisible, the invisible will be revealed to you. It's quite plain as a way of living. Do not resist knowledge as if it is intended to distract you from knowing about some mighty life far away from here; but embrace it, knowing that what is distant isn't so distant. In reality, though the form of life may vary in the distance, life's wholesome reality is the same everywhere. Nothing can be hidden from you that is meaningful unless you do not have a grip on what is in your sight.

Once again, the accent is on knowledge – Know, Know, Know. Know what you can see; and you will also know what you can't see because both the visible and the invisible follow the same rules of generation, including the creation or generation of souls as I discussed in an earlier essay – THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL SOUL. That, of course, is a personal opinion, but I think it is the same opinion that Jesus held. Know what is in thy sight and what can't be seen will be revealed to you because the rules are the same. If you know one, then you also know the other. If anything is true about the Jesus of Thomas, it is the consistent emphasis on the need to know.

Verse 13: *Jesus said to his disciples: Make a comparison to Me and tell Me whom I am like. Simon Peter said to Him: Thou art like a righteous angel. Matthew said to Him: Thou art like a wise man of understanding. Thomas said to Him: Master, my mouth will not at all be capable of saying Whom Thou art like. Jesus said: I am not thy Master, because thou hast drunk, thou hast become drunk from the bubbling spring which I have measured out. And he took him, He withdrew, He spoke three words to him. Now, when Thomas came to his companions, they asked him: What did Jesus say to thee? Thomas said to them: If I tell you one of the words which He said to me, you will take up stones and throw at me; and fire will come from the stones and burn you up.*

Before I offer an interpretation of this verse, let me comment on the translator's use of terms. I have no idea why an English-based fellow translating some terribly different Coptic into English would choose to retain much of the old standard **Biblical** semantics – **thee and thou, hast instead of have**, etc. I guess he was trying to maintain the current writing as having comparable worth with those of the **Biblical** Gospel writers. Since I'm only citing what has been translated, and then offering an interpretation, I'll retain the translation found in **Mr. Guillaumont's** version of **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**, but the use of all the **thee** and **thou** terminology is a bit perplexing.

Interpretation: Is this ever clear? Jesus told Thomas that he was not Thomas's master because Thomas had drunk of the cup of knowledge that Jesus served. In knowing what Jesus knew, Thomas was like Jesus and was his own master. Jesus as much as says, Listen to and Practice what I say and do and you will become as wise and free as I. It is my knowledge, not myself, that is important. Know what is in your sight, become comfortable with that, and life will become the peaceful expression for you that it is for me. I am not your master, once you have comprehended what I am here to teach you. Drink of knowledge and understanding and become your own master.

Concerning the three words that Thomas claimed Jesus spoke to him after withdrawing from the others, maybe it was something like Heaven is Here. Suppose? The Jews of Jesus's time lived for the idea of Heaven coming later. They would not have liked the idea that Heaven is already here anymore than traditional Christians do. Their power lies in controlling the present by threatening with the future. If the future is the same as the present – or likely will be – there is no need to live in fear of the future, unless you also live in fear of the present. Is there?

Regardless what Jesus may have spoken to Thomas, however, whatever it was would have angered his fellow disciples to the point that they would have taken up stones and thrown them at Thomas. Now, that's anger; and anger, by itself, tends to devour the angry. Thus, the stones that the disciples would throw at Thomas would become as fire and burn them up. This Thomas was not only a fantastic man I would love to know, but he was also a colorful writer.

Verse 18: *The disciples said to Jesus: Tell us how our end will be. Jesus said: Have you then discovered the beginning so that you inquire about the end? For where the beginning is, there shall be the end. Blessed is he who shall stand at the beginning, and he shall know the end and he shall not taste death.*

Interpretation: Here's another reference to reincarnation, I think. It implies to me that Jesus saw life as a constantly revolving process. At death, you begin again; and with birth, the end is no more. With death, however, there is a new beginning. The wise see death for what it really is – the beginning of a new experience, as well as the end and continuation of an old one. It's like the invisible line between death and rebirth is but a line to cross and should be nothing to fear. Blessed is he or she who stands at the end but who is aware that the end is only the beginning of something new. He or she shall not experience any pain in the transition. He or she will not taste death – and before death happens, he or she will not live in fear of it.

Verse 22: *Jesus saw children who were being suckled. He said to his disciples: These children who are being suckled are like those who enter the Kingdom. They said to Him: Shall we then, being children, enter the Kingdom? Jesus said to them: When you make the two one, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner, and the above as the below, and when you make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female not be female, when you make the eyes in the place of an eye, and a hand in the place of a hand, and the foot in the place of a foot, and an image in the place of an image, then shall you enter the Kingdom.*

Interpretation: See things simply and you shall find the Kingdom of Paradise. Know that all things are equally blessed and that no one thing is any different than what it appears to be. An eye is an eye and not some misbegotten organ of a devil. Be simple like a child and love your curiosity, keeping all things of equal importance before you. Don't divide male and female for the sake of discrimination; but see only a person who is equal to all persons. There are no inferiors or superiors – only creations of equality. If you see yourself as superior in any way to anyone or anything else, then by your attitude, you will not inherit the Kingdom of Serenity. Makes a lot of sense. Right?

Verse 37: *His disciples said: When wilt Thou be revealed to us and when will we see Thee? Jesus said: When you take off your clothing without being ashamed, and take your clothes and put them under your feet as the little children and tread on them, then shall you behold the Son of the Living One and you will not fear.*

Interpretation: Jesus is saying he can be recognized for what and who he is only by those who exist or act without shame. Only those who love their nakedness and do not apologize for life can recognize him for what and who he was – and is.

Between you and me, I don't think any of his disciples could stand the test; and consequently, none of the Twelve Apostles (except maybe Thomas) knew of his value. Standing naked and embracing nakedness is to understand and appreciate your equality as well as to express gratitude to Life and Creation and God for that gift. Those who accuse life by attaching it to sin have no way of knowing Jesus, let alone sharing the Kingdom of Chastity with him.

To those who might claim that Jesus is speaking of embracing nakedness only figuratively and not literally, let me say, I don't think so. I doubt that he was speaking only in a figurative sense because I think he knew that no man can claim to love what he or she is so quick to hide. A person without shame is without shame because they are like all others. In that likeness, and knowing it, they only express a sense of equality of Divinity – which is the basis of shamelessness. It is knowing and embracing an awareness of being alike within the same Goodness or Divinity that makes one shameless – and chaste. Without literally going naked with each other, equality is only a word; and only those who know they are equal can know Jesus as Christ.

Verse 77: *Jesus said: Why did you come out into the desert? To see a reed shaken by the wind? And to see a man clothed in soft garments? Your kings and your great ones are those who are clothed in soft garments and they will not be able to know the truth.*

Interpretation: Like the verse before this, Jesus is saying that only those who can embrace their nakedness without shame and with a sense of equality can know the truth – which is that all are equal sharing in the same Divinity. People in soft garments tend to live for distinction – especially people in power. Jesus was not a lord in terms of needing or wanting to master or subject anyone to his will.

Kings and great ones live to rule over others out of a sense of superiority and a lack of a sense of equality; and they are clothed in soft garments. Can you picture a king of this world standing only in his nakedness with only other naked people about? For lack of distinction, he could not survive as a king. So, to survive as a king and maintain his distinction as superior to others, he must adorn himself in soft garments – or at least in some distinguishing garments. When he does so, however, he leaves a sense of equality behind; and when that happens, he will not be able to know the truth of equality for having denied it.

Verse 113: *His disciples said to Him: When will the Kingdom come? Jesus said: It will not come by expectation; they will not say: “See, here” or “See, there.” But the Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it.*

Interpretation: The Kingdom of Paradise is here. It is not something only to come or something to look for only in the future. It is here and now, but it is everywhere. One cannot say, it’s only here or it’s only over there. Rather, it is everywhere. Men do not see it because they have no idea what it is. They expect Divinity someplace else when it is all about. People live in Paradise but do not know it because they refuse to treat Life like it is a Paradise.

In my opinion, this verse captures in one statement what the real Jesus came to teach. He came to suggest to us that the Kingdom of God that we seek elsewhere in another life is here before us. It is spread upon the earth and men do not see it. That is because we are not looking for it here, but rather hoping for it there.

The basis of it being Here and Now, in this place and in this time, rather than being only later in another place and at another time is the thought that the God we all want to love is all about. It is the Presence of God that makes for Paradise; and because the Presence of God is just as much here on Earth as anywhere, Heaven is Here. We need only open our minds so that we can open our eyes and see it. That, for me, is what any Christ is all about; and Jesus was a Christ with only a message that a true Christ could tell.

The Gospel of Mary

Like the **Gospel of Thomas** appeals to me in my *Spiritual-Logical* approach to truth and life, so also does the **Gospel of Mary**. I am not sure about its history, but like the Gospel of Thomas, it was lost for centuries, **probably having to go under cover to avoid being destroyed by the powers that be**. It, too, is not very flattering to those who seek power and want to use God as an excuse to claim it.

The Gospel of Mary was supposedly written by Mary Magdalene or a disciple of Mary. I do not wish to say much about it here – though, in truth, I don't know much about it – but my interest in it for this article is part of a verse that offers a Christ much in the light of the Christ of Thomas.

Before we finish with that, however, let me note that I have written an interpretation of the first verse of the Gospel of Mary. It is a somewhat long verse, but is only one verse of six that has survived that offers what I consider a living testimony of Jesus – or testimony of a living Jesus. The other five verses deal mostly with Mary having visions or dreams of Jesus after he departed from her company – be that departure by death or otherwise. The Gospel of Mary does not mention the nature of the departure – only that he left. I call my work **JESUS VIA MARY COMMENTARIES**.

Who knows the exact relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus? Personally, based partly on verses found in the Gospel of Thomas, I do not believe that Jesus would have considered Mary in any different light than he did the other Apostles. In Verse 22 of the Gospel of Thomas, cited previously, he offered that we should not distinguish between male and female in terms of worth. So, for me, it is unlikely that he would have considered Mary much different than he did any of his friends or companions.

Did Jesus marry Mary as some have conjectured? I don't know, but if he did, I don't think it would have made much difference. He believed in the solitary worth of every individual and would have concentrated on his own worth whether he was married or not. Since I have no way of knowing anything different, I am content to leave it at that.

The Child of Humanity within you

From THE GOSPEL OF MARY – Edited by Marvin Meyer – Copyright 2004 – End of 1st Verse:

When the blessed one said this, he greeted all of them and said, “Peace be with you. Receive my peace. Be careful that no one leads you astray by saying ‘Look here’ or ‘Look there.’ The child of humanity is within you. Follow that. Those who seek it will find it. Go and preach the good news of the kingdom. Do not lay down any rules other than what I have given you, and do not establish law, as the lawgiver did, or you will be bound by it. When he said this, he left them.

Interpretation: A child is not normally part of the social order of authority. Jesus offered that we should be like children, I think, as an emphasis that we should not set ourselves up as authorities. We should be our own authority in terms of recognizing that we are all the same. There are no inferiors and no superiors. Children do not have authority; and neither should the ideal soul. We should look for the child of humanity

within us and not seek authority. To have authority is to make law and to make law is to have to enforce it – and to have to enforce law is to be as much bound by that law as those subject to it.

Jesus did not recognize law as the safeguard of a soul. Do not establish law, as the lawgiver did, or you will be bound by it – he said. Judaism was all about law. It was filled with law. It was all about law and social order – just as modern Christianity is today. It seems to me that New Christianity with its obsessions with law is largely an extension of the Old Jewish Ways, beginning with a very stubborn attachment to the Ten Commandments of the Old Law and a refusal to replace them with the simple rule – Love others as you love yourself. Love is so Forgiving. Blind Obedience is not.

The old Jewish Law was about legislating morality, controlling behavior, punishing offenders; and how is the New Christianity any different? It's all about law – not rule of conscience. It's about deciding that abortion is immoral and imposing the standard on everyone. It's about punishing those who violate the law. It's about striking potential enemies in advance to keep them from striking you. It's about an eye for an eye and a life for a life – and any eye and any life will do – just as long as justice is served.

Whatever happened to be kind to your enemies? Who is kind to his or her enemy? It doesn't work, I am told. You can't be kind to your enemies or your enemy will take control of you. So you control your enemy and become as much controlled by your control as you would be if your enemy controlled you. And so it goes!

And it is the same in the so called spiritual realm. As we do in this life, in this life where we can see what we are doing and watch what we are doing, it is only a rehearsal for the spiritual order. It is no different.

That's the Spiritual-Logical Way – to judge the spirit by the material – to know the one by the other – to realize our spiritual conduct by the way we act within the visible world we know – to judge spiritual or soulful disposition and mode by the way we act within the world we can see. Any judgment of the future is only a continuation of Now. That's the Spiritual-Logical Way!

Look at what the various law givers of this world have done. Look at Moses whose god declared all sort of law intended to control Jewish life. Was Moses happy? Did all that law make him content? If it did not make him content in this life, you can bet discontent will follow him in the next.

Look at Jesus, surrounded by children. Where is authority? He had none! He sought none!

And that's how I think it should be!

Thanks for listening!

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

March 21st, 2006

My Song of Jesus follows.

MY SONG OF JESUS

By

Francis William Bessler

Feb. 12th, 2006

Note: Beyond the Refrain, the following song is intended to list the main lessons that I feel Jesus has taught me. Those lessons are really eight-fold:

- 1. Heaven is Now because God is Now, 2. Love of others follows true self-love,*
- 3. Ideally, I should be grateful as a child free of imposition naturally is,*
- 4. Heaven is Everywhere because God is Everywhere,*
- 5. I should enjoy the current moment because it is fleeting,*
- 6. To secure the future, conduct the present because as so conducted, it will be,*
- 7. Revenge is useless for a soul in love with life,*
- 8. The wise realize independent worth.*

Notice no emphasis on forgiveness. That is because I think that a life well lived results in forgiveness because it is impossible to be grateful and to retain hurt. Forgiveness, for me, is a state of mind that reflects a lack of revenge. With revenge, there is no forgiveness; and with revenge – often confused as justice – neither is there focus on gratitude. All eight lessons can be extracted from the Gospels of the Bible; however, in some way, Gospels banned by Constantine and his Bishops in the 4th Century – like the Gospels of the Apostles, Thomas and Mary Magdalene – enhance the lessons considerably. I do not wish to suggest my eight lessons of Jesus are the only lessons he taught. Rather only, these eight really include all that may be missing. Notice, too, Thou Shalt Not is completely missing. All meaningful virtue is positive, not negative.

Refrain:

Let me tell you - of a man – who walked so long ago.

He still walks - in my heart – and peace from him I know.

1. Jesus said - look no more - Heaven is at hand.
That means - Heaven must be – right here where I stand.
2. Jesus said - love others – as I love myself.
That means – I must love me – then share that love that’s felt. ***Refrain.***
3. Jesus said – it is best – I imitate a child.
That means – I should be grateful – for all that’s in my file.
4. Jesus said - the kingdom’s within – as well as from without.
That means – quite simply - that God is all about. ***Refrain.***

5. Jesus said – my way – should not be one of sorrow.
That means – I should not waste – today to gain tomorrow.
6. Jesus said - the future – just extends how I am.
That means - I will be – what’s now in my command. *Refrain.*
7. Jesus said – be kind to all – no more, an eye for an eye.
That means – revenge is useless – for a soul in love with life.
8. Jesus said - I should live – solitary on this Earth.
That means - I should realize – my independent worth. *Refrain (2).*

*Note: Initially, I wrote interpretations of the Gospels of Thomas and Mary in 2005; however I rewrote them in 2009. If interested in those works, find them among the works of 2009 – not 2005. They are called:
**JESUS VIA THOMAS COMMENTARIES &
JESUS VIA MARY COMMENTARIES.***

THE SPIRITUAL-LOGICAL CHRIST

THE END!

CRIME & CORRECTION

(16 Pages)

An essay about life and virtue

By

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Originally written: 7/1997; rewritten 4/2006

Note: Originally I wrote this in July of 1997, however I am rewriting it – and revising it a bit – in April of 2006. Originally, I wrote it for publication in Reader’s Digest and labeled it Crime & Punishment, but Reader’s Digest ignored it. Thanks so much! F.W.B. (April 5th, 2006)

Preamble

What can I say? I hate crime and criminal behavior; and my first impulse is to have nothing to do with it in any way – other than just trying to personally treat all criminals with whom I come into contact like I would anyone else. That is easier said than done, however. I have seldom had to confront any abusive behavior in my life; and so, it seems I should not be so bold as to pretend how I would act if I did confront such behavior. There is a part of me, however, small as it is, that says I should try and deal with it – keeping in mind that my dealing with it is strictly by remote thought, not actual dealing.

Perhaps my thinking may prove somewhat useful, however, in some way; and so I am proceeding to offer my two cents worth about the issue. It certainly won’t hurt me to think about it and determine how I would try to handle things if I were in charge, so to speak. Consider me an *armchair judge* or an *armchair warden*, if you wish; but it may be a whole lot better than saying nothing at all. Let us all reserve judgment on that. OK? *Thanks for listening!*

The Old – Jail Welfare

I am a gentle man – or try to be; and it is very difficult for any gentle man to have to deal with that which is harsh. My dear ole departed friend, Emmett Needham, who died of a heart attack back in 1985 at the rather young age of fifty-three used to choke me up when he would introduce me to another. He’d say, *I’d like you to meet my best friend, Will. I have never had a better friend.* Then he’d add, *Will is not only a gentleman, but a gentle man.*

Unfortunately, gentle men sometimes have to deal with much that is not gentle because the social fabric that surrounds us is often terribly biting and vicious. Any society that chooses to survive as somewhat gentle must resolve that which is not gentle in the best way possible. The key, I think, to surviving as gentle and not get lost in the

ring of viciousness is to approach that which is not gentle – crime & criminality – with a determined gentleness that is both firm and quiet in temper. As a willing member of society, I have to deal with all things social or exclude myself as a social being. Let others do as they will, but I feel a responsibility as a committed citizen of society to deal with all things within that citizenship; and that includes the harsh reality of crime.

When dealing with crime as when dealing with anything, I never approach life or any aspect of life as if the status quo must be continued. In fact, I have often resolved the status quo in my life by walking away from it because of a basic recognition that it stands upon a very weak foundation by virtue of an initial false premise. If the premise is wrong, then any practice based on that premise can not be ideal. Can it?

For example, the traditionally religious base their entire spiritual life on the faulty notion that man can be separated from God. Then they practice rituals that are supposed to unite themselves with God because they recognize that God must be honored and adored in life because without God, whatever God is, life would not be without It – or Him or Her. I think they are right in the idea that the successful live their lives with an awareness of God and should always try to honor and adore God as their source; but that's where our agreement ends. I hop off their wagon that assumes I have to do something to unite with God; and I base my life on the truth that God is in all things and separate from nothing.

This has to be so because God must be Infinite; and being Infinite, God can have no limitations. That is what infinite means – to be without boundaries. So, if God is without boundaries and is in everything, then God can be separated from nothing. Hey! It's First Grade Philosophy that so many reject once they have passed to Second Grade. What can I say? I am still in the First Grade. What made sense to me then still makes sense to me now. So I do not proceed to bang my chest and cry out that I am unworthy of that which is Godly, like so many do, because I know I am worthy of God because God is in me. How could I not be?

Accordingly, I love the end practice of the traditionally religious in terms of singing the praises of God; but I throw out their initial premise that man is unworthy before he sings the praises of God and only becomes worthy by singing them. That is about as stupid a thought as I can imagine; and I live my life having nothing to do with it – even as I do sing the praises of God.

What has this to do with crime? There is a parallel, believe me. As a concerned citizen I agree that criminality must be resolved for the sake of the common good; but I don't agree with the premise of most criminologists that society has to pay for that resolution. I think the traditionally religious are **WRONG** in their notions that man must do something to become worthy of God; and I think modern societies are **WRONG** in how we deal with crime.

How have we dealt with crime? By making society pay for the crime of criminals. As I see it, that is dumb. In essence, when sentencing a criminal within our current very ineffective process of justice, we as much as say: We sentence ourselves to care for this or that criminal for this or that period of time. As crime increases, we increase our debt to the criminals. We build more jails to house and feed them. In other words, the basis of our current justice is to commit society at large to a thing we could properly call jail welfare whereby those we sentence for crimes are supported by us in terms of taxation to care for them.

It is right to deal with a criminal; but, I think, jail welfare is wrong. Society should not have to pay to support criminals, though society does have to deal with crime. My argument is that we have it all wrong in how we deal with criminals; and that is the biggest reason it is growing and will continue to grow. Jail welfare is wrong because it makes you and I pay for criminals to live – not well – but adequately. Put someone in prison and he or she gets three meals a day when on the outside, he or she might have had to limit themselves to peanut butter sandwiches.

Within our current system, we offer citizens the option of having to fend for themselves on the outside or being fed by taxation on the inside. Jail is an option for the dropouts of society. It is wrong; and if we continue to follow that course in dealing with crime, you and I may have to violate society in order to become part of a general jail welfare because we won't be able to support ourselves. Jail welfare will ruin us. It is, indeed, a dire thought, but if we don't change our ways as to how we deal with crime, it is only a matter of time before our jailed will become our jailers by virtue of the demands they make upon us. Surely, that is not very smart. Is it?

The New – Prison-less Processes

What do you do with those who hurt others? It's a hard subject – a hard, hard, one. It's hard because it is necessarily harsh. No one with any degree of sensitivity wants to deal with it. As an individual, living my life as an individual, I could ignore it, dealing with any violations of myself as strictly personal territory. If someone were to aggravate me or even violate me, I could simply try to forget about it, and thereby forgive both myself and my assailant of further mental duress. That would work if I am the only subject living on this Earth besides by violator; but it would not work if there are more than two.

It is because I am not alone with a violator that I would have to prefer charges against one who has offended me because to do less is to allow that violator freedom to violate others; and as a responsible person of society, I should not do that. So, regardless of how harsh it might be, I have to deal with the process of keeping one who has violated me from violating others if I think there is a significant chance he or she will violate others like he or she violated me. Accordingly, any responsible person has to deal with crime and the proper response to crime.

I tend to simplify things because I am a simple man – or try to be. I pride myself on not only being a gentle man, but a simple man as well. It is for criminals and lawyers to complicate things to assure themselves of a future, but I think in very simple terms and often find myself wondering why society at large does not do the same.

As far as I can see, there are only two feasible ways of dealing with a criminal in order to protect society and hopefully, cure his or her criminal disposition. Correct a convicted criminal so that it is not likely that person will repeat the offense – or in plain terms – banish him or her with some sort of incarceration. I am not in favor of capital punishment because I think it brutalizes me to kill you; and that no gentle man will do because it is to become like the one you killed – or allowed to be killed; and when you spread that about through an entire society, to allow capital punishment is to allow extensive brutality. That in my opinion is dumb. How is it smart to become like a killer in order to dismiss a killer?

Correction – Not Punishment

Let's deal first with the lesser criminal, the one who can be trusted in time to rejoin society at large and be set free from the limited community of the correction facility. In my opinion, no person should approach another by way of revenge; and, unfortunately, that is the exact approach taken by most of the imprisonment systems throughout the world. They exist as a measure of revenge and retaliation, not primarily as a source of correction.

If someone steals from us, generally our first reaction is that person should pay the penalty for stealing from us – not corrected to prevent them from doing it again. We agree to put a person in prison for a time; and somehow that makes him or her pay for what he or she did. In reality, via that system of criminal response, everyone pays for the crime of one because in putting the violator away, we all have to pay for it through taxation to provide him or her food and shelter and to pay for his or her supervision in terms of guards and wardens and whatnot. In my opinion, imprisonment for the sake of punishment or revenge is a totally idiotic response to a crime lacking physical or mental abuse.

So, how do we correct someone who has stolen from another? First of all, the violator should return what was stolen with a significant, but reasonable, amount of interest as a deterrent from doing it again. If I were to steal \$20 from you, of what good would it be to either you or me that I should be removed from society for a span of time – perhaps even years? To require that is to exact revenge – not justice. Instead, require that I pay you double the amount that I stole + your court and lawyer costs to take me to court. For most slight offenders, that would do just fine; but our thoughtless punitive system often imprisons an offender, making, as I have argued, all of society pay for his or her crime. Considering the cost of providing food and shelter and medical coverage and guard pay via imprisonment, the judgment against a small violator of society should never be imprisonment.

What if the amount that was stolen is not small? Again, the first act of retribution should be to have to pay it back with a significant, but reasonable, amount of interest as a deterrent from doing it again. If the money that I stole has been used up by the time I have been convicted, then another course of action should be taken – other than just requiring that I pay it back. To require that I pay something back that may not be possible to pay back would not be smart on anyone's part. Maybe I stole a million dollars from you and gambled it away on a weekend. How could I pay that back?

So, what should be done about me in that case? Your million is gone. I can't earn it to pay it. What should be done? It may be too simple minded of me, but I can't see how it would benefit anyone to exact revenge against any thief. For a first offender at least, require that as much as possible be returned to a victim – and then set the offender free. If it should happen again, however, then another course of action would be necessary. Repeat offenders should be dealt with in a different way; and perhaps the punishment should not fit the crime as it should with an initial offender; but more about that later.

I think the key to resolving crime is to think realistically when dealing with it. Violators should have to pay as much as they can, but no more. It does no good to press more from one than he or she can reasonably bear. Too much stress only causes the

criminally disposed to break and commit even more crime. I think we overstress within our system of punitive justice by concentrating on punishment rather than rehabilitation, but it is not wise that we do. No one is served; and how can that be wise? For my stealing a thousand dollars from my neighbor, society has chosen to pay for my upkeep via imprisonment for twenty years, while removing me from being productive and freeing me from having to pay my own way. If we start deciding what to do on the basis of cost to society in just financial terms, there would be very few jails to have to support.

Instead, our reaction to ever growing crime is to build more jails and require more of a fewer number to pay for the course. Oh, that's brilliant! For every new jail that is built, the state (you and me) has to pay for janitors and cooks and wardens and guards, to say nothing of a huge mortgage to somebody. Build more jails! Solve crime by making an ever increasing number of violators pay for their vile deeds! Exact revenge! Make them bastards pay! But while they pay, we do, too, who have to support them.

What can be done to correct a criminal guilty of a non-violent crime? That should be the entire thrust of any decision dealing with that lesser criminal. We should be able to gather as a society and put on our thinking caps, as my father used to say, and come up with some very worthwhile processes that do not include incarceration and the tremendous cost thereof. The issue should not be to make a lesser violator pay for his or her conduct as much as it should be to correct that behavior so that society doesn't have to pay the price – either of being further violated or having to pay the cost of imprisonment. Society should think in terms of what can be done to make of me a responsible, paying member of community life and not a parasite upon it. That is the only smart way in dealing with crime. Otherwise, society pays and pays and pays; and that is dumb, dumb, dumb. Isn't it?

The Rich, The Poor - & Crime Via Impact

To me, life should be greatly a matter of balance. If you put \$5 in one hand, then you should put \$5 in the other as well. If you take out \$3 from one hand, then you should take out \$3 from the other as well. Unfortunately, our society allows one hand to collect as much as it can while the other hand is allowed to lay limp, doing little or nothing. This results in an imbalance. In this regard, so many money merchants of the world who insist in filling their hands with loot may be guilty of social theft in that in their greed, others go hungry. And also there is a degree of truth in the idea that avarice and greed on the part of one forces another to go without and to have to steal to survive. We deal with the one who has actually stolen something as a thief because it is vivid and clear that he took something not his; but perhaps there should be some way we could determine what part the money merchants of the world play in *guiding* the convicted thievish to do what they do.

I look at the world and see innumerable relationships. In any relationship, there is action and reaction. That which I do does not stand alone because it cannot stand alone. It must have some sort of impact on you; and that which you do must have some degree of impact on me. For every one who slips and falls in the mud, there is someone or something that caused it. All too often, it will look like some bystander is completely innocent of making another fall in the mud because he may be a dozen people away from the one who fell, but, if the truth were known, the one furthest away may have actually

tripped and fell against the eleventh in line, who fell against the tenth, who fell against the ninth – and so on. **It's known as a chain reaction.** Now, when the number one bystander falls against the one who falls in the mud, it looks to the one in the mud that number one neighbor may have pushed him when all the time it was the one furthest away that caused the whole incident.

The point of all this is that in reality, at least a part of the reason you may have to resort to stealing from another is because I kept too much to myself. It's part of the ageless discussion of socialism versus free enterprise, I admit, but given the essence of interrelationships within society, too few having too much of a social pot can only result in some not having any. There is just no way to get around that, looking at society as a big picture.

If a hundred in a big picture have among them a thousand dollars and one of those hundred has five hundred and some have nothing, then clearly, the members of the big picture are without balance. It is clear that if one of a hundred has five hundred dollars, that is at least part of the reason that some have none; but when some who have none resort to crime to get some, the one who has five hundred acts like it is his right to hold as much as he can and does not see his part in the crime of the one who has none. Nonetheless, the one who has five hundred and does not share is a participant because of the rule of impact. That which one of us does must impact all others, though the impact may not be seen or known.

Am I suggesting that when some penniless vagrant commits a theft that the millionaire on the other side of town should be convicted as well? No; but I am arguing that he is part of the blame. Legally, nothing could or should be done to make him pay for his part in a crime, but, hopefully, he will realize he is not without guilt entirely and will try to find ways to share his wealth in productive ways that can reduce the need for others to steal. I'll try to keep that in mind myself, though I am closer to being poor than rich in terms of the big financial picture of things.

Assault

How about assault? How do we deal with those who insist on physically controlling and hurting others? I said before that we could figure out some worthwhile responses to crime if we only put on those thinking caps – of which my father spoke so highly. So, for this crime, let us do just that.

Basically, the punishment should fit the crime. I did not take years to beat you and take your money. I took only a few minutes, though in that few minutes, I may have severely disabled you. Beating and theft involves two crimes; and as much as possible, each crime needs separate treatment. Having stolen from you, I should be required to return what I stole and be required to pay some reasonable interest to dissuade me from doing it again. Next, I should have to pay what I can for your hospital care and recovery – if it is within my means. If I can pay something, I should; and likewise, if I can't, I shouldn't. There is nothing gained by insisting that I pay something I can't. We should get on with life as much as possible and not insist on demanding excessive payment for our mistakes. To do otherwise is to act in revenge and retaliation and without heart; and that makes brutes of us who do.

Now, in terms of the few minutes that I took to beat the hell out of you, what should be done about that? The question should be, what should be done about me to keep me from doing such a horrible thing again? Once again, I don't see that you have gained a thing by incarcerating me and requiring others to pay for my food and lodging for a number of years of my life. The punishment should fit the crime. If I beat you, then I should be beaten. It is not so much revenge as a balancing act.

If we all know that if we hurt another, we will be hurt, then it is very likely that violent crime will significantly diminish overnight. Don't incarcerate me and house and care for me for years. Just beat the daylights out of me for the same number of minutes that I took to beat the stuffing out of you – and then let me go.

That's heartless! I can hear all the well intentioned wailings of a lot of really good hearts. It's cruel and uncharitable and savage and all of that. Ah, but economically, it's so much more practical; and it is probably the best deterrent, too, that can be used to discourage me from repeating my way of violence.

The Whacker Machine

Who should do the beating? Perhaps that is as important a question as any in dealing with the issue of assault, among which, rape should probably be included. Personally, **I think the beating should be as impersonal as possible because to allow personality into it would be to encourage revenge and personal gratification for the beating of another.** I am sure that there are many who would take tremendous delight in beating me just for the sheer delight of assault. To allow another human to beat me – regardless of who that is – guard or victim – would be to justify assault, though I would be the victim this time.

It may seem just, but in terms of what it would do to you to allow you to do that to me would be to justify by one what is not allowed to another. That is not smart. To give one the office or freedom to assault another, though legally, is to encourage the mindset of assault. If that were to happen, all those who have some deep desire to beat others would simply have to acquire a license as some *public thrasher*; and knowing the society in which I live, I strongly suspect there would be a long list of applicants.

So, how can you impersonally thrash me after convicting me of assaulting you? I don't know, but I am sure there are a lot of creative designers in the world who can devise machines with some sort of whipping straps to do it. I'll bet a windowless room can be devised that has a *whacker* or two that can be activated that can inflict impersonal hurt on me without anyone looking at the process according to the degree of my inflicted hurt upon another – **a slap for a slap, a beating for a beating.** I think, though, that it is essential that the process should fit the crime as a means of balance, if possible. If I beat you, then I should be beaten. It's as simple as that. **Beat me. Then turn me loose.** If I should repeat my behavior a certain stipulated number of times, then consider me **incorrigible** and *banish* me from society via some permanent incarceration.

Rape

Rape, I think, is a form of assault, but perhaps it deserves a special treatment as well. If I should rape you, I may not hurt you at all other than mentally devastate you. What should you do about me if I would take you and possess you sexually against your will?

There are all kinds of rapists like there are all kinds of thieves. There are petty thieves who just take a little and there are rapists who take just a little. Likewise, there are thieves who take a lot and there are rapists who take a lot. It is no more right to deal with the light rapist in the same fashion as the severe rapist as it is right to deal with the little thief in the same manner as the grand thief. Once again, as in all kinds of crime, the treatment or correction measure should fit the crime.

If I am out on a date with you, but things get a little out of hand and my lust gets aroused past the point of your acceptance, I guess I am guilty of raping you if I should go too far. What should be done to keep me from repeating that behavior on another date with another unsuspecting lady like you – or maybe even with you again?

Jail or fine should be out of the question in any degree. What I did was improper, but it was not life threatening, nor was it intentional on my part when I asked you to go to the movie with me. I merely got caught up in my passion for you. It wasn't right; but neither should you see it as tragic. I'd say let me go unless you really think I will do it again and you need to tell on me to get me help; but no law should be able to convict me of intentionally raping you unless there is some obvious proof that I am not only a date rapist, but a liar as well for claiming I intended you no hurt.

What about if I literally force myself on you without any intentional passion on your part? That's a lot different than the preceding issue of dating getting out of control with exchange of passion. If I should take you against your will without any desire on your part, then, as far as I am concerned, I have raped you. Out of concern for yourself and others, you should report my conduct so that I may be corrected before doing it to you or another again.

What should the law do with me? I don't think anything drastic would be necessary or useful – certainly not incarceration, making society pay for my rape of you. Putting on my thinking cap, I think that which would discourage me from forcing myself against another – outside of your inconveniencing me with a charge of shame – would be to have me see a therapist.

Remember, all responses to crime should be corrective in measure as much as possible, not punitive. First, try to correct me with mandatory visits with a therapist. If that does not resolve my problem and I should repeat it, then maybe a little incarceration time might help me by giving me some meditative time alone to ponder my actions. For the more sensitive, that might help a lot; though for the truly insensitive, it wouldn't. I would not suggest a long time, however, as imprisonment for its cost to society should be a rare resort for dealing with crime.

If I should repeat my criminal conduct after a time of incarceration, then adjust the charge from rapist to assault and put me through that whacker machine some imaginative designer will invent for thrashing those who assault others. If that does not discourage me, after a few progressively painful whacking visits to the whacker machine, then consider me incorrigible and banish me with some sort of permanent incarceration.

What about the rapist who beat his victim as well? No question on this one. He may be a rapist, but only secondarily. Treat him (or her) as if guilty of physical assault and pursue the normal whacker routine with banishment from society if a reasonable amount of treatment does not correct the improper behavior. And the more brutal the rape and assault, the more brutal the whacking machine in terms of pain while making every effort to actually preserve the body that is whacked.

I suspect some are saying that preserving a body while inflicting pain upon it is impossible; but I remember Dad; and that wonderful wise man took me over his knee a time or two and stung me something fierce with a razor strap. It hurt like hell; but it did not permanently hurt my body. If Dad could whip me for doing something wrong and never cause any enduring injury to my body, so could any pain inflicting process. I learned my lesson from a whacking, but Dad never was one to tell me I had to go to my room and shut myself in there for three days or whatever. No. I was never imprisoned by Dad for anything; but I was stung a time or two for doing something he thought was wrong; and then I was released to go forward with better behavior. Ten minutes after a whipping, I was back hugging Dad and all had been forgotten.

Take that same mentality and apply it to the correction process regarding crime and criminal behavior. Don't permanently damage any body with punishment. Just sting it a little and turn the would be prisoner loose. I think we would be amazed at how well it would work. Again, I would not approve of any form of mutilation of any body – regardless of his or her injury to another. That is only brutalizing me to deal with you. Any society that accepts brutality as a measure of punishment or correction is not any better, in my opinion, than the criminal. An eye for an eye just does not work. It is far better for me if I leave your eye intact even after you have put mine out. Otherwise, in taking your eye, I have brutalized myself; and that is really unwise.

Crimes of Indecency

Should public nakedness be considered an infringement on society? If someone can convince me of how it can possibly be argued that walking naked in downtown Laramie – where I live now – with nothing but a wallet in one hand and car keys in the other can be hurtful to a passerby, then I will be the first to agree that public nakedness should be considered a crime and dealt with accordingly. It is considered a *crime of indecency*, but in my opinion, it should not be. The problem with considering mere public nakedness a crime is that by allowing ourselves to be controlled by some illogical camp of anti-naturalists, we have classified something that should at most be distasteful as something pernicious or harmful; and we have done ourselves an immense disservice.

Our society has decided that public nakedness is totally unacceptable; and by so doing, we have confused the proper lines of natural sanity and sexual abuse. We do ourselves an immense disservice, I think, by including public nakedness within the realm of public indecency. No society should have the right to declare the natural as unacceptable; yet there are only a few societies in our modern world that allow it. Why? Because only a few societies think in terms of the natural. Most of us are seeking something totally unnatural – conveniently labeled the Supernatural – and walk right on by the Paradise we should be knowing and enjoying.

Be that as it may, as a matter of law since it is the law in most places to consider public nakedness in itself indecent, what should you do about me if I should appear in downtown Laramie walking down a main street with nothing on? I know of no one daring enough to do such a thing – including me – but if I should do such a thing, how should the law deal with me?

If I were one who might react to being shamed, you could shackle me naked to a pole in some downtown square where there is much activity and shame me into correction; however, since my act of public nakedness would probably be an expression of shamelessness, that would not work. Would it? I suppose you could hang a sign around my neck stating my transgression and have me march up and down a main street for a time. Maybe that would discourage me from continuing my boldness. If that didn't work, then maybe you should consider therapy. If that didn't work, sentence me to some social service for a time.

It's difficult to determine what we should do with someone who is breaking a law that should not be a law. It happens all the time, though, because there are many laws still on the books that receive no consent on the part of those obliged to obey them. This public indecency law that most societies seem to love is one of the laws of our society for which I offer no consent. In whatever way you treat me, however, I think you can do it without resorting to incarceration. Again, put on your thinking caps and decide another course other than that because to incarcerate me would be to make you pay for my doing the crime. Truly, is that reasonable?

I do not wish to get into any argument here about what should or should not be a crime of indecency. My only argument is that once defined and once a law is broken, what should be done about it? The same goes for laws regarding child abuse or illicit sexual behavior with any age of person. To incarcerate someone for breaking the law is of no benefit to anyone. That is what we have done in the past and our jails are filling fast and everyone is paying big time for big time jail welfare. Jail welfare should be as outmoded as burning at the stake. It is not fitting a decent society that takes any kind of pride in itself.

What should be done about someone who rapes a child? My initial response to that is why single out a child? Rape is rape – regardless of age of victim. In fact, it is entirely possible that an older person could be damaged more by being raped than a child because a child is still innocent and may not be aware that she should be more offended with some imposed sexual behavior than being beaten or starved. Is one any worse than the other? Again, I would argue that a smart society will try to correct a rapist rather than punish him. If correction does not work over time, then, incorrigibility will have been demonstrated and an eventual process might entail banishment from society.

Our societies often give a convicted sex offender no chance for redemption, however. It is truly dumb what we do. We sentence someone to years of incarceration for what might be handled with a single therapy class; and then once a sentence is served, we hang a sign around the neck of such a one telling the world he was convicted of a sex crime and that there is no room anywhere for him to go. What is the point of that? If you give someone no place to go after they have served their time, what are they supposed to do? Our heartless society just throws its hands up in the air and says – who cares? I don't want his kind in my neighborhood. It is not easy, I know, to deal with such matters; but if we would only approach it with heart and without contempt and with

giving a guy a break who made a mistake, so much bad behavior could be corrected and so much jail welfare could be avoided.

Illicit Drugs & Alcohol

Wow! Is this one ever blowing up in our faces. So many are using drugs these days and becoming addicted to them. I don't think it should matter the kind of drug, but **I think we create a huge problem for society by making any addiction punishable by law.** What good does it do to arrest some poor misguided soul looking for a fix to his or her drab life and sentence him or her to jail for the addiction? Again, incarceration should never be a resort of attempted correction; and an addict certainly doesn't need to be further punished with incarceration. The addiction is punishment enough.

So, what should we do with an unfortunate addict? I think we should be smart enough to create convalescent centers where an addict can get some care and not be punished. We spend billions on making bombs to kill our enemies. Why can't we spend millions to care for our fellow citizens? It is a huge problem. There is no doubt about that. It won't go away until people become more rooted in values that will allow them to find fulfillment outside a pipe or a snuff or a needle fix.

What about the pusher, the drug dealer? I think we need to let them alone and consider them no different than a gun salesman. We do not convict a gun salesman for selling a gun to some criminal when clearly it is obvious to a gun dealer that certain guns are not for killing elk, but for killing other humans. Yet, we do not forbid the sale of guns even though we know they might be used for murder. So, why should we forbid the sale of any drug as long as someone is willing to pay for it? We only create terrible problems of law enforcement by doing so and not much trafficking is stopped.

On this issue, I believe firmly that the only smart way of dealing with drug trafficking is to let it go and try to change society so that it doesn't need the drugs. Without a market, no drugs could be sold; and if there is a market for them, then that is a clear indication that there are deep problems in society – unless getting high on drugs is considered the right thing to do. And if getting high on one drug is right, then why not another? So many problems are created by trying to suppress use of drugs and alcohol.

In the long run, addiction is a choice – a very destructive one, I think, but nonetheless a choice. I think the wise society will not spin its wheels trying to standardize behavior by outlawing this or that kind of product and will let the product use fizzle out for becoming unneeded in time.

Now, if I am one to force another to take a drug against his or her will, that is another matter entirely. Then, we are talking real crime. Such a person should be treated within the system as any violator would be – offered a chance to repair damage caused to an unwilling victim by aiding him or her financially as much as possible to overcome an addiction forced upon him or her – or be the guest of our ever popular whacking machine. If over a period of time, such a dealer is found to repeat his or her imposing ways without correction, then once they become assumed incorrigible, out they go via the banishment of last resort – permanent incarceration.

Murder

We come now to the ultimate act of violence – murder. Of course, there are varying degrees of this as in all things. There's first, second, third, degrees – and maybe even a fourth in some circles. I am not a criminologist and I am somewhat ignorant of the exact definitions; but I will try to not define by legal means, just by my own logical means.

If I got caught in some unforeseen circumstance and killed a friend of yours in the process, I do not think we should treat that terribly seriously. Circumstantial Murder is unintended murder. I was at a bar and got drunk and some guy made a pass at me and I did not like it. So, in a fit of unintended anger, I socked him and he fell dead at my feet. It happens, but to incarcerate me for a crime that was totally unintended is to only continue that terrible jail welfare I think is so unwise. If I am sorry for what I did, let me go; but if for some reason I make my conduct a habit, then I should be considered incorrigible and banished from society via permanent incarceration.

Say that I planned to kill a friend of yours and set out to do it. Planned Murder is something else entirely. If it can be demonstrated that I am guilty of planning the murder of your friend and no justification on my part can be demonstrated, then that is the big exception. Don't kill me because you will be brutalizing yourself to do so; but banish me with some degree of incarceration. If I am totally at fault without any prompting on the part of the one I killed, then let my incarceration be permanent; but if there is some extenuating circumstances like fear of the one I killed, then only temporary incarceration or a date with our economical whacking machine should be my sentence.

No one should be jailed permanently who in all likelihood will not repeat a murder. Of what value is there in doing so? People make mistakes – even mitigated murder. I do not think it is the interest of society at all to act like people cannot change and be productive members of society, once they have had some time to ponder their actions; but if I plan a murder and there is no evidence that my victim intended any significant injury to me, then that should be an exception to allow permanent banishment or incarceration; and if I kill once and am sentenced to temporary incarceration, then upon release, I kill again, then incorrigibility will have been established and my imprisonment should be forever.

Perjury

This is a very, very, serious crime; and no system of justice can ignore it. **What do you do with someone who has given false testimony that has resulted in the unjust conviction of an innocent?** Without hesitation, I say such a person deserves at the very least a good whacking treatment, regardless of the issue, and beyond that, perhaps the very same sentence as that unjustly delivered to one falsely convicted. Hey, that was easy. It would be easy to determine the sentence of one whose false testimony resulted in the false conviction of another – offer the exact same sentence. End of story.

The Appeals Process

It should be obvious that with my proposed system of justice, the customary appeals process would become irrelevant to a great extent because sentencing is both fair and swift – according to the apparent evidence of the case. Of course, there will be mistakes made; but mistakes would become issues themselves for trials of their own – involving the crime of perjury. In essence, there would be no appeals process to keep one from receiving a given sentence because the sentence would be *executed* immediately upon its determination. That would be one of the strengths of this alternative way of justice I am recommending.

As it is now, the appeals process may take as long as a normal life sentence – twenty years. That is ludicrous due to the tremendous expense to society as well as to the emotional drain on all involved – victim and criminal. Under my proposed system, there would be no appeal to save one from a sentence because – except in the more stringent cases like murder – a sentence will have already been carried out. Very importantly, however, all states should require the exact same response to various crimes because of the total lack of fairness in separate sentencing.

As it is now, one state may require execution as the appropriate sentence for a crime and some indivisible line away, that same crime would receive a life sentence of twenty years. That is not fair at all and allows criminals to literally get away with murder in some cases.

America once fought a very costly Civil War on the issue of states rights where the various states could be free to respond to various issues separate from any other state. In some ways, that Civil War still rages because the various states insist on the right to decide many issues on their own. Sentencing for crimes should not be one of those issues that states can decide differently, depending upon some prevailing opinions within a state's borders. Be it America or be it the World, ideally all sentencing should be uniform among all jurisdictions – in the very important name of fairness. At least, that is how I see it. It sure does confuse things to allow differently.

Would the appeals process go away entirely – from district appellate courts to the Supreme Court? For the more stringent crimes, of course not. As long as a sentence is still being carried out, an appeals process could still go on. In the less stringent cases of crime where a sentence has already been carried out, perhaps further appeals would be useful in judging the process itself. The appeals process would still be useful in that light; however, any resorting to appellate decision would be for the sake of similar cases in the future – and maybe for addressing wrong convictions. Concerning crimes of a lesser nature, any given case in terms of unfair sentence would receive no benefit from issuing an appeal because the sentence would have already been administered, but that case could serve as a basis of argument for either the prosecution of a criminal type or the sentencing of a convicted criminal.

The Jury System

The jury system would, of course, be retained for the more major crimes, but would it be retained for the lesser crimes? Probably, though there may be many *light* crimes that could bypass the cost and inconvenience of the jury process; and those juries that remain as part of the process could and probably should decide by majority opinion rather than unanimous consent among jury members. There is no issue in life that can be decided by unanimous decision because there is no way we can all see things exactly the same way. For the jury system to act like twelve different jurors must come to the exact same conclusion is quite at odds with the democratic standard of majority opinion. As it is now, only one jury member sitting in judgment of a serious crime can hang that process. That is not only ludicrous, as far as I am concerned, but extremely costly to society because another jury and another trial and another billing for legal fees is the standard response.

Obsolete Law

As already argued, **there are so many laws on the books that have become irrelevant to current society which may have evolved beyond those obsolete laws, yet society may still live in fear of them. Like we need legislatures to make laws that seem appropriate, we need a process – other than the legislative one – to *unmake* laws.** Perhaps public referendum is the only way we should unmake laws; and then when a law – initially passed by a legislature – is overridden by public vote, it ceases to be law. In my opinion, we need to practice public referendum much more than we have and get some of the antiquated, destructive laws off the books. Right now, we tend to just live with them like they are sacred and cannot be abolished once enacted.

I offer laws defining public nakedness as a crime for example. When they were passed, society at large was obsessed with a God outside of them and somehow saw God being separate from man as reason to declare man himself impure; but we have evolved in our thought since those laws were passed. Much of society now sees God as part of life, not separate from life. Thus society is changing to realize that man is not impure because God is really in him – or her. The reason for the old law in the case of public indecency is fast becoming obsolete and that obsolete law needs cancelled for being considered irrelevant by modern society.

Making public nakedness a crime for considering man impure is just one example of an obsolete law, however. The point is that we need a process to override and cancel obsolete law – letting the public vote of a referendum decide the issue. Many might consider that public nakedness should still be considered a crime. Alright, that is fine; but the public needs to decide that – not just some who still have a hankering for an old law. In some cases, local referendums would be needed for applying only to local law; but there are other cases where a national referendum should be allowed. I just throw that out as another of the ideals that, personally, I would find satisfying.

We Can Do Better!

I do believe we can do so much better than we have done in dealing with and preventing crime. **In my opinion, the cost of jail welfare or incarceration is without benefit to anyone, except maybe to a few mean and ill tempered guards who somehow love banging heads and consider employment to do so a Heaven send.** Of what benefit is it to anyone to pay for the imprisonment and care of those who violated society? We should not have to think about how we are going to finance additional prisons, but what use we can make of the prisons that we liberate. Perhaps we can convert some of them into convalescent centers for various addicts. It is certainly a thought.

I have a good friend who thinks we should bring back public hanging, but I think that would be a huge mistake because before long, we would have to have a hanging a month in order to justify a public gallows; and knowing the anger and hatred of so many of my fellow humans, I suspect that public hangings would be accompanied by barbecues and dancing in the street. That would not be good because celebrating the dismissal of another via execution is useless to a sensitive soul; and if souls are insensitive so as to feel good about the execution of others, then public hangings and public celebrations would only make them more insensitive and more likely to become among the convicted in the future.

In short, there should be only a few jails to incarcerate only those considered as incorrigible criminals. Incarceration should be the very rare response to crime because it is by far the most costly.

Once I spent three days in a Virginia jail for driving naked on an interstate highway because some truck driver who noticed me from his lofty seat while passing me called the police who incarcerated me for a weekend. In that weekend, Virginia spent at least \$5 a meal for three meals a day on me and paid a good sum for guards to guard me; and for what? It was foolish for Virginia or any society to have to pay for a crime that I committed.

Now, take career criminals – of whom there are millions – and imagine the cost of crime in financial terms alone. Then consider the cost in mental anguish – on the part of both convict and victim – and see how totally unjustifiable incarceration is as a response to most crime.

We have done badly; and we are breaking our back in going down the road we are. Rather than incarcerate someone for taking dope, treat them. If they injure another while in their state of befuddlement, exact from them the same as you would from someone who would do bodily harm to another. Treat people to be responsible for their dispositions. If I am insane by virtue of some substance I am taking and injure or murder another, don't let me off with a plea of temporary insanity. Rather, hold me responsible for my disposition and treat my acts as if intended, including vehicular homicide by drunkenness.

One of the most useless and wasteful crime stopping programs of recent years, I think, has been our so called war against drugs. If people want to buy that stuff, let them buy it; but let them be prepared to pay the consequences if found to be party to injuring another while under the influence. Personally, I take no drugs, nor do I enjoy being in the company of those who do; but if I can drink alcohol beyond the limit of sobriety and not

be hauled off in handcuffs, then one who takes drugs should be treated no differently. I'm sure there would be no more to die of snorting cocaine than from excessive drinking of alcohol. If you allow one, then you should allow the other as well; and let the buyer beware.

How should we deal with causing death or injury on the highway due to intoxication from drugs or alcohol? It should be considered a privilege to drive on a public highway; and if I should put others in danger by drinking or snorting too much and then actually injure or kill another by accident, don't treat me like it was OK that I should take a chance like I did. At the very least, perhaps, run me through the whacking machine to impress upon me that I did wrong. Then, if I am an addict, commit me to some corrective rehabilitation center until it is satisfied I have overcome my habit. In any case – addict or otherwise - if I should repeat my deed later, incarcerate me for some temporary sentence to allow me to ponder my failing. If that doesn't work and once I am released, I do it again – consider me incorrigible and pack me away where I can do no more hurt by my irresponsibility.

Personally, I doubt very much that the truly incorrigible would number more than a few. The vast majority would probably learn their lesson outside of incarceration; and the public would be spared for paying for jail welfare to correct them.

We Must Do Better!

We can do better – much, much better – than we have in dealing with crime, its prevention, and its solution. We must do better! *Jail welfare is not only ineffective, but extremely costly.* There are no totally simple answers, but if we listen to the past and see our immediate future in terms of a runaway crime problem, it should be obvious that changes are necessary to somehow turn things around and straighten our course. If we continue on the extremely insecure and wobbly course we have been pursuing for centuries in terms of fighting crime by building new prisons, soon the criminals will overcome the law abiding by virtue of the cost required to house, feed, and care for them. Now, that is runaway jail welfare; and that is dumb. At least, I think so.

What do you think?

Thanks for listening!

Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
April 5th, 2006

CRIME & CORRECTION

THE END

PARADISE ON EARTH

(9 Pages)

An essay about life and virtue

By

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Originally written: 8/1997; rewritten 4/2006

Note: Originally I wrote this in August of 1997, however I am rewriting it – and revising it a bit – in April of 2006. Originally, I wrote it for publication in Reader’s Digest, but Reader’s Digest ignored it. Thanks so much! F.W.B. (April 3rd, 2006)

Preamble

I am now sixty-four as I write this in 2006. I was twenty-two (or maybe twenty-three) when I wrote an allegory I called **WISDOM** while studying at St. Thomas College in Denver, Colorado in the 1960s. I don’t suppose it was well written, but I think the theme was a nice one. It was all about an angel of wisdom that I named **Wisdom** selecting two young kids, brother and sister, whom I named respectively, **Simplicity** and **Innocence** and teaching them some lessons of life, centering on what **Wisdom** considered the prime virtue of any soul – **Integrity**.

Like I say, it probably wasn’t very well written as it was among the first serious works I ever attempted. I never did anything with it and only had one copy – which I stashed among other artifacts in my garage in Norcross, Georgia when living there in the 1980s and 90s. I have no idea what happened to **WISDOM**, but one day in the late 1980s I went out to the garage to fetch it – wanting to rewrite it - and it was nowhere around. I can’t imagine anyone stealing such a manuscript, but I have no idea what happened to it.

To first write **WISDOM** in 1964 or so, I had asked myself, *if I could define a Paradise, how would I define it?* I meditated on that question for awhile and finally decided that any true Paradise would have to be populated with souls who all shared three virtues – **Innocence, Simplicity, and Integrity** – because without them, I could not imagine any lasting **Peace** is possible. The equivalent of **Paradise** for me is **Peace**. Thus, I arranged a little allegory and tried to bring those virtues to life by personifying them through the brother and sister of **Simplicity** and **Innocence** and have them be led by my grand ole wise angel, **Wisdom**, to realize that the key to living a good and holy life was to have **Integrity**. I am not sure how I ever came to make such an analysis at the age of twenty-two, but being quite philosophical about life, the notions just seemed to strike out at me.

Life, however, has confirmed that at least for me, I was right. I have tried to live those three qualities of **Innocence, Simplicity, and Integrity**; and they have resulted pretty much in the **Peace** I expected of them. They have been very noble goals and ideals. I guess I will always be my two little kids, **Innocence** and **Simplicity**, wandering about and encountering a wise old angel who is always yapping about how wonderful the

world would be if all its people only possessed *Integrity*. I can still hear ole *Wisdom* as he took a couple of white robes that he labeled *Sanctity* and put them on the brother and sister and told them all about the wonderful virtue and quality of *Integrity*; and I still believe it too. I still think that the single greatest missing virtue in the human race is *Integrity*; and I still agree with *Wisdom* that if somehow all the people of the world could be fitted with it, the world would become a *Paradise*. Even though I may have misplaced the actual story, I have tried not to misplace the tale; and I have tried to live it the best I could.

I wrote my little story around 1964 or so. In 1997, I decided to write a few things that I wanted to submit to **Reader's Digest**; and I decided to make one of my articles a presentation of how I see Paradise. I did not retell the story of 1964, but I certainly did offer a tale of sorts of my three virtues of Paradise – *Innocence*, *Simplicity*, and *Integrity*. I offer that perspective below in this rewrite of the article of 1997 and conclude this effort with a current song about *Paradise* that I wrote to complete this essay. As I noted above, **Reader's Digest** ignored all my submissions; but it was very useful to have written the various articles to be able to rewrite them in the current year of 2006.

I think it's a lot like being a sculptor and making a plaster model and doing nothing with that model for years – and then taking the plaster model and painting it. The model is the same in shape and form, but after painting it, it has a new look. Thus, with this rewrite, I am giving my old model a bit of a new look. Listen, if you will, to my argument about the *perfect society* and then decide on your own the qualities you would choose for all the souls of a *Paradise*. If people would only ask the question I asked in 1964 and then try to lead their lives according to their own determined answer, it might be amazing what a wonderful world would emerge. Having done it, I highly recommend the exercise.

Heaven on Earth

Before we can talk about *Paradise on Earth*, we must begin with *Heaven on Earth* because without a prior Heaven on Earth, there can be no Paradise on Earth. Heaven, I think, is everywhere because God is everywhere. **My definition of Heaven is being where God is.** Since God is everywhere, everywhere is Heaven. I think Heaven is everywhere in actuality, however, virtually it is only where I think God is. Thus, virtually, rather than actually, Heaven is essentially a state of mind that says the one in Heaven has achieved communion with God and is aware of that state of communion. That's the traditional sense of Heaven; and I agree whole heartedly with that sense of Heaven. Being with God and being aware you are is the essence of Heaven – virtually speaking. Everyone is with God because God is with everyone; however, if I am unaware of the Presence of God, virtually, I am not in Heaven. Those who lack awareness of their actual communion with God are virtually not in Heaven – though actually they are. Additionally, however, many think they are in communion with God, but are actually in communion with pretenders, posing as God or as from God. Virtually, these, too, have not achieved Heaven, though they may think they have.

Being in Heaven is to be able to stand naked and natural on top of a mountain, in a field of cotton, in a garden of marigolds, or in a crowded subway with an awareness of

the Infinite Presence about and within. I know of no one personally who has done that, strives to do it, or even cares about doing it – though I am aware of a lot of remote Naturalists who do. Unfortunately, the world of my fellow humans has been overcome by the many noises and variations of Hell that have declared living in Innocence and Natural Purity as useless and harmful. The world, as currently composed, knows very little of Heavenly qualities, even as the members of the Great Throng aspire to find Innocence in the next life, presumably under the auspices of some Fantasy Innocence that can shed His Innocence over the masses and make them of Heavenly quality.

In truth, if we don't find Heaven here before we die, living in the garden of our senses, we will never find Heaven after we die either. Virtually, Heaven is a practice that must begin to be continued; and if we don't begin it in life within the body, we can't practice it outside the body either. At least, I suspect that is true because it seems logical to me that nothing can be continued that has not been first initiated.

It does make sense, doesn't it? Why should I think that I am going to somehow miraculously be able to start a practice at some future time when, in fact, my state in the hereafter may prevent me from starting anything? It is very unlikely that anything can be continued in the hereafter that was not first initiated beforehand. Therein is the great gamble that so many I know live – that life in the hereafter will provide them the innocence and peace they refuse in this life.

Innocence, Simplicity, & Integrity

I have pondered the qualities that I think would comprise a real “virtual” Heaven; and I have concluded that any real “virtual” Heaven that is comprised of cooperating individuals must have as its membership all who practice the qualities of *Innocence*, *Simplicity*, and *Integrity*.

Innocence

Innocence is a quality by which I live without imposition on another. To be innocent is to recognize your worth as a temple of God, equal to all beings who also have God. I think innocence is impossible without an awareness of the Infinite Presence, even as a knowledge of that Infinity must be lacking because we are within a picture of which we can not stand outside to see. Still, we can know that the Divine is within us because it must be within us due to the very nature of Infinity – which is unlimited. That's what infinite means – without limitation, without boundaries. If the Divine were not within us, it would not be Infinite. Would it?

As I see it, innocence cannot be lost with abuse; but it can be lost with reaction to abuse. If I am abused and in turn I call for imposition – by myself or another – upon my abuser, then I impose on my abuser. I know it seems sad, but that is the way it works. Of course, it is much easier to be innocent if I never suffer any abuse; but easy or not, once I respond to any abuse by becoming myself an abuser, then I have lost my innocence. Some would say it is not abuse I would be exacting against an abuser to have him or her pay for what they did to me, but justice. Well, civilly it may well be justice, but where the soul lives and how the soul lives, it is returned abuse because it is a form of imposition upon another.

Just think about it. If I have been abused by someone and my mind is full of hurt and maybe even rage for his or her imposition on me, in just wanting to get back at him or her, I am without innocence because related to my abuser, I want him or her abused to pay for what he or she did to me. We live in our minds. Thus, if I even want imposition on you – be it so called justice or otherwise – I am guilty of imposition on another individual. It may not be a primary imposition because I may not have instigated the circumstance of imposition, but it is at the very least a secondary imposition in that I am seeking imposition on another individual.

Tested innocence, then, can be somewhat difficult. Jesus proved himself worthy of innocence when he accepted crucifixion without remorse or any desire of revenge against his executioners. His innocence was tested quite severely, but be it tested or otherwise, it is not innocence if one either wants or demands imposition upon another. One's soul loses innocence only when one chooses to impose upon another – regardless of the nature of that imposition – be it deemed justice or revenge or whatever. You cannot fool the soul. You either have or don't have innocence.

When I was growing up, I had few pictures in my room, but one picture I did have hanging on a wall at the head of my bed was a picture or image of **Saint Theresa** – called **The Little Flower**. I was told of her story, though I have forgotten the details now. The gist of it, however, was that she was raped by some soldiers, I think; but she always spoke well of her abusers. She certainly did not like being raped, but she knew full well that it should not be within her heart to demand anything of anyone and still retain her innocence. Thus, she forgave her abusers like Jesus forgave his abusers. Regarding innocence, it is the only way one can go and still retain innocence. One cannot hold onto innocence by wanting or demanding that justice be done and that an abuser is punished for his or her deed. That is just the way it is because imposition is imposition. Regardless of why I might impose upon you, if I impose on you, I am without innocence related to you and without innocence in general in my soul.

I think what it comes down to is turmoil. If I allow turmoil in my mind, I am really without innocence because Innocence is really an equivalent of Peace. If I sit and stew about something you did to me, then I am without peace. You cannot have turmoil and peace at the same time. Analytically, then, if my mind and soul are filled with either desire of imposition on you or actual imposition on you, I am without peace and with turmoil. Innocence is a state of purity with only awareness of the Blessed of Life. How can you be only aware of the Blessed state of Life if you allow thoughts of justice or revenge or imposition on another in your soul and mind? You can't. The mind can only think of one thing at a time. So if you choose to ignore the Blessed of Life and allow distraction to the non-blessed of life, then that is what you will have; and the result is turmoil.

Given the choice between peace and turmoil, what do you think you should choose? I can assure you that related to Paradise – and that is the topic of this discussion – you could not choose turmoil and still retain Paradise. Could you? Turmoil and insisting on retaining it is not only dumb, but hard – much harder than releasing your hurt to the wind and concentrating on the Blessed of Life – or the Blessing that is Life. In the end, it is always a matter of choice. Do I want my mind to see positively and see Life as a Blessing or negatively and see other than Blessing? The Innocent will always choose the Vision of Blessed.

Simplicity

Simplicity is a quality by which I act the same regardless of audience. This world of ours not only lacks in honor of this great quality, but it often flatly outlaws it by insisting on division between adults and children, labeling certain restrictive behavior as *adult* and out of range of children. It is no wonder that very few achieve Heaven on Earth, given their willingness to oblige the narrow blindness of many who toss their brains into the trash and refuse to think for themselves.

There is no species on Earth that acts so stupidly as humans in regards to simplicity; and if the truth were known, there is no species on Earth more unhappy because of it. Other animals have simplicity; but the alleged royalty of creation – humanity – lives without it.

I think the weak always excuse themselves from doing what is wise. It starts with a restriction of the senses and ends with a restriction of each other. The strong and wise use the five senses; the weak deny them. Denial of the senses and of their God Blessed Worth is the beginning of the violation of the quality of Simplicity.

We begin by denying that the flesh is good and accuse it of devilment. We proceed by apologizing for our features, acting like the Divine Which designed them was playing tricks on us. We continue by banning the naked and natural and insist that God is the one with that plan – not us caught within a web of blindness.

We are told that God is the one who has given us the command to shy away from our flesh, the very flesh He or She or It is in. Amazingly, we believe it. We listen to those who claim to be prophets of God who are really prisoners of stupidity, who have themselves been signaled out by voices pretending to be of God for the sheer purpose of controlling us – in the name of God.

God is not a voice from without, however, because It is a Presence from within – and of course, from without as well. Moses did not hear God on the Mount of Sinai. He probably heard the voice of some nether world scoundrel, pretending to be God, though the voice may have indeed been sincere in leading Moses and his clan to some point in life. It's important, though, to be done with the notion that any one man has been signaled out by the real Divine One to give us all some direction or other.

We must stop listening to those who claim to be speaking for God on the basis that it is **EXTREMELY UNLIKELY** that a God Which is Present within us would need to command us from without. The various voices and their proclamations scare the wit out of us by their claims. We must learn to tell them to go chase themselves, as my father used to say, and leave us alone to find our own truths and live our own lives.

Innocence & Simplicity have suffered much at the hands of voices pretending to be God – or of God. Innocence is simply not imposing your will on another; but so often these voices command with rulings that not only impose on others but command imposition – all in the name of Salvation and Justice of course. The voices always know what is best for mankind and through their various prophets, they instruct the rest of us. They give us God's Plan for mankind; and we are supposed to listen when what they offer is a flat denial of what is logical in favor of a Superior Supernatural. Maybe eventually we will wake up and realize that in listening to voices from without, we waste

the graces from within because the voices from without would have it that way – to keep us dependent upon them.

Integrity

And finally, the last of the great Heavenly qualities – *Integrity*. *Integrity is that quality by which we recognize our equal worth with all other beings and realize that no one of us has more or less of God than any other. Integrity is the quality of equality – of being one with All.* We are equal to all beings, not superior or inferior to any because the same God is equally Present in All. That is the very essence of the unlimited – to be the same in All. To limit God to one being or the other is to strip the Infinite of Infinity. That is clearly impossible. Isn't it?

The voices pretending to be God or of God have tried throughout history to convince us that God can be stripped from reality like clothes off our backs. It is, in fact, the lesson of the famed Garden of Eden. God lived in the Garden of Eden and for a time had man live there with Him in His Presence; but then man disobeyed God and God banished us from His Presence.

What utter stupidity! The idea of integrity says that is impossible. God can not banish us from His Presence because to do that He would have to banish Himself from His Infinity or Everywhere Presence. The idea of integrity specifies Divine banishment is impossible; and the story of the Garden of Eden is a blind and dark fantasy without any possible foundation in truth. The quality or ideal of Integrity is that we recognize our equal worth due to equal Divinity and live accordingly.

The word integrity means whole. To have a sense of integrity and to live a quality of Integrity is to be aware of our being an equal part of the fabulous whole. To have integrity is often equated with telling the truth, but it is far more than that. It is knowing the truth of our equality among all created beings, knowing that because the Infinite Presence that is God is Everywhere, He or She or It must be in Everything equally – not more in some than in others as if life can be evaluated in importance according to some lesser or greater presence of God.

That has been, I think, one of the BIG MISTAKES of the ages – to assign values to created beings from tadpoles to angels according to some surmised lesser to greater presence of God. What nonsense! To have Spiritual Integrity is to know that man is of no lesser or greater value than the angels or of no lesser or greater value than the tadpoles. Tadpoles, human beings, and angels all exist having equal value due to having equal Presence of Infinity. That is the spiritual principle of Integrity; and when we live by it, virtually, we achieve Heaven – though in actuality, we always had it.

How many very sincere believers of the story of the Garden of Eden, that pretends a wonderful story of God and His Kindness and Justice, are wasting their lives in pursuit of a separation between God and humanity that does not exist because it cannot exist? Why do we take such pleasure in pursuing the impossible? Why do we take such pleasure in insisting that we are worthless because God is lacking in us? Why do we take such pleasure in pounding our chests and screaming some witless Hallelujah! Have mercy on me, Oh God! as if God is a thousand miles from us and cannot hear us with a simple, quiet, grateful heart? I talk to God, but only to remind myself of Its Presence in me. God

cannot hear me as It is without ears; but nonetheless, It's the Movement without which I could not exist.

Integrity Covers All

I am in love with all the Heavenly qualities – *Innocence, Simplicity, and Integrity*; but I think if I had to emphasize one, it would be *Integrity*. I think Integrity has a huge sound to it - and it does. What a word! It says all that is important. *If I have Integrity, I think it would be impossible to lack Innocence or Simplicity*. Thus, one could say that Integrity is the only necessary Quality of Heaven. It is like a Mother bearing the twins of Innocence and Simplicity; but if you have the Mother Quality of Integrity, you are assured of the Child Qualities of Innocence and Simplicity.

Integrity is not only expansive, like an umbrella that covers everything underneath it; but it is also easy. *There is nothing hard about any of the Heavenly Qualities, but Integrity is not only not hard – but easy*. What is not easy about realizing that I am equal to the rabbit because both of us have an equal Presence of God? What is not easy about realizing that you are equal to me because both of us have equal Presence of God? What is not easy about realizing that everything and everyone is Divine? What is not easy about treating all like they are what they are – Divine? Integrity is easy – so much easier than the practice of Inequality.

Just think about that! Look at how hard inequality is. It takes more energy than the average individual has to keep up with it. It sponsors crime and justice and law and slavery and revenge and hatred. All of those are hard – not easy. With equality, there is no crime because all are treated equally. With equality, there is no need for justice because no one ever infringes on another. With equality, laws are unnecessary because it is presumed that violations would not occur. With equality, revenge would be unneeded because no one would offend in the first place; and with equality, there would be no such thing as hatred because no one would despise another. Integrity or Equality is really easy because it only takes awareness that all are Divine.

If all practice the quality of equality, is it possible that anyone would impose on another? I do not think so. Thus, if I have Integrity, Innocence would be a natural byproduct. If all practice the quality of equality, is it possible that privacy would be needed? I don't think so. In fact, just the opposite would stand true. If I am overcome with my oneness with everyone and everything, the last thing that would come to mind is having any need to separate myself from others. Thus, all could practice their natures in full open view of everyone because all would realize their sameness. With Integrity, then, would come Simplicity.

Hey, keep in mind, this is My Virtual Heaven I am defining. I see a virtual Heaven as being a place where the three qualities of Innocence, Simplicity, and Integrity are practiced. If you see a different virtual Heaven, then you have to define it differently; but as I see a virtual Heaven, I have just described it.

Paradise – Only Heaven on Earth

Now, you tell me. Could not that which I have just described exist here on Earth? I mean, it is possible. Isn't it? I realize it has not existed yet; but that is not to say it could not exist in the future. **As I see it, Paradise is only Heaven on Earth.** That is all it is. It's like the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve had any notion that they might lose Eden – before they were instructed about obedience and all of that – before they were told they had command over all the other creatures of the Earth. They had it all – before that command. Didn't they?

So, take away the command of the right of domination – and presto – Paradise Again! See how simple it would be – and then make it happen in your own life; and wherever you would go, Paradise would be there. Perhaps it takes but one to be in Heaven; but maybe it takes two – or at least two – any two – to share a Heaven and allow a Paradise. I think that is a good definition of Paradise – two souls, two heavens, blending as one.

Maybe someday the whole Earth will become a Paradise. It is certainly possible if we can rid ourselves of the terribly injurious notion of inequality. I won't predict it, but I would never count it out either. I think we should always begin with definitions; and then we can make them real. When people tell me there can be no Paradise on Earth, I tell them, I disagree. Why should easy not be achievable when hard is very much so? You tell me!

Even though a General Paradise on Earth is not likely, however, that does not mean Little Paradises cannot exist. It really only takes two to make a Paradise. Where two or more are gathered to live between them or among them the ideals of Innocence, Simplicity, and Integrity, there is a Paradise. I have not been privileged to find one yet myself, but I am only sixty-four. It could still happen for me in this life – and if not in this one, then maybe in a next one. I am quite satisfied with my Singular Heaven – which all have because it is only being where God is – but I will always hope for a Paradise where I can share my Singular Heaven with others in their own Singular Heavens and realize the merging of ideals.

Any who are reading this are welcome to share in those ideals – whether with me or with others. Life should not be the Constant Conflict it has become on this wonderful planet, Earth. The Earth has no heart. It can sustain conflict or peace. It does not care; But Why Not Peace? Right? Why not Paradise on Earth?

My song of Paradise will follow.

Thanks for listening!

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

April 3rd, 2006

Paradise, Paradise

A song about life & virtue

By

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

March 31, 2006

Refrain:

Paradise, Paradise – it seems so right to me.

Paradise, Paradise – can you tell me what it would be?

It's easy, My Friend, to comprehend.

It's Innocence, Simplicity, and Integrity.

If God's outside, we must seek to please,
but if inside, we must be pleased.
It depends upon where we place our God
that determines how we will trod. ***Refrain.***

Innocence means not to impose,
not just to not be imposed upon.
It's treating everyone like they're Divine
regardless of any wrong. ***Refrain.***

Simplicity means I should act the same,
regardless of who is around.
It's regarding the Nature of which I'm a part,
like no shame in it can be found. ***Refrain.***

Integrity means I'm Part of a Whole
that is Blessed completely throughout.
If the Whole is Holy, so is each Part,
and the Whole is filled with God now. *Refrain.*

So with these three wonderful qualities,
Paradise is given birth.
It shouldn't matter where I am.
So, why can't there be Paradise on Earth? *Refrain (3).*

PARADISE ON EARTH

THE END

THE SOLITARY WAY

(12 Pages)

An essay about life and virtue

By

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Originally written: 9/1997; rewritten 4/2006

Note: Originally I wrote this in September of 1997, however I am rewriting it – and revising it a bit – in March of 2006. Originally, I wrote it for publication in Reader’s Digest, but Reader’s Digest ignored it. Thanks so much! F.W.B. (April 14th, 2006)

Attending to *Natural Design*

Every discipline requires some restriction. I think it just depends on how much the results of a discipline are worth to determine if an accompanying restriction is worth it. I call my own personal choice of a discipline *Natural Design*. It’s to say that I try to order my life according to what I think Nature (and God through Nature) would have me do – based on what I see the design of Nature being – or doing.

For example, is it right to kill to eat? All I have to do is look at general Nature to find the answer. Of course, it is; but only to kill in order to eat, not just to kill for the sake of killing or for some misguided personal vengeance. Nature does not offer me – outside of man – any example that I take with comfort that offers me any right to kill except to eat. That leaves out any killing for which the motive is not to fill my tummy.

That means I cannot go out and kill just for a pair of antlers to put over my fireplace. I cannot kill a bear just to strip it of its fur for a cushion or a rug. Now, I may use the fur for a cushion or a rug as an afterthought for my killing a bear to eat his or her meat; but *Natural Design* – or conduct according to *Natural Design* – does not permit me to kill anything – ideally, of course – except to fill my tummy. Hey, it makes life really simple. All I have to do is look at what Nature is doing elsewhere outside of man to know what as man I should do.

Another example: Nature designed sex for conception. I mean it seems fairly sensible to me that all species mate mostly for propagation of their kind. Thus, as a human, following *Natural Design* as an instructor, I should engage in sex – in terms of coitus - only for procreation purposes. Ouch! Yeah, that means I can’t follow the crowd that tends to use sexual intercourse as only entertainment and have at it at will. That’s what I mean when I say that any discipline requires a restriction of some sort. If I choose to follow *Natural Design* as my prime source of instruction, then I have to give up going to bed just for the thrill of it.

On the other hand, what do I gain by restricting sexual intercourse to intending conception? Just count the gains. I do not expose myself to lots of venereal diseases that most coitus free couples do. I do not conceive when I have no intention of conceiving. I

do not have to worry about such things as impotence that might prevent me from coitus at will. Oh, the gains! But I do give up being free to copulate at will. Personally, I would like such a freedom; and I probably would do a lot of copulating because I really enjoy it; but my discipline says no. According, I will give up some activity that Y'all might do very freely. I will miss it a little. No doubt about that, but considering the gains of the protection that my life style will allow me, there is no question in my mind that my choice of Natural Design is the best choice for me.

Is it worth it? That is the question each of us should answer when deciding on any course of discipline in life. Is it worth it for me to restrict coitus to conception? For me, Oh, Yes! My life is really simple because of it. If I won't go to bed with my own wife except to add another little human to the human race, then certainly I cannot be tempted to go to bed with your wife or your sister or your friend. Can I? Now, you will have to admit, that is one terrific protection that I may enjoy that most folks never do. Right? Yes, I give up some nice little advantage in life that I would not have to give up if my discipline did not require it; but Wow, what tremendous advantages I gain by being secure within my chosen discipline.

Now, if I won't have coitus – or some form of sexual organ bonding – with a girl, can you imagine my doing so with a guy? Where is the example of that in Nature? While most have to study some moral guide that has been dictated by some outside source – be it of scriptural or secular source, I am much more free with my chosen discipline than anyone I know. It really makes life simple; and if there is anything I favor, it is simple. How about you?

I am not a homosexual in that I will not have sexual intercourse with a man; but I am also not heterosexual in the light of being free to have sexual intercourse with a female – outside of intended conception. I have no such freedom; and I would not want such freedom because it would complicate my very simple life. I am what I would refer to as a Solitary Man – needing neither male nor female for completion. Natural Design has formed of me a solitary persona; and I am very proud of that persona.

A Most Amazing Miracle

I cannot *explain* my life; but I can *accept* it. **Acceptance of who we are and what we are is, I think, the very foundation of happiness.** I know of no one who is truly happy who has not accepted life. When I encounter someone who is sad, the answer is ALWAYS the same – that person is not accepting the natural life he or she is living. Invariably, rejection of the natural life results in unhappiness.

Is not every life a miracle unto itself because it has to exist within the limits of Infinite Presence? But who within the broad ranks of civilization acts like that is so? Almost no one. But I do because I take time every day to reflect on the truth - the very important truth that God is in me. It has to be so because God must be Infinite and Infinite means Everywhere; and I am part of Everywhere. Am I not? Accordingly, God is in me as It is in every particle of life and every individual. There it is – **A MOST AMAZING MIRACLE!**

I love life and I love God and I don't know how it is possible to disconnect the two – but civilization – or man contrived order – is full of social entities that make it a point to do that very thing. Most churches live, not to express the truth of the inseparability of

God and man, but to declare that the two are separate, not because God designed it that way, but because someone called Satan severed the relationship a long time ago. The excuse that many churches use to justify the impossible separation between God and man is Satan.

Satan is an alibi, I think, for justifying failure – or a right to fail. Those who do not wish to accept life and wish to justify their rejection of it label Satan as their reason to have to reject it. It is a MOST AMAZING LIE – or at least, untruth. It may not be a lie in that its believers really believe it and are not promoting something they do not believe, but it is definitely an untruth or falsehood. And that amazing untruth overwhelms the truth of life being **AN AMAZING MIRACLE**. It is terribly sad, but the greater world that pays no attention to Natural Design and chooses, instead, to make its own rules lives in relative unawareness that life – all life – is a miracle because God is in it.

Satan is a lie – or again, at least an untruth – because there is or can be no entity that can remove God from life. Satan is a falsehood because nothing can separate God and life – or even God and existence in general. Satan is a falsehood because there can be no entity that can actually struggle against something that is inside of us. How can you struggle against something that is inside of you? Tell me that. And yet, unnatural people – or people based in the unnatural – choose to believe that there can exist some entity that can take God away from life. Satan is a security blanket that is used to wrap failure to accept life.

Why do people beat one another? Because they don't recognize the status of life as a miracle. You can't beat a miracle – if you are under the impression it is a miracle. Many do not recognize life as miraculous; and they do not hesitate to beat it. Why do people kill one another? Because they do not recognize life as miraculous. If it means nothing, then it can be eliminated without guilt. Do you not agree? Is that not as sad a thing as is possible – to be free to kill because of an ignorance of God within?

The Meaning of Solitary

Satan is a little blurb and flicker of darkness. I do not wish this definition of who I am to concentrate on a blurb or a blur. I am a Solitary Man, not because I don't believe in Satan, but because I do believe in God. I believe in the God within; and that is my definition. Because I am a complete vessel of God – as all are – ***I am solitary in that within me is completion.*** That is what I mean when I say I am a ***Solitary Man. I am complete unto myself – as all are.***

It is because I am a solitary person that I do not need another to fulfill me. Most people ***need*** others to find fulfillment in life. I don't because ***I recognize the truth of the Divinity of Life.*** I am happy because I accept my life as being from and in God. So I do not need anyone outside of myself to live a full life. That's what being a solitary person means. ***You do not need anyone else to feel completed.***

Beyond Life

No one knows how it will be beyond life – after death. It's all very much a gamble on all our parts that we will have prepared the best we could for the life that will be. Who knows? I sure do not; and no one does; though many accept by hearsay some

description or other. A big part of why I choose to be a limited Naturalist in life is that I think it's the best preparation for a life beyond the senses. I may be wrong, but I'm probably not. I'm embracing in life the tremendous gifts God has given and is giving. How could that possibly be charged against me?

Can true gratitude be grounds for some sort of punishment? Not likely. My little gamble is that I will find the same God beyond my senses as I find within my senses; and more than likely, I will not recognize God anymore where I am going than where I've been. God is Infinite. I will never become so – nor should I want such a thing.

There are far more who gamble big than gamble in a small fashion like me. Practically everyone I know is choosing to gamble big – hoping that God is some magnificent guy in trousers with eyes big as saucers and hands like those of a giant that will handle any stern opposition. So many gamble the most outrageous gamble that life someplace else is holier than here. How can it be holier than here when the God that is there must be equally here to be Infinite? What can I say? It's a foolish gamble. On the other hand, I do not think my little gamble is foolish. It's realistic. I have Heaven in this life; and I will have it in the next as well.

The Safe Way

When my youngest daughter, Melissa, was about eighteen, she extended her face to me for a kiss. I reached out to kiss her on the lips. She drew back and quipped – **No, Dad, not on the lips. That would be too much like incest.** Unfortunately, much of civilization would agree with that statement and treat life like a simple kiss on the lips is tantamount to some great infraction of life. I kiss my daughter on the lips – and presto, I'm a man of incest.

In truth, however, a solitary person engages in neither in-cest nor out-cest for completion. If in-cest is having sex with a blood relative, then out-cest must be having sex with one unrelated by blood. Right? In that light, solitary people engage in neither in-cest nor out-cest. We don't engage in sex, period, when sex means coitus – unless for procreation. Why? Because as solitary people, complete unto ourselves, we don't need to violate Natural Design with others – be they of blood or outside of blood relations. See how safe we Solitary Souls are? As I offered earlier, how can I copulate with my daughter when I won't even do so with my wife – except to co-create a daughter or son?

Unfortunately, civilization in its ignorance of God being within has declared that no one is complete unto themselves and therefore must depend upon others to fulfill them. It is the perceived need we have for one another that sets the stage for all sort of Thou Shalt Not orders in life. If we need each other, then we must make rules to govern that need because not everyone should need others in the same way. If you don't need me and I shall act like you do, then civilization has to resolve that conflict with rules. Would it not be much simpler to teach the truth in the first place? Would it not be much wiser to teach the independence of worth rather than dependence of worth? Solitary souls do not need a list of Thou Shalt Not commands because they have or sense self-worth.

Solitary Relationships

I have been married three times in my life and I would not mind marrying for a fourth time – should the right lady come along. Perhaps some might think that being *Solitary* means always being by oneself. Not at all. Being *Solitary* only means **not needing others for a sense of self-esteem**; but it does not mean **having to be alone**. One can be *Solitary* and be alone and one can be *Solitary* and be with others. I very much enjoy being with others and sharing with others, **but I do not need to share with others to be happy**.

Personally, I think that *Solitary Souls* are the best mates in the world. In being happy with themselves, they have a lot of happiness to share. At least, that is the ideal. The difficult relationships in life are those when people really need each other for a sense of self-esteem; but when two or more with self-esteem relate, hey, life sparkles. How could it not? There is nothing better than two Solitary Souls Making Love – be it within marriage or otherwise.

It is very important, however, that people do not require relationships to be happy. People tell me, people have to be needed – or feel they are needed. I understand that is the world in which we live, but I do not agree that it has to be that way. Ideally, each soul should realize he or she is a perfect vessel because of the Presence of God within and be impressed with his or her own Miracle Status - then relate by sharing each others Divinity – or awareness of that Divinity. That's what a Solitary Relationship is all about.

But can we Solitary Souls kiss and fondle? Is that outside our regimen? The answer to that is it should be outside my regimen if it tends to challenge my Solitary State. In my life, I have at times kissed and fondled others without regret because my kissing and fondling as been only complimentary to us both; but there have been times when I have kissed and fondled another when the partner took it wrong. I do not mind taking a chance in exchanging affection if I think the other person is free to do so; but, boy, the red light goes on for me when a partner acts either uncomfortable with an affection or becomes too clinging because of affection. I do not believe in relationships that challenge the Solitary State of my life; and when in my judgment my Solitary State is compromised, then it's goodbye to a partner. If I am being offensive to another, it should never be for me to insist on staying around. I should leave and let the offended one follow her (or his) own path.

Complacency & Aspirin

Complacency is a wonderful word. It means **pleased with**. It is often used in a very negative way. We must not allow ourselves to become complacent, it is said, lest our complacency inhibit invention and improvement of society. Thus, we are not supposed to be pleased with our lives. I guess each individual is supposed to sacrifice his or her own potential contentment with life so that his or her discontentment can lead to some wonderful civilized invention that will improve the lot of all. To each, his or her own, but that makes no sense to me. I think it is the entire notion of sacrifice, though – that one should yield for the benefit of all. The problem with that approach is that in sacrificing one's complacency, the real worth of one's life is lost in the shuffle.

The way I see it, the only thing that makes sense is to find satisfaction with life. That way, whatever lies ahead in an afterlife – as well as what may ensue in a current life – will be paved with personal happiness and joy. The best way to assure that you will be happy is to limit your dependency to yourself as much as possible. That is the Solitary Way. Given that each is a microcosm of everyone else, it is truly – not only a wonderful way to go – but an easy and ideal way to go. If you and I were different and I needed what you have that I do not have, then that would be a different story perhaps; but given that whatever I need, I have in myself, why in the world complicate things by forming a dependency that is really unneeded?

That is not to say that what might be called aids in life should not be enjoyed and appreciated. I could do without a stove to cook my meals, but it sure is nice to have a stove. I could do without a music box and make all of my own music, but it sure is nice to have a record player – or disk player as they are these days. I could do without aspirin and put up with a headache that may come along, but it sure is nice to have a tablet handy to ease the pain. I am not suggesting that a solitary person does not have use for aids; but I think a solitary person should keep all aids in perspective and recognize they are only temporary additives for assisting us through life, not life itself.

Unhealthy addictions are no friends to the solitary person because with them, the solitary way becomes compromised. I think, however, that I would define an unhealthy addiction as anything I might use that distracts from my love of my individual life as it is. If something depresses my awareness of the wonder of life, it can become an unhealthy addiction, but as long as any aid is kept in perspective, it may enhance awareness of the wonder of life and subsequent greater enjoyment of life. Without an aspirin – or the like – a headache may distract me from enjoyment of my life; so I always try to keep a bottle of aspirin handy. I try not to become dependent on anything beyond an aspirin because of a fear that it might prove to be an unhealthy addiction, but all of that is strictly a personal call. Each one must decide for him or herself how much anything is an aid or an unhealthy addiction.

Jesus & The Solitary Way

I think Jesus was a *Solitary Soul*; and I think he recommended his *Solitary Way* to others. Through the regular and accepted Gospels of the **BIBLE**, it should be clear that he was a champion of the *Solitary Way*. What is *Love others as you love yourself* but a prescription for the *Solitary Way*? It is saying that I should find in myself all that is pleasing or necessary for happiness – and then share that happiness or contentment with others; though it may be implied that it can happen the other way around the way it is stated in the regular Gospels of the **BIBLE**. By stating *love others* first, then referencing *love of self*, it can be taken that love of others is more important than love of self or that one can learn to love oneself by loving others. I suppose one can, but personally I think it is much easier to love self first – then spray that love about. Regardless of approach, however, be it loving others first or loving self first, one should love because all are Divine; and that is a message of the *Solitary Way*.

What is *Be kind to all, even to your enemies* but a prescription for the *Solitary Way*? People have enemies when they think others can prevent their own happiness. If one realizes that one's happiness is entirely a matter of one's own handling and control,

nothing that another can do can distract from personal happiness and fulfillment. That was the real lesson of the crucifixion, I think. Jesus knew that nothing that others might do to him could erase his own self-love and thus his own murder could not interrupt that love. To have resisted death by inflicting injury on others to avoid his own fate would have been to follow a non-solitary way because it would have implied that Jesus was better than his enemies or that an enemy could upset a true self-love. Enemies arise when we become dependent on others for our happiness; but if we allow no dependency on others for our personal happiness, we can have no enemies. Thus, kindness to all – including one’s potential enemies – becomes an after thought to one in love with the Solitary Way.

What is *Only those who become like children can enter into the Kingdom* but a prescription for the *Solitary Way*? Left alone, children sense their innocence. Left alone, children do not kill each other. Left alone, children are happy. To become solitary, then, is to become like a child – whether that child is alone or with other children. But if we are not as children, then we are also not solitary. Left alone, children would not become killers, but left to adults who have come to know only guilt and rage and stupidity, children lose their innocence – and become killers. And as Jesus said someplace in the regular Gospels – *Woe to one of those who causes a child to fall into sin* – or something like that.

Those are three *Solitary Way Commands* from the regular and accepted Gospels that come to mind, but there are many verses in Gospels that Constantine and his Bishops of the 4th Century banned because they were too challenging that also tell the story of Jesus recommending the *Solitary Way*. I have commented quite extensively on two of the banned Gospels in other works and I do not want to take time in this essay to offer much about them, but *The Gospels of Thomas* and *Mary Magdalene* contain many verses that could be considered to be advocates of each of us being aware of our *Solitary Worth*. Both of these relatively unknown Gospels offer a good many *Jesus said* type verses that are missing in the accepted Gospels of the **BIBLE**.

Before ending this monologue with a song of life I wrote recently, let me offer some brief testimonies from **The Gospel of Thomas** that, I think, suggest that Jesus believed in the independent *Solitary Worth* of each one of us. I have made a considerable review of **The Gospel of Thomas** and quote both the various verses of that Gospel and my personal interpretation of them in an essay work I wrote in 2005 that I call **JESUS VIA THOMAS COMMENTARIES**. That work is unpublished as of this time, 2006, but perhaps, in time, it will be available. I have also made a considerable study of **The Gospel of Mary (Magdalene)** and have written a work on that Gospel as well. It, too, is unpublished, but perhaps, in time, it too will be available. My work on **The Gospel of Mary** is called **JESUS VIA MARY COMMENTARIES**.

Verse 3 of **The Gospel of Thomas** states: *Jesus said: If those who lead you say to you: “See, the Kingdom is in heaven,” then the birds of the heaven will precede you. If they say to you: “It is in the sea,” then the fish will precede you. But the Kingdom is within you and without you. If you will know yourselves, then you will be known and*

you will know that you are the sons of the Living Father. But if you do not know yourselves, then you are in poverty and you are poverty.

In this verse, Jesus does not tie having worth to be dependent upon him, but rather suggests that the Kingdom (of Peace and Worth) is inside of those of his audience and presumably his audience could be considered any who was listening to him – then or now. If we know who we are, he is offering, we will know we are existing sons of the Living Father, not potential sons – or children. Can a son of the Living Father, Which has worth, have anything less than worth, being from a source of worth? But if we are unaware of our status as sons of the Living Father, then we are ignorant and do not know ourselves. If we do not know who we are – or what we are – Jesus says, we are in poverty and we are poverty.

In Verse 70 of **The Gospel of Thomas**, Jesus states that we must recognize our interior worth or we will be subject to an emptiness that can kill or destroy us. To quote the verse, ***Jesus said: If you bring forth that within yourselves, that which you have will save you. If you do not have that within yourselves, that which you do not have will kill you.*** But the emphasis here is on that which we already have within – and that can only mean our intrinsic or interior worth. If we do not recognize that worth, then, in essence, we will live without sense of our blessings and it will be as if we have no blessings. He says what we do not have will kill us or destroy us, but that is really only saying that because we are unaware of ourselves, we will experience a living death. Life requires awareness; and if we live without being aware, it is the same as being dead.

In Verse 75 of **The Gospel of Thomas**, Jesus speaks directly in terms of ***Solitary Worth***. To quote that verse, ***Jesus said: Many are standing at the door, but the solitary are the ones who will enter the bridal chamber.*** Given the comparison of happiness with a ***bridal chamber***, it would be expected that it would take two to enter a bridal chamber – or experience happiness – but Jesus offers that it takes but one to enter that bridal chamber. The many who are standing about waiting to enter the bridal chamber in multiples will never enter it, he says. Only those who are solitary – or those who have a sense of independent worth – can enter the bridal chamber. Given the other verses about the Kingdom being within and our having to rely on what we have in ourselves, it should be clear that Jesus believed in ***Solitary Worth***, completely independent from any outside force or saving grace.

And finally, when asked to identify himself, Jesus offered that only those could recognize him who did as he did – or as he should have been able to do if the law of the day permitted it. In other words, only those could recognize Jesus who were Solitary Souls like he was – and is. He did not use the word solitary, but he meant it.

I have offered that I go naked because it is an expression of acceptance of myself as being a worthy son or child of God. I do not go naked primarily just because it is fun – though I do enjoy the freedom. I go naked because I am honoring myself as being fine just the way I am – just the way Nature and God are making me. The single greatest proof of one's acceptance of him or herself as a vessel of God is that he or she embraces him or herself without shame. Shame is only an expression of rejection. No one can be ashamed who fully embraces that for which he or she would otherwise be ashamed.

No Solitary Soul can be ashamed of who or what he or she is. It goes against the territory of acceptance and recognition of Divinity. Was Jesus Divine? If I am Divine

and you are Divine because God is in us, then certainly Jesus was and is no different. He was and is Divine. Any true Solitary Soul must recognize their Divinity because they must recognize their Oneness with God. It is that sense of oneness with God and Worth that defines solitary – or at least partially does. Jesus was and is a Solitary Soul. Thus, he had to recognize his own Divinity. What does one who is solitary and recognizes their own Divinity do? They go naked – or can go naked - without shame.

But it takes one to know one. It takes a fellow Solitary Soul to recognize another Solitary Soul. How does one Solitary Soul try to identify him or herself as a Solitary Soul to one who is not one, but who can become one if they listen? I think Jesus tried to get his message across through a back door, not the front door, because his audience seemed to lack the disposition necessary to hear in direct terms. That is why Jesus spoke in parables so much. He thought that telling stories and making comparisons would get his message across better than just saying the truth outright. Personally, I think he made a terrible misjudgment there because history has demonstrated that so many quote the parables and then go out and do precisely the opposite of the lesson of the parables. So much for trying to suggest ideal conduct by a tale.

Anyway, in Verse 37 of **The Gospel of Thomas**, *His disciples said: When wilt Thou be revealed to us and when will we see Thee? Jesus said: When you take off your clothes without being ashamed, and take your clothes and put them under your feet as the little children and tread on them, then shall you behold the Son of the Living One and you shall not fear.* Personally, I wish he had spoken direct to them about their being equal with him and that both his disciples and he were equally *Divine*, but in his typical *back door* approach, he tried to show the end product of his identity – shamelessness – by suggesting some shameless behavior. More than likely, however, he was not naked when he suggested that others go naked because he would have been arrested on the spot – just like I would be arrested on the spot if I were to go to downtown Laramie and suggest that others go naked to realize their own shamelessness.

Unfortunately, Jesus did not tell it directly as it is, probably because he felt that his message would go unnoticed if he did; and he may have been right. In fact, I am not so sure that his message could be understood by many today; but let me tell it directly as it is – or at least as I see it.

We are sons of the Living One. We are not sons of Evil. We are sons or children of Divinity. The Divine is all around. The Living Father is Everywhere. Being Everywhere, it is in us. No being or force can undo that Divinity. Satan is a falsehood. Nothing can remove anything from Divinity; and Divinity cannot be removed from anything. We have believed wrongly. We have no business going about acting otherwise because to do so is, in effect only, to be otherwise. But I think we have to recognize we are Divine and then go naked – not go naked to recognize we are Divine. Jesus tried the back door approach by suggesting ideal behavior to learn the truth; but I think it is much better to know the truth and then practice ideal behavior.

Not to criticize Jesus, however. In his message – and messages – are indeed hidden golden nuggets that offer that the Solitary Way is the way to go. The message is still the same. Love yourself because you are Divine and Complete as you are; though perhaps it would be better to say – Know you are Divine and Complete – and therefore, love yourself – and love others as yourself once you have, indeed, secured a true self-love.

Ending it with a Song

A few weeks ago I wrote a bit of a song that is somewhat biographical that offers to some degree the theme of this essay in verse. I have long been confused as to how so many who think of themselves as Christian can have any other impression than *Solitary Worth* because I think it is what Jesus taught. I do not use the term *solitary* in my song, but it is implied just as it is implied in the Jesus command of the canonized Gospels to *Love others as you love yourself*. That which I offer in my song is saying the same thing. Know yourself first and be happy with yourself – and then, with that complacency in hand – share that love with others. *But you cannot love others until you love yourself*. Or, at least, it is not easy to do so. I suppose it can follow like Jesus suggested. We can come to love others and from that, secure self-love; but I think time has demonstrated it doesn't work very well that way. Does it?

In my song, I ask – **why do people think the way they do?** I have never understood how souls who think they are either the real sons of God or the adopted sons of God can go about acting like life only has meaning if it is imposed on others – assuming that life equates to an understanding of life. I have never understood how someone who claims worth can go about acting like he must prove worth to achieve it – as if life is not worthy in and of itself and can only become worthy with some extra effort. I have never believed my worth is dependent upon my actions and have always believed that my life is worthy, independent of actions. **Life itself is worthy; and I am worthy because I am part of a worthy life.** As I offered above, I think it is very likely that Jesus believed likewise.

Be that as it may, let me end it with my song. It's a song that tries to look at the *Solitary Worth* of the individual. In my song, it is talking about me; but it could be talking about anyone. Before life, During life, and Going on Beyond when I die – all life is *Blessed* because all life is *Divine*, being of and from *God*. It is the *Divinity of Life* – all life and all existence – that gives it its worth.

Knowing that I am Divine is the *Solitary Way*. Knowing that I need nothing extra to become perfect because I am already perfect is the *Solitary Way*. Acting like my nakedness is the very nakedness of God is the *Solitary Way*. Embracing each and every one of my parts and functions because each is Divine & Good is the *Solitary Way*. Knowing that I can love you because I have first known and loved me is the *Solitary Way*.

My Friends, I can speak from experience; though I realize my experience is only my own; but from where I sit and stand, I have tried to live that which I know as THE SOLITARY WAY almost all my life; and from that single voice of experience, I highly recommend it.

Thanks for listening!

*Francis William Bessler,
Laramie, Wyoming,
March 28th, 2006*

My Song of Solitary Worth follows.

WHY DON'T PEOPLE KNOW?

A song of life by
Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
Written February 20th, 2006

Refrain:

***Why do people think – the way they do?
Why do people want – to keep on being blue?
Why don't people know – that God's in here?
Why do people want – to keep God out there?***

Even as a child – I wondered how it could be
that anything could exist – outside Divinity.
If God is all around - why do we moan and plead
for God to come – when He's already in, you see? ***Refrain.***

When I was only ten – I'd strip down to my skin
so that God could see – all the wonder He was in.
I wanted God to know – I was so proud of Him
and that I didn't think – He made me out of sin. ***Refrain.***

And now that I'm older – nothing much has changed.
I've grown a bit here and there – but I'm pretty much the same.
I'm still so proud of God – and the two of us still play.
God and me together – still naked without shame. ***Refrain.***

I'm still in awe of life – cause I still think it's Divine.
The flesh is a wonder – though a passage of time.
It's a way for my soul to know – that all life is fine.
So I'll enjoy my life – to find a truth that's mine. ***Refrain.***

And I think it will be – the same when I die.
My soul will depart – leave this grand body behind.
But God and me – we'll be – just another child
and we'll find another skin – and go naked all the while. ***Refrain.***

So if you want to be – just the same as me.
And if you want to find – your own Divinity
And if you want to know – your soul to be free,
become friends with God – go Naturally like me. ***Refrain (3).***

THE SOLITARY WAY



THE END

IMPEACHING A PRESIDENT

(2 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler

January 24th, 1999

Do I think President Clinton should be removed from office due to the current impeachment charges against him? Yes and No. Or I suppose that could be better translated as "Perhaps."

First of all, Bill Clinton is our chief public officer of the land. If he doesn't choose to go public before the American people about this mess, then the answer is "Yes." He should be removed because he would be defying his public status by staying hidden. And never mind all the nonsense that his lawyers are going public for him. He needs to go public, starting with an appearance before the Senate to explain himself. If he can't – or won't - do that because it would be too much of an embarrassment, then it should be too embarrassing for the American populace to claim him as their public leader.

It seems to me that throughout all the legal-smegal agenda being put forth by both sides of the impeachment issue, the people are being lost in the wind. Does not a president preside over the public that has elected him? Unless an issue is some top secret thing that would undermine the security of the nation as a whole, a president should be public – and go public all he can – never clinging to a right of privacy when he is a public figure. You can be sure almost no one would agree with me on that, but it is what I think and it is where I am coming from in this discussion about impeachment.

If a leader of the public does not choose to discard his right to privacy upon election to an office, then he or she should stay away from leadership. That is my opinion. If I were any kind of public leader, I would invite my constituents in and would not cling to privacy. That may be somewhat easier for me than most because I do not cling to privacy as an unelected person; but it would also be somewhat difficult because I would have to entertain a public with my openness whereas now I pretty much live outside of the public view.

But in principle, I would be willing to open my entire life to the view of a constituency. I suspect that Bill Clinton would cling to a need to be private and stay quiet about private matters. Most would – including many of the outspoken calling for Clinton to step down because he violated his privacy with activity they would not do if they had been in his place. And of course, he lied about it. But the way I see this lying issue is any one who hides behind the **5th Amendment** – though legal – is a liar. A liar can either tell a falsehood, deny the truth, or plead to not answer a question.

I'm not interested in all the legal arguments in this discussion of mine. In my mind, be it legal or not, Bob Barr is just as guilty of lying to the court by refusing to answer a question put to him on the basis of a claim to privacy as Bill Clinton is guilty of lying to the court by hem-hawing about and dancing around the truth like it is some kind of open bear trap. In his divorce case, Representative Bob Barr was asked – were you unfaithful to your wife during your marriage? His answer was: I decline to answer. So, you see, one kind of liar is trying another kind of liar in this impeachment mess; but both are liars.

Be that as it may, if Bill Clinton should come forward and explain himself adequately to the Senate and the American public he serves, without hesitation, I would not only not impeach him, but I would hope he could come by and say hello; and I would openly embrace him – just as I would Bob Barr if he would adequately explain himself concerning his probable infidelity during his marriage.

So, there's my answer to the question – should President Clinton be impeached for lying to a grand jury and encouraging others to defend him in his lie? If he will agree to not do that in the future and pledge to be public with his public trust, then he should be allowed to continue as our chief public servant; but if he will not agree to go public, it will be a clear indication that he will continue to hide behind the cloak of privacy for the rest of his administration. If Bill Clinton cannot show truthfulness and honesty during these proceedings, then he surely cannot be trusted to tell the truth – starting tomorrow. Can he?

GOING NOWHERE

Written Feb. 27, 1999.

Refrain:

I'm going nowhere – no matter where I go.

I'm going nowhere – no matter who I know.

I'm going nowhere – we're the same – you and me – cause where I go,

I'm still the same ole me.

I used to think I had to travel this whole world wide

to find the love I need – to find peace of mind.

But now I find that's all I need is the me that's in this room –

For knowing me as a reflection of God puts love into bloom. **Refrain.**

People think they have to go into someone else's arms –

to find the love they need to bring out all their charms.

But what they don't realize is all they need is their eyes -

For looking back at them in mirror is God's own sunrise. **Refrain.**

I wonder why it is that people can look up into the sky

and see only clouds and miss God near and wide.

For God must be in everything, in everything we see.

In everything that is is Precious God and Blessed Divinity. **Refrain.**

Finish:

You're going nowhere – no matter where you go.

You're going nowhere – no matter who you know.

You're going nowhere – we're the same – me and you.

You're going nowhere – cause where you go, you're still the same ole you.

THERE'S NO PLACE

Written Feb. 28, 1999.

Refrain:

***There's no place where I can GO where God I cannot find.
There's no place where I can BE where I can't find the Divine.***

God is in everything we see –
It's in the mountains and It's in the streams.
It's in the squirrels and It's in the fish;
and It's in a frown and It's in a kiss. ***Refrain.***

God is in everything we know –
It's in our blood and It's in our snow.
It's in our living and It's in our dead;
and It's in our wheat and It's in our bread. ***Refrain.***

BRIDGE:

***God is living and God is sweet. God is in everything I eat.
God is in the air above. God is this thing called love.
God is in everything we feel –
It's in our cotton and It's in our mills.
It's in our cries and It's in our laughs;
and It's in our future and It's in our past. Refrain.***

God is in every part of me –
It's in my heart and It's in my cheeks.
It's in my hands and It's in my feet;
It's in my bones and It's in my teeth. ***Refrain.***

Repeat ***Bridge***, then ***Refrain*** twice.

MY LIFE & MY DREAM

(2 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler

October 13th, 1999

Speaking frankly, I have been a lonely kid on the block in this life - and because of that, I have not been as happy as I could be. There is no doubt about that. This has been somewhat of an unhappy life, but it should not be that way. It has been a bit unhappy for me because of the loneliness aspect of it. It is not easy being happy when you are the only one doing what you are doing; and for most of my life, I have been alone in my conduct. And that is what has made it a bit unhappy, though not dreadfully so. No one wants to be alone; and being alone does hurt a bit.

But all of us have our troubles in life. Perhaps I have no more room to complain than anyone else. I have been lonely, yes, but others have had to put up with all sorts of hardship and pain – the likes of which I have seen little.

In my opinion, though, the biggest reason why there is so much pain and hardship is that people do not act like me. They cause their own pain by insisting on living separated from life and abusing themselves by bad habits. Very few consider that the life we have is good enough and in wanting a better life and insisting there is a better life to be had in another world, they decide this life is to be tolerated at best and that is all. So in just tolerating life and not enjoying it for what it is, they cause themselves pain – lots of pain – by choosing unhealthy and unnatural habits which end in disease of mind and body.

The sad thing about it is it should not be that way. We should not have all this pain and separation from life that we have madly chosen for ourselves. It hurts me that so many have felt estranged from life and then go forward to make professions out of that estrangement. Guys like Paul of Tarsus and Sigmund Freud can't handle life as it is and then insist that others should not handle it as it is either. And thus ones like me are accused of being sick of mind because we want to handle life as it is and see life as it is as a miracle – and not spend our lives hoping for a miracle beyond life.

Unfortunately for me and the world at large, guys like Paul and Sigmund, whose only happiness was to be unhappy with life, have made the laws that outlaw open acceptance and embracement of life as fashioned by God & Nature. It is not God who would clothe what He makes, but rather man who chooses to hide what God makes and make man ill in the process. Then almost disgracefully, they who outlaw the Natural claim that God who made it led them to do so. That's like painting over a Michelangelo painting and claiming Michelangelo asked you to do it. Do you think that would be very likely? I don't.

Of course, it's to each his own. Others don't do what I have done in life because, sincerely, they have not and do not see it as the right thing to do. In a way, they can't help themselves from isolating from me because they think I am wrong in what I do. That is definitely the truth of the matter. I can hold no grudge against anyone who has chosen to refuse nakedness because they have done so and do so for seeing nakedness as less than ideal.

But once again, I think it should be seen as the ideal. It is not and that is why I have had to live the lonely life I have. But it should be the ideal; and it is so sad that it is not because the Heaven we could have here on Earth is slipping away. I may be alone, but at least I have not abandoned the ways of Heaven in life. It amazes me that people say they want to die and go to Heaven, but in life, they refuse the way of Heaven. Does that make any sense whatever? I think not. Heaven is only being happy with the gift of life – and for the gift of life. I just do not understand why the masses delay Heaven? It makes no sense to me.

The way it has been, though, does not mean it will always be that way. If necessary, I will continue on alone, embracing life as it is and not making a sham out of it in one way or another. But I hope that the way it has been is not the way it will be. I hope another Wild Angel will join me and the Heaven I know will become a happier Heaven for the two of us – and that maybe through two who have found Heaven, others will not be far behind. Let's just say, that has long been my dream – and, at least for now, it remains so.

Thanks for listening!

Francis William Bessler

October 13th, 1999

MY LIFE & MY DEDICATION

(2 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler

October 14th, 1999

All of us have our troubles in life. Certainly, I have no more room to complain than anyone else. I have been lonely, yes, but others have had to put up with all sorts of hardship and pain – the likes of which I have seen little. In the isolation I know now due to being somewhat alone in my convictions, I need to keep that in mind. Above all, I must remain thankful as an individual and not lose that focus. It is all too possible to lose the bird in the left hand by ignoring it while reaching for another in the right and stumbling in the process, thus releasing the bird in the left hand as well and not securing anything with the right hand and losing everything in the end.

Too many lose sight of the little idea that God is all about; and many never gain the sight at all. For the most part, I am not at odds with most of my fellow humans in the idea that awareness of God should be expressed; but I am at odds with the majority of my fellow humans in how that awareness should be expressed. It is the “how” part of the picture that sets me apart – or at least has set me apart.

Most who pursue an awareness of God at all follow the course that says God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit. Originally in life, I agreed with that stance, but for most of my life I have considered that argument irrelevant. It matters not in the least what God is – be it spirit or matter. That which matters is that God IS and is everywhere and it is the awareness that God is everywhere that should be the focus of our lives. And more than that, God IS the Creator of life – not WAS the Creator. Unfortunately, we think that life was created and set in motion in one instant in the beginning; but as I see it, life is being created in and with every instant.

Be that as it may, whether life was created or is being created, I have long considered it illogical to claim you can love what God has done or is doing in one instant and then damn the action in the next instant by claiming the creative act was not or is not perfect. If the creative act was perfect or is perfect, then as created beings, we are perfect. And if we as created beings are perfect, we have no business acting like we are not because that would dishonor God Who is making us. As God is creating us, there is nothing that can spoil that act – including a so-called Satan.

The world is caught up with the idea that something can spoil creation once it has been created and we punctuate that idea of spoiling creation with the idea of Satan; but in reality, nothing can spoil the act of creation. Though we may think otherwise, as I see it, no finite being can spoil or upset anything that an Infinite Presence is doing. If one becomes spoiled, it is not a Satan who is responsible, but he or she who acts without dignity. Those who have become spoiled should not blame Satan or anyone else. They should blame themselves and take responsibility for their conduct; but, even if a spoiled one becomes spoiled, that does not spoil all of creation of which a spoiled one is a part.

So, there it is – my life and my dedication. I hope I will find another who shares my view and conduct in life, but I hope I never let loose of that bird in my left hand while reaching for another with my right. Maybe I will be lucky and will have both hands filled in one lifetime – and maybe not.

It may not seem so, but I think everyone is dedicated to something in life – if to nothing more than just doing nothing or being nothing. One can be dedicated to that as well as anything else. My dedication is to try and live my life aware that my life is Divine because God resides in it. Nakedness for me is not being without clothes; but rather it is being clothed with God and Nature. I hope I don't allow anything to distract me from my dedication – though nothing is certain. I may get distracted. Who knows? There are so many who believe that there is a Satan who is the root of all evil who are dedicated to distracting me from my dedication because of the implication that if I am right, they are wrong. Few of us are willing to admit we may be wrong. We will just have wait and see how it all turns out.

Thanks for listening

Francis William Bessler

October 14th, 1999

MEET IN THE MIDDLE

Written Sept. 27, 2000

Refrain:

*When two hearts, two minds, two lives – meet in the middle
there's a tale of true love defined.*

*When two hearts, two souls, two loves – meet in the middle,
No one is left behind.*

1. So many times, people join together, and leave their very own space.
They give up themselves, to find another – and end up losing their face.
Refrain.
2. Each of us is, a wonderful mystery, filled with God's good grace.
No one's a loser, who loves that mystery – and runs at their own pace.
Refrain.
3. The tale of true love, is to love yourself, and to give of that to another.
The key to it all, is to treat all the same – and see each as a sister or brother.
Refrain.
4. So many people, think Heaven is distant, and that God is way beyond.
In truth, God is here, and so is Heaven – when the grace of God is the bond.
Refrain.
5. Treating life, like it's only personal, is the worst mistake we can make.
God's not a person. It's a Only a Presence – that makes everything great.
Refrain.

A LITTLE ABOUT GOD

(5 Pages)

By Francis William Bessler

May 5, 2001

Revised slightly on Sept. 7th, 2008

The conversation begins: Who is God? One asks that. And I say, my impression of God is that God is not a Who, but a What. You mean, God is not a person? And I say, Yes, God is **NOT a person**. And from that small beginning, I can proceed to offer my impression of God.

I think all any of us can do is offer an impression of God. None of us can define God as God really is. All we can do is say, God is like this or that – in our mind. That which is important when we talk about God is that there is no final objective in detail we all can know for sure. The better the explanation, the better the chance of one being a better description of God than that of another; but in the end, your version of God may be more like the real God than mine or mine may be better than yours – though neither of us can tell whose version is closer to the truth. All we can do is surmise.

Now the problem with most religious people is that they do not know they are surmising. They think they have the real thing and act like they have the real thing and go about prancing and dancing and preaching as if they actually have the real thing. More than likely, however, they don't have the real thing and any demands they may make based upon their actual ignorance of God could amount to real tragedy to their students. That goes on all over the world. Teachers who know nothing teach what they think they know; and students of ignorant teachers walk away with more of the same – **ignorance – posed as knowledge**

Having said that and hopefully having made it clear that I do not know God anymore than anyone who is reading this, let me offer my impression of God. Like so many others in this world, I think God is important because without an impression of God as source, I can know nothing of me as product. Since I do want to know at least a little about me as child of God, then it is good that I know something about my Father – God. Or just as accurate, it is good that I know something about my Mother – God – though in my impression of God, God is neither male nor female. God is an **IT**.

Why do I think of God as an It? I do so because my God is all over. My God is In everything as It is Everywhere and thus my God cannot be limited to any form that would say It could be male or female. **It just IS**. Those who make God a man have another impression of God than my own. My God cannot be a man with penis and testicles anymore than my God can be a woman with a vagina. My God can be neither male nor female because my God cannot be defined.

My God is Infinite. The very definition of infinite is “indefinable.” How can an entity that is “indefinable” be defined as male or female? Yet, there are many who start their impression of God with a definition of God being male. In my view, those who do have already stepped way over the acceptable rules of dealing with God. They have violated proper intellectual behavior that requires honesty.

No one can be honest who starts with a contradiction – an insistence on defining that which is known to be indefinable. Almost everyone who believes in God believes that God is Infinite. Yet many pretend they can define God and go forward in life like the definition of God is as sure as the blue in the sky. Then, having defined an indefinable entity, they offer all sort of commandments based upon their ill conceived definition – all having come from their indefinable God of course.

Think about it. Am I not correct in thinking that an entity that goes on and on cannot be defined? That is to say, such an entity cannot be limited. For an infinite being, an end cannot be conceived. If you think you can conceive of an end to God, go ahead and try. I dare you. You will soon realize such a feat is impossible because an infinite God that ends is impossible. An unlimited being or a being that cannot end is infinite. That is the very definition of God – an unlimited being or an un-definable being. Is it not?

No one can say, there is the face of God. See the eyes and the mouth and the ears. See how plain they are. See here is where the eye begins and there is where the eye ends. It cannot be. All that is God must be without capability of definition. So how can one say an eye begins here and ends there? And yet if you cannot claim to know where the eye of God begins and ends, how can you know where any other part of Its body begins or ends? It is such a game those who claim God as a person play. God can come to them like a ghost in the air or can go from them like a tire being deflated. **Their God is not infinite at all – but a finite one that can come and go as it pleases – or as a believer pleases.** God-come. God-go. The believer is in control. God is not.

Having the impression, then, that my God must be indefinable, how can I proceed? I can only say that God is “like” this or that. That is the best I can do – and that is the best anyone can do. Knowing what God is like, or what I can best conjure about what God is like, I can go forward and understand more of myself than if I did not have an impression of what God is like. I have already concluded by making God an entity that must be everywhere that God can’t be male or female with dangling participles.

So, I have an impression of what God is not – as something that can end; but who can imagine much about something that is endless? That does not do much to clarify who or what I might be as a product of something that is endless. Does it? Now, what impression of God do I have about what God IS – other than that God is endless? As best as I can imagine it, God is **like THE LIGHT**. Try as my little mind might, I can find no better impression. But what an impression! Though many who have different impressions might disagree, “the light” is my best impression of God. Of course, I am not alone in my impression. I am not claiming that. I am only claiming that I am one of maybe some who see God more as “the light” than anything else.

Now, let me make it clear, God is not only “**the light**” because God exists in the dark too. Whatever that is in **the light** is also in the dark in terms of God. At least, my God must be everywhere – light and dark. So, God is not only “**the light**” because to be so would be to limit God to **the light**. I can’t do that and be fair to my impression of God.

But why am I so comfortable with saying that for me God is **like the light**? Because for me, whatever God is, God is the **SOURCE** of all that is. From the light that we know on this earth comes all things that we know on this earth. From the light that comes as energy from the sun, all that exists on earth owes its origin. Without the light and the

energy that is in the light and perhaps is the light, nothing as we know it could be. We, as earthlings, owe everything to **THE LIGHT**. Accordingly, that is why I would describe my God as being **like the light**. For me, there is no better explanation possible.

The light shines on all and judges none. The light makes all thrive and all perform. The light provides energy to all – and refuses itself to nothing. The light continues even in darkness because what is started in the light and because of the light still continues in darkness. Without the light, nothing that lives in darkness could exist. So, God is more **like the light** than anything I can know.

That mysterious thing called light makes for all of my food and energy. The light is the source of all that I am. If I have a soul that is an entity itself outside of my body, and I believe there is such a thing, my soul, too, owes its existence to the light. So, what is my impression of God? God is that which is in everything – **like the light** – that makes everything go. May I repeat:

God is that which is in everything – like the light – that makes everything go.

God is not a male standing outside of life. That is the worst impression of God I can imagine – though it is the most popular impression of God that humans love. It is, for me, irrational; and I cannot abide by it. When God is made male, God is made a judge, offering fruit to one and denying it to another. When God is made male, God is limited to providing the money I need to buy my food rather than seen as the food itself. God is food, not the money to buy it. God can't be delved out in parcels as if some deserve and some don't. So God can't be male because all males by nature can only give to some and not all. All males are limited. So God can't be a male that is limited. Can It?

And since God is **the light** – or **like the light** – that makes me a son of **the light** as it might make you a daughter of **the light**. Each of us is an equal child of **the light**. If someone asks you, who are you? Say, I am not sure who I am, but I do know what I am. I am a son or a daughter of **THE LIGHT**. It really doesn't matter who I am – in terms of who my finite parents are – but it does matter what I am. I am a wonderful mystery of life that has as its source – God. I am a son of **the light** – not “*the*” son of **the light** – but **“a”** son of **the light**. I am **“a”** child of God.

Now, wouldn't it be nice if we all thought that way? Wouldn't it be nice if we all believed that we all come equally from **THE LIGHT**? Then we could all be free to skip in life as a butterfly and touch upon everything we could, in a way, devouring all on which we land as food for our souls. And you could reach out and touch the **body of light** that is you and I could reach out touch the **body of light** that is me – and there would be no shame.

I believe it is as I have stated. **We all should have no shame because, in fact, we are all children of THE LIGHT.** We can have no sin because sin is simply being without light. Since no one can be without light, then no one can sin – in terms of be “of sin.” We can sin in terms of harming individuals, including ourselves, but we cannot sin in terms of being of sin – or **full of sin**. To sin is to be **without light**. Since no one can be without light as a creature that it is, being dependent upon the light as its source, then no one can be **sinful** by nature. We can sin and do evil to one another, believing we can sin or be without light, but as evil as we may act, we can do no sin in terms of **we cannot defy the light. We cannot dismiss the light. We cannot dismiss God. Can we?**

So, if we are all of the light and in the light and cannot dismiss the light upon us or in us or through us, let us start acting like it. **Let us all go natural in the sunshine, knowing that nothing that comes from the light deserves to be hidden;** for to hide anything that comes from the light is to try to hide light itself; **and to try to hide that which comes from the light is to try to hide God.** It's really simple. Isn't it? Who among us should really dare to hide God? We are all equally worthy of life and love and happiness because we all come from **THE LIGHT**.

Keep in mind that when I think of God as **The Light** rather than as Father, I am playing a game with my mind just as those who think of God as Father are playing a game in their minds to describe God. No one can know God – not me who wants to think of It as **The Light**, nor they who want to make God a male in their own image. We are all just doing the best we can to help define our source, but my definition of God as **The Light** leaves me with an impression of God as **ONLY source** whereas those who have an impression of God as Father have God as not only source, but also as *firm disciplinarian*.

Many who are religious do not want to leave God as only the source of life, but also as judge and jury of each who are brought into life. Fathers discipline and scold and punish and reward. So those who would make God a male and not an It define God in an image that lends to discipline. **They call God a Father so that God can be used as a tool of discipline in terms of serving as one who will punish for supposed misconduct.** I doubt that God was made Father in the minds of those who originated it as a him out of loving respect for God as source. For sure, they wanted God as an image of judgment too; and that is why they called God a him and a Father. Don't you think?

“Wait till your father gets home!” Has not many a mother used that to terrify a child into behaving? My mother certainly did – and it worked too. My father – like Father God – was the disciplinarian in the family. All Mom had to do was threaten me with punishment by my father and I became the nicest kid in the neighborhood. And sometimes when I was not so nice and Father did wield his power and authority, I was reminded that Dad did not have the strap in the pantry dangling there just to decorate the room. When the occasion called for it, Dad used the strap on me and my siblings – and I was immediately made aware that Leo was not only my Dad, but also my “Father.” Leo the Lamb became Leo the Lion when little Sonny misbehaved; and the lion in Dad growled and snarled and clawed me into submission.

And so it is with those who want God as a Father and not just as a non judgmental source. Behind their desire to see God as loving source, they want so much to be able to claim that others who do not do as they would do should be punished. It is reward for themselves and eternal punishment for offenders. Both desires are fulfilled with just one word for God - Father. *“Wait until your father gets home”* becomes *“Wait until Judgment Day.”* **Both a spanking in time and an eternal punishment on Judgment Day has a father lurking in the shadows.**

To each his or her own, but I no longer need to fear a father in God because I do not need to see God as a person who wields anything for me or against me, but as a **SOURCE** which provides the mysterious energy that allows me to live and die – or pass on and perhaps spring forth to life again from whatever seeds may have accompanied my passing.

The mystery of life and death is at is and I cannot change it. I can only render respect for it all as a process and give credit to **The Light** for making it all happen in the

first place. I do not fear **The Light** as it will take me and support me and change me as It will in Its own way without regard to my understanding any of it.

Perhaps when I die, my soul will be released from my current body within **The Light** to assume another body within **The Light**. Indeed, I have personally researched logic pertaining to the soul and have reason to suspect that souls are reincarnated to continue in a subsequent life, but even if it is not so and my being is totally consumed by **The Light** when I die, it would be a fitting conclusion because all belong to **The Light**. No one can escape **The Light**. So, we might as well enjoy It.

Go now and act like that which you are – a child of THE LIGHT!

The poet in me offers a poem in me below. Sing it, too, if you wish!

CHILD OF THE LIGHT

Written May 5th, 2001

Oh, *Child of The Light*, play as you will.
You have but to live to find your fill.
You can't understand from whence you came.
Just embrace it all joyfully as if it's a game.

For a game life is, or should be for all.
Oh, *Child of The Light*, have yourself a ball.
Look at the earth and the sun and the moon
and know that they are all in tune.

The wonder of all of God's great creation
should fill your mind with jubilation.
Oh, *Child of The Light*, you fit in well
and you ring as you should as one of the bells.

So, don't fret and worry and live in fear.
As God is your source, It's also your care.
Be not afraid as you go forward in time.
Oh, *Child of The Light*, you've a life that's *Divine*.

A LITTLE ABOUT GOD

THE END!

A GENTLER REACTION TO SEPT. 11, 2001

(4 Pages)

By Francis William Bessler

Atlanta, Ga. U.S.A.

Sept. 14, 2001

Perhaps in early 1991 – or was it 1992 – or 1993 – or sometime in the past, one of the “faceless cowards” who was part of the assault on the Pentagon or the twin towers in New York was only a teenager when an American made bomb or missile struck close to him and tore away from him his parents or his brother or sister – or friend. And maybe that little faceless coward shook his fist at an imaginary enemy and cried – “You bastards! I will make you pay!”

That’s probably how many faceless cowards are born. Don’t you think? Something terrible happens and a previously quiet soul turns into an angry young man or woman with but one passion – to make those dastardly bastards who killed their mother or brother or friend pay for what they did. And because humans are born with a thing called “compassion,” one angry young man who lost a brother or sister or father to an act of terror can convince many who did not lose anyone that the first one’s loss was actually a loss for all. Thus, one angry young man with a reason for revenge soon gathers to him a dozen who become angry due to the tale of the victim. Now, you have not just one young victim out for revenge – but that young man and 11 others.

So the angry dozen go off and seek out the ones who did the dastardly deed to the first one – and in the process, they manage to wipe out some innocents related to the original bastard. That prompts one or more of the new innocents to shake their fists at the murderers who murdered as a response to the first murder so long ago. Thus, with revenge as the main companion of the newly wronged innocents, new soldiers are born who must find and punish all those who made them cry. And so it goes, on and on and on.

Unfortunately, I think sometimes that the greatest crime of all is compassion because it causes many who have no reason to take action against a fellow human clan to follow the will of one who thinks he or she has been done wrong. From that we have armies that march against fellow human beings to right a wrong done to one or two or three. But do we stop to ask what motivated the faceless coward who inflicted pain upon us to do what he did? No – not very often. We assume that whatever his reason was, it was not sufficient enough for what he did. But maybe if we had taken some time to review with him his reasons before he did what he did, he would not have done it.

I voted for George Bush Jr. for President, but I do not agree with him that the men who commandeered the American planes and crashed into American buildings can be called faceless cowards. As I write this, many of them will later today be given faces as their names and faces are published, but even with faces, they will not become cowards. It serves no one any credit to call another who gives his life for his cause a coward, but in

calling another a coward when he was actually extremely brave for what he did, the air is filled with more hatred and the killing continues because of it. What man is a coward who gives his life for his cause?

What if President Bush were to have called the angry young men who tried to kill some American enterprise simply “unknown soldiers” – for that they were at the time of his abusive name calling. I know it would be difficult to label others who have just killed your fellow citizens simply unknown soldiers, but in all fairness, that is exactly what they were – for their own cause. In recognizing that these unknown soldiers had a grievance that caused them to do what they did, the world could now be facing a promise for peace rather than a pledge for more of the same insanity that caused the initial bravery of the unknown soldiers.

What if President Bush would say? “Osama Bin Laden, let us meet together in Pakistan and discuss your grievances. Perhaps we can work to resolve that which is so irritating to you.” And maybe Osama Bin Laden would have responded, “Yes, George, I think you are right.” And maybe it wouldn’t happen that way too. Maybe Osama Bin Laden has too much hate in his heart to agree to meet with President George Bush, but more than likely the world will never know what might have been because cooler heads may not prevail.

But regardless of how it happens or might have happened, let us never forget that anyone who gives his life for a cause must have had a darn good reason – and such a one should never be labeled a coward. Was the American pilot who dropped an atom bomb on Japan a faceless coward? To the Japanese for whom millions of innocents died, the answer is yes. To the Americans who were seeking revenge for Pearl Harbor, the answer is no.

As this current conflict ensues and perhaps millions of civilians on all sides of a conflict are killed or maimed, let us keep in mind that as the faceless cowards who engineered the American tragedy in New York did not distinguish civilians from soldiers, neither did many an American soldier or pilot of past wars – including most recently, The Gulf War. The American pilot who dropped bombs on Japanese cities in World War II did not distinguish civilians from soldiers; and it is good to keep that in mind as we nurture our current anger.

I think it’s good, too, that we who are Christians should turn to our leader for direction in this or any time. Let those of us who are Christian ask of ourselves, what would Christ do? Would Christ encourage us to take up arms and go out and slay those with whom we disagree? Each must answer that according to his or her own understanding of Christ, but my understanding of Christ would tell me that the way of the gun would not be his way – and so neither should it be my own. Would Christ who died on the cross without resentment and without disdain take up a gun and go kill some faceless coward or brave general for whatever reason? I doubt it. Don’t you? Well, some of us who are Christian know that anyone who would die innocent of the charges against him asking forgiveness for his executioners would not agree with revenge.

But it is not because Christ would not have encouraged revenge that it is wrong. Revenge is wrong because it solves nothing as it encourages the action that motivates it in the first place. Going to war to redress the falling of the twin towers in New York will only encourage more hatred and more faceless cowards to act against us. Instead, why don’t we try to give those cowards a face? And then understanding their grievances, we

can deal with them – and maybe we will find that they are actually brothers and sisters who have the same desires as us – to live in peace and prosperity on this Earth where we all share in the fruits of Paradise.

In all fairness to those of the Islam faith for whom so much of the current Middle Eastern chaos is taking place, America, I think, is a bit too ignorant of the plight of the Palestinian. I may be wrong, but I suspect that we will find that many of the faceless cowards who dared to inflict pain on America can be traced to some degree of Palestinian contempt for America simply because of America's blind allegiance to Israel. As I write this, I am among the ignorant because I know almost nothing about it. And yet, there are millions as ignorant as myself who know nothing of the current conflict or what is causing it who have allied themselves on the side of Israel for no other reason than the Jewish faith is the mother of Christianity.

At one time, my heart was with Israel too; and thus I made my mind agree – without so much as giving the Palestinian view one slight moment of thought. But time has led me to try to understand. I do not understand yet, but maybe if I take some time to study the issue, maybe I will. And if I can take some time to study an issue for which I know nothing, then surely President George Bush and a lot of Americans can follow that same course – and maybe, given some intelligent review, the world can help to resolve the Palestinian/Israeli conflict – a conflict that seems to be taking so many lives and costing the world so much more than it can afford.

Realistically, who was in Israel before Israel became a nation in the 1940s? Not many of them were Jews because the Jewish problem was that they were a people without a nation. I'd say that points to the great possibility that upon taking Israel for themselves after World War II, many who were already there must have become displaced. And though I do not know it now as I write this, I suspect that those who were displaced to make room for the wandering Jews are those we now know as Palestinians. Furthermore, I suspect that is the issue of the current conflict. In feeling like they were simply moved out to make room for the new nation of Israelites, those who have been displaced are mad as hell. And would we not be mad as hell if it happened to us as well?

So, before we Americans go on half cocked as we have since Israel gained its independence in the 1940s, perhaps we should review the modern history of the land. Maybe we will find that Osama Bin Laden is nothing more than a wandering Palestinian, by origin or by compassion; and maybe we will find that he represents a displaced nation that has been expelled from a homeland. And then maybe by putting our minds where are hearts are, we can aid the Jews and the Palestinians to reach some reasonable accord.

Where there is a will, there is a way. It is certainly true. If all of us who have been impacted by the current Israeli/Palestinian conflict will put forth the will, we can together resolve our conflicts. Before Palestine became the new Israel in the 1940s, it must have had a heart of its own. It is only by recognizing that it did have a heart and by recognizing the nature of that heart that the current conflict can be resolved. To put an end to this mad affair, America and all combatants must be willing to abide by reason and recognize that all parties have their perceptions – and then try to accommodate each by offering to each a reasonable plot of land in which to express a faith.

And if there needs to be a “New Jerusalem” for one or the other of the faiths, then please, someone, somewhere, let it be. My home state of Wyoming is arid like much of what I can see is the so called Holy Land. Perhaps either the Jews or the Palestinians can be offered a section of the state and perhaps the capital can be called Jerusalem. As far fetched as something like this might seem to be at first hand, that notion could provide an answer. It would not have to be Wyoming as a place, but somewhere, anywhere, a new Holy Land can be established. Who ever decided that there can only be one Holy Land on this Earth? Right?

Or the current Israel can be split right down the middle – with half going to the old Palestinians and half to the new Jews. But in any case, where there is a will, there is a way. Be it a Jerusalem, Wyoming or a split Israel or some other fantastic notion, the conflict can be resolved by peaceful means – if only we have the will to do so. In many cases, the old adage of “united we stand, divided we fall” does not work. In many cases, it is just the opposite that is needed. Divided we stand, united we fall. It hasn’t worked to unite the Palestinians and the Jews. So maybe it will work to divide them – by letting each have a land for expression. Perhaps, Huh? What do you say, Osama Bin Laden? Would you be willing to be Mayor Osama Bin Laden of Jerusalem, Wyoming?

A GENTLER REACTION TO SEPT. 11, 2001

THE END

Modern Israel – Reasons For Conflict

(11 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler
Atlanta, Ga. Sept. 23, 2001

I am writing this to perhaps show a little light on the Palestinian question. I think that we often make judgments about things without knowing any of the details that led up to some particular crisis. So maybe by offering a glimpse at the land of modern Israel and how it came about, we can better understand the anger that surrounds the issue of Palestinian/Israeli conflict; and then knowing more about it, we can better speculate on what to do to make things better.

We stand today in the midst of a terrorist environment, having witnessed so recently terror on our own land with the terror inflicted in the eastern part of our land. I think at least some of that terror can be traced to the Palestinian conflict. So perhaps we can get at the real issues that are causing the terror if we just take a moment and review a little history. I do not claim to know much – only a very little as a matter of fact; but what little I do know, I gladly pass on, having been in a research mode myself for the last week. Prior to the disasters in New York and Washington and Pennsylvania, I knew almost nothing of modern Israel. Now, I know a little more than I did. With this small essay, I pass on that little bit of knowledge while also offering some speculation as to why events really happened as they did.

Like I say, I have only a little knowledge of modern Israel and the Islam world, but the sources I have reviewed to gain that little knowledge are three:

1. **Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Middle East** (1988)
2. **The Longman Companion to the Middle East Since 1914** (1992)
by Ritchie Owendale
3. **The Encyclopedia of Religion** (1987)
using an article on Muhammad by W. Montgomery Watt

I do want to emphasize that my knowledge of the Palestinian conflict with the Israelis is not very profound. It is sketchy at best. I know it is said that a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing, but I think it is far more accurate to say that no knowledge can be critical – and even fatal. It hurts me to see so many of my fellow Americans almost anxious to accept that the terrorists who destroyed so many American lives recently had no reason for doing so – like it was only a matter of some senseless hate.

In truth, hate is never senseless. Hate always has an origin and a reason for being, even though that reason is often buried within misinformation and ignorance. People don't just hate for no reason. Acting like an enemy has no reason to hate is to bury your head in the sand and act as foolishly as you think your enemy has. Maybe before acting

like an enemy has no reason to hate, as if hate comes only from some mindless evil, we should dig into things and expose a little of the history that encompasses those who hate. Maybe in that history a reason for hating will be revealed; and then knowing why a person hated and persons hate, we can work to diffuse the conditions of the hate. Then, having diffused the conditions that caused the hate, hate itself can be dissolved – and terrorism will end. Only a fool thinks you can attack hate by trying to kill those who hate without addressing the issues that caused the hate in the first place. But hate can only be diffused by way of understanding; and understanding can only be derived from knowledge.

Perhaps the little information that I have found in my research of the Palestinian conflict can be a seed, though a small one, that will lead anyone who is truly interested in the truth to research it more on their own; and maybe, armed with knowledge and not ignorance, we can go forward together and resolve so much better the issues that confront us as a human race.

In my research of the Middle East, I found that the terms “Arab” and “Muslim” seem to be exchangeable, though Arab should reflect a land and Muslim should reflect a religion. In my offering in this paper, I will do the same. Where you read, Arab, you can substitute with Muslim if you wish – and vice versa. With that, let me begin.

Prior to the early 1900s, though some Jews may have lived in Palestine (now called Israel), the land was governed for 1300 years under various Islamic rule, concluding under the Islamic Ottoman Turks for the final 400 years of that 1300-year span.

In the early 1900s, there were many Jews outside of Palestine actively promoting the idea that the Jews need a homeland – and more than that, a national state. This movement came to be known as Zionism. Around 1917, related, I think, to World War I, British troops routed the ruling Ottoman Turks from Palestine and established Palestine as a British protectorate. The British who ruled Palestine were somewhat sympathetic to the idea that at least part of Palestine should become a national home for the Jews. In 1937, some commission known as the Peel Commission, presumably of British origin, recommended that Palestine be divided into parts – an Arab state, a Jewish state, and certain important religious areas common to both Jews and Arabs retained under a British protectorate. By the end of 1937, that suggestion was denied, but by 1939, the British agreed to allow 75,000 more Jews into Palestine, perhaps to allow more equality in number with the Arabs or Muslims already there.

Keep in mind that for 1300 years, Palestine had been mostly of Arab rule and Arab population. Accordingly, at this time, there would have been a great percentage of Arabs in Palestine. But throughout this time from 1917 to World War II, the ruling British were subject to various terrorist activities by both Jews and Palestinians intended to undermine British occupation.

With the coming of World War II in the late 1930s and early 1940s and the systematic extermination of the Jews in Europe, the idea of the Jews needing a national home gained a lot of favor in the world; and that included America, though America was very much aware that it could prove very hostile to the Arabs for America to openly

support a Jewish nation. After all, most of the known oil reserves were thought to be located in Arab lands; and to take sides and support the Jews in their quest to oust the Arabs could prove damaging to American interests in the long run, though as I will soon suggest, taking sides may well have been a strategic move to assure more control as well. Still, the Zionists in America did all they could to press the issue and assure that it would be an issue in American elections. In at least one important election in New York, the Jewish sympathy vote helped decide that election in the 1940s, given that the district contained a lot of Jews who would not have voted for anyone who did not sympathize with a Jewish national state.

After the war, as early as 1946, Truman endorsed an Anglo-American commission that was asking for the allowance of continued emigration of non-Palestinian Jews to Palestine. Of course the greater the emigration of Jews to Palestine, the lesser the percentage of Arabs. As the influx of Jews continued into Palestine, the Arabs there became more and more enraged. As the Jews were hoping for a Jewish state following a period of British occupation, the Arabs were hoping for the same.

Following the war, as clashes between Jews and Arabs continued in Palestine, more and more terrorist acts were directed toward British troops, there to maintain order. In Sept. of 1947, terrorists hung two British sergeants; and a British morale that was already low went even lower. There was tremendous support in Britain for British troops to evacuate Palestine and leave the messy matter of Palestine to the United Nations. In Nov. of 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted for partition according to the designs laid out in 1937 by the Peel Commission. I am not sure the partition plan was derived from the suggestions of the Peel Commission, but it seems to me that, in essence, the details would have been the same – dividing Palestine, with one part to become a Jewish state, another part to become a Palestinian or Muslim state, and a third element to be supervised by some outside effort.

When pondering this matter of a divided Palestine under United Nations supervision, I am somewhat reminded of a nation once called Vietnam – which was also divided under some international plan. As the British occupied Palestine in the first part of the 20th Century, the French colonized Vietnam from the latter part of the 19th Century into the 20th Century. As Palestinians attempted to oust the colonizing British from Palestine, the Vietnamese tried to oust the colonizing French.

As it happened, a Vietnamese in his 60s by the name of Ho Chi Minh was the leader of Vietnamese forces named the Viet Minh that were opposed to French rule. Ho was somewhat attracted to the ideal of Democracy and hoped to see it live in Vietnam. To oust the French from Vietnam, he asked America for the arms to do so, but how could America supply arms to fight a friend – France? Accordingly, having been turned down in his request for arms from America, he turned to Russia to get them; and Russia supplied them. There were native Vietnamese, however, who sided with the French in that struggle – and one was named Diem.

With the aid of Russian arms, then, Ho and his nationals went to war against the invading French and Vietnamese sympathizers of the French, starting, I think, just after the close of World War II. In 1954, Ho and his troops finally defeated the French and their sympathizers at a battle in Vietnam at a place called Dien Bien Phu. Accordingly, Ho had all of Vietnam back in Vietnamese control; however desiring for whatever reason

to at least appear that he would be the chosen leader of his nation, he agreed to sit down with those Vietnamese who had sided with the French and draw up plans for a general election. For some reason, those plans were drawn up and agreed on formally, not in Vietnam, but in Geneva, Switzerland. At that table of agreement sat representatives of a whole lot of countries, though I am not sure of their identities – except one – America, My America.

John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State of America was there for America – and he agreed that America would be among several nations present in Vietnam to oversee the elections that Ho wanted. Unfortunately, Ho had accepted arms from Communist Russia after America refused him to defeat the French and was thus labeled a Communist. That label would lead to a terrible war. Had Ho been labeled what he was – a patriot to his cause – and not a Communist – I think the Vietnam War may have never happened.

In 1954, in Geneva, with my wonderful country represented, Vietnam was divided for the purpose of planning for an election. The nation was split down the middle and became North and South Vietnam, with Ho given temporary leadership of North Vietnam and Diem given temporary leadership of South Vietnam. The plan was for all parties to go back to their corners and come out fighting – with the winner to be the leader of a reunited Vietnam decided by an election to take place some time in 1956.

I am sure there were irregularities on both sides in trying to influence the scheduled election, but in the end, those elections never took place, but it was not because Ho Chi Minh did not want them. It was because Diem did not want them. I cannot blame Diem for not wanting them because “Uncle Ho” was the overwhelming favorite to win the election, but I do blame the United States for not stepping forward and following through with their agreement to assure them. Diem, however, chose to declare his end of the divided country a separate nation; and guess who was there to quickly recognize the new nation – in violation of the Geneva Accords of 1954? You guessed it – good OLE America. When the new American ally, Diem, declared his southern end of the country as a new republic, that started the Vietnam War. That was 1955.

In the ensuing years, President Eisenhower and Vice President Nixon would send “advisors” into South Vietnam to assist the South Vietnamese in their struggle with the North Vietnamese. President Kennedy and Vice President Johnson would beef up those advisors and President Johnson and Vice President Humphrey would follow with sending troops. And America got involved in a war without knowing the details that caused it.

In my introduction, I claimed that a little knowledge might be misleading, but no knowledge can be disastrous. In the case of Vietnam, for the most part, Americans had no knowledge of the reasons for the conflict and were duped into participating in a cause for which there would have been no consent, had the truth been known. Did most of the soldiers who willingly went off to war in Vietnam know the facts of the Geneva Accords of 1954 and the failure of Diem to live up to them? No! All they were told was that a Communist by the name of Ho Chi Minh was trying to invade a country called South Vietnam and America was not willing to allow it because if South Vietnam should fall into Communist hands, there would follow from that a domino affect and Communism would grow to eventually invade American shores. From a fear of Communism, we turned our backs on principle. We agreed to be there to help supervise an election in Vietnam, but we chose instead to support a foe of Ho Chi Minh and deny those elections;

but in supporting a man who would deny the people of Vietnam to make a choice for a leader – even though we may not have liked their choice – America betrayed the very Democracy it holds so important.

Needless to say, America has paid in huge numbers for that blunder; but it should provide a very good lesson for Americans knowing what the hell an issue is really all about and not go blindly off to war because their leaders bid them to do so. We should not have been in that war at all, but if we were in it, it should have been on the side of Ho Chi Minh who wanted Democracy for his land and went to Geneva to arrange for it rather than just assume control because he won a military battle. For going to Geneva, his Vietnam was split into Vietnams and he had to spend the rest of his life fighting for control when in 1954, he had already won control. He gave up control for the sake of a Democratic election and was completely snuffed for the act – by his fellow Vietnamese and by Americans who should have equated him more with George Washington than Joseph Stalin; but that is only one man's opinion. Again and again since that time, I have asked – America, My America – why did you betray principle for fear of a foe? In your betrayal, you went on to be a participant in a totally disastrous action called “The Vietnam War.”

Enough for that tangent. Let me return now to the current discussion – about the beginning of modern Israel. As Jews continued to emigrate to Palestine in the 1940s under British oversight, various terrorist acts by the Jews upon resident Arabs caused Palestinian Muslims to flee in significant numbers. By the latter 1940s, the Jews outnumbered the Muslims. Then in May of 1948, the British had experienced enough turmoil and withdrew their forces from Palestine. The planned partition of Palestine under the supervision of the United Nations never took effect and without any outside intervention to prevent it, the Jews were free to take over – and take over they did, under their leader, David Ben Gurion, who had been calling and working for a Jewish state since the early 1930s. Now, at long last, Palestine was a national Jewish state – at least part of it. The new nation was labeled “Israel.”

Perhaps out of an attempt to leave something for the Arabs, the new Israel did not include a good bit of land that it has since acquired, including for some reason important cities like Jerusalem, Nablus, and Jericho. It also did not include the so called “West Bank” which is a stretch of Palestinian land reaching from the west of the Jordan River, bordering Jordan, to eastern Jerusalem. Also excluded from the new Israel was a strip of land extending north from Egypt called the Gaza Strip.

Upon Israel's declaration that Palestine was now Israel, a Jewish state, the world was quick to recognize it. President Truman did so immediately; however, since the Jew's declaration of independence in 1948, the new nation has continuously fought opposition from its Arab neighbors - which surround it on all sides except on the western side. On the west is the Mediterranean Sea, but on the south and the north and the east lie Arab lands. Much of that opposition has been directed from within the ranks of the so-called Palestine Liberation Front (PLO), but all the opposition is based on the idea that the Jews stole Palestine from the resident Arabs.

For 1300 years, the Arabs had ruled Palestine in one way or another. Even the Ottoman Turks, who ruled Palestine for 400 years before World War I, were of Muslim heritage. For one brief period in history, outsiders under British domain ruled, but for the

most part, since the days of Muhammad who died in 632, Palestine was under Arab rule. Rightly or wrongly, Palestine belonged to the Arabs; and according to the Arabs, it was wrong for any outsiders, British, American, or wandering Jews, to occupy it.

While the British ruled it, however, outsiders were allowed into the country in significant numbers – for it was under British rule that emigration of Jews to Palestine was not only allowed, but encouraged. And it was with significant American support and encouragement and assistance that Zionism was practiced. It has also been with continued support of English and American artillery that Israel has been able to thwart all attempts to rescue Palestine from the Jews and return it to the Muslims. So, given all the aid that the western world has supplied Israel to thwart Muslim attempts to retake the land, it can be seen that America and the western world have clearly been allies of Israel in all ensuing conflicts. It is no wonder, then, that the Muslim world would be angry with America. Wouldn't you be if you were an Arab?

As stated, conflict has been constant in the new Israel since its beginning in 1948. In 1956, with aid from the western world, Israel was enabled to resist Egyptian threats from the south. In June of 1967, with aid from the western world, Israel was equipped to resist Palestinian rescue attempts from three nations – Egypt to the south and Syria and Jordan to the east. Lebanon to the north may have been involved as well. In June of 1967, Israel defeated the efforts of these three (four?) nations in just six days. From this, we have the so-called "Six Day War." As a result of their defeats, however, Jordan ceded to Israel lands it formerly ruled – the cities of Jerusalem, Nablus, and Jericho – and the land known as the "West Bank." Israel also took control from the Egyptians of the Gaza Strip, extending from Egypt into Israel, bordering the Mediterranean Sea. From Syria, Israel took the so-called "Golan Heights." These lands have come to be known as the "Occupied Territories." Since 1967, to my knowledge, no significant additional occupations by Israel have taken place, however conflicts between Arabs and Jews have been constant, as the reasons for the rivalry have continued.

According to Muslims, then, they have been ousted from their former home of Palestine. We are inclined to ask, why should Palestinian occupation of such a small portion of the world be so important? So what? The Arabs have vast control over so much of the world's lands in the Middle East. Why should they insist on having some small God-forsaken land that isn't worth a camel's slobber to most Westerners? Why? Because if you look at a map, Muslim continuity is interrupted by ceding any part of this area of the world to non-Muslims – and Capitalism. Allowing for a Jewish State of Israel, the international state of the Muslim world is interrupted; and Muslims, united, do not like that. And if we were they, we wouldn't either. Would we? Like we have struggled to keep the Western Hemisphere free of Communism, the Arabs – at least some of them - have struggled to keep their territories free of Capitalism. We have viewed Communism as our most serious threat and have gone to extremes at times in trying to punish it and destroy it. Witness – the debacle in Vietnam. The Arab world has viewed Capitalism as their most serious threat and has struggled to keep it out. As we all know, both the West and East have suffered mightily at each other's hands for fear of one another.

Strategically, however, it could be for interrupting Muslim continuity that the western world is insisting on staying put in Israel through its Jewish allies. Without a presence in Israel, the western world could be left without any ability to counter Arab control of its own oil, but that is strictly a personal opinion. Yes, there is a lot of sincere sympathy for the Jews in having and maintaining a national state for themselves, but personally, I doubt that most of the power-minded interest of the western world in Israel is sympathy for a religious people or cause. Though it may be masked behind some other veil, the main interest of those in the western world who have a stake in Israel and its independence from Muslim control is based on political strategy. It would be strategically dumb to allow withdrawal from the Middle East of western world presence. Through occupation in Israel by the western world, Capitalism and Democracy and industrial commitment can be maintained.

Let me repeat that it is only personal opinion that western interest in Israel is far more strategic than religious. Having Israel as our ally – and perhaps as a colony of sorts – America and the West have a much better chance to secure access to the lands of the Arabs. If I were the one who had to manage the strategy of the West to compete well with the East, I may well make the same decision; but for the sake of integrity, I could not keep my reasoning a secret. I could not veil my real interest behind a mask of deceit – as I think most western decision makers have done and are doing.

Yes, we love the Jews for their religious fervor and dedication, but we also love the Muslims for their religious fervor and dedication – or should – though that is another story for another paper. From strictly a religious standpoint, would we who are Christian be unhappy if Jerusalem was in the hands of the Muslims and not the Jews? Before I researched for this paper, I thought the main reason for American support of Israel as a state was religious, but having researched the matter, I have changed my mind and now believe our interest, politically, to have been mainly strategic. In plain simple terms, we need the oil – and we need to be in Israel to get it. It may be partly religious, but I think it's largely strategic.

Yes, to some degree, we might be unhappy today if Palestine was in the hands of the Muslims; but given honest communication between the faiths, we would soon find that our real convictions about things soulful are not all that different. I doubt that our Muslim friends would refuse me as a Christian from visiting the city of my friend, Jesus; and I doubt that our Muslim friends would refuse my Jewish brothers and sisters from visiting their holy sites in the land as well. At one time in the history of man, yes, access by faith may have been denied; but for the most part, most are reasonable in this day and age – and with reasoning, we can come to mutual understanding.

In my research so far of Muhammad, as founder of Islam – and I have only just begun – Muhammad considered the Jews as allies to his way of life more than enemies. So far, I have the impression that Muhammad did disagree with how the Jews were handling their faith, but he was in agreement with that faith – for the most part. Likewise, I have the impression from my research that he believed that Christians were not following the ways of Christ, but he did believe in Christ as a true prophet of God. Personally, I disagree with both the traditional Christian impression of Christ and Muhammad's impression of Christ, but that is not relevant in this discussion.

The truth is that Muhammad respected both Judaism and Christianity and considered both faiths as complimentary to the Muslim faith, not opposed to it. As such, all three of

these prominent faiths – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are really brothers to one another. As such, they can get along. If Moses, whom Muhammad gave credit for Judaism, was alive today and if Jesus was alive today and if Muhammad was alive today, they would be three brothers more or less in concert, not three enemies. Thus if the founders would not consider themselves enemies of one another, neither should the followers of the three.

The three did disagree, but not a whole lot. All three seemed to have believed in one God. All three seemed to believe that the righteous soul should be impressed with the presence of God and that from God all the blessings of life come. All three believed that the way to holiness is the way of gratitude. All three did not agree on the issue of human justice, however, and in that disagreement and that distinction some explanation for Muslim action against infidels could be understood.

Moses would have held to the ancient teaching of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; and so would have Muhammad. In that light, Moses and Muhammad were alike in their beliefs, but Jesus would not have agreed with either Moses or Muhammad on the issue of vengeance. Muhammad claimed that vengeance against one who has done you wrong could be justified, but only according to the degree of the harm done. If I were to slap you in the face, then it could be right for you to slap me back, but it would not be right for you to knock me out in return for a slap in the face. Jesus would say, if someone should slap you on one side of the face, turn to him the other and let him slap that side too; but Muhammad would have taught that limited retaliation or vengeance or justice is just fine.

I find it very interesting that in practice, most who claim to be followers of Christ are actually far better suited to accept fellowship with Muhammad. Most Christians that I know have no problem with approving retaliation and vengeance when it is abundantly clear from the Gospels that vengeance is wrong – or at least not ideal, according to Christ. Now Muhammad would agree with retaliation; and so most Christians that I know, if faced with questioning reaction to injury, would say that making someone pay for insult or injury is justifiable. It would be if you were a Muslim. It is not if you are a Christian – a true Christian.

When Christ and companions were confronted by Roman soldiers just prior to Christ's arrest, one of Christ's companions took out his sword and moved to defend Jesus against the Roman soldiers; but Jesus bid that companion to put away his sword, saying those who live by the sword perish by the sword – or something close to that. Many of my Christian friends who are actually Muslims in practice know better the story and the words, but I am not far from stating it accurately that Jesus would not approve of violence against another human being for any reason whereas our dear brother, Muhammad, might.

Anyway, because of Muhammad's approval of limited retaliation and vengeance, some of the terrorist conducts can be understood. If they felt that their people were being insulted or injured by western influence or western conduct or whatever, then they might have had reason to see terrorist activity as payback for insult or injury. Needless to say, their offering of justice as they may have seen it got out of hand, as many acts of retaliation often do. While striking back at one who did us wrong, we often destroy many who are standing about. That is just the way vengeance often works.

If another should act heartless against me, is that reason for me to act heartless against him? Of course not. For if I should return heartlessness for heartlessness, who will have a heart in the end? And the world without hearts would be a terrible place to be. Don't you think? Personally I love all three – Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, but I find myself more in agreement ideally with Jesus than the other two – though in practice sometimes I lean more toward Muhammad than Jesus.

I have been slapped in the face and have turned around and slapped a friend right back. I know the feeling of needing to right a wrong, but given some time to reflect on what I did, I would not have slapped my friend back. The Muhammad in me slipped through me quickly, I guess you could say; but given time to react otherwise, surely I would have acted according to the counsel of Christ.

My Country, My America, is now caught up within a frenzy of fervor to find certain people and rip out their hearts for the hurt perpetrated against America and the American way of life. We claim our path is not vengeance, but justice; and yet we stand willing to commit injustice to attain justice. The towers in New York were the targets, more so than the people within them, but in hitting their targets, the towers, the recent terrorists made victims of thousands of innocents. And now, America by demanding justice that is really vengeance, is willing to shoot and bomb its own targets and consider any innocent victims standing about as justifiable homicides when they may be really innocent victims.

In my introduction, I argued that there is always a reason for hate. Almost without question, those who hated and destroyed the towers in New York were acting in retaliation to some perceived terror against them. For them, we were the terrorists when we did the injury to them. For some real or imagined injury done to them by us, they acted in retaliation against us – and if we return their retaliation for retaliation, let us be aware we are only continuing the cycle of terror that caused the attack against us. It may be a whole lot wiser to try to understand why they are angry rather than just return anger for anger. The cycle of retaliation can be endless, unless someone acts to stop it. For sure, retaliation for retaliation will not resolve a perceived need for it, though it may offer some temporary relief – like taking an antacid for heartburn. The wise person, however, will determine the cause for the heartburn and stop the action causing it and not keep treating heartburn with antacid. Likewise, the wise person will determine the cause of some grievance and stop the action causing it and not keep treating grievance with grievance.

What would I do if I were in the position to stand for America? I may well lose my head in doing so, though hopefully never my heart, but I would try to find Osama Bin Laden and make a case for peaceful coexistence. I would not leave it to anyone else to go in my place, but I would go wherever Osama might agree to meet with me, alone if necessary deep into his territory and not my own. And there I would sit with him and offer him a friend. And maybe I would leave his camp as his friend – or maybe I would not leave at all – with my bones left upon the earth for the buzzards to enjoy. But in no case would I leave without a heart. Maybe eye to eye – and not eye for an eye – we could begin to address the issues that motivate him to do as he does and slowly decide on measures to correct the injustices he and his associates perceive. In spite of how impossible it might seem that something could be worked out to pacify both Arabs and

Jews, I am sure there can be found a way; but unless both Arabs and Jews are pacified, the Palestinian conflict will continue and with it, an endless cycle of terrorism.

It really is sad too, because almost by nature, the main combatants of this drama are not barbarians. The Jews are a peaceful lot – and so are the Muslims – but that which is keeping peace from happening is a sense of wrong done by one to the other. According to both religions, it is right to correct a wrong and vengeance, as a way of righteousness is proper. So you have two peaceful religions snapping at each other's throats because the one thinks the other has done it wrong. Unfortunately, whoever aids one or the other of these combatants is in for the same treatment as that justified for the immediate enemy. Thus the peace of the world is at stake until these religions decide that the world is big enough for the two of them.

What would I do if I were a Jew? I don't know, but I might seriously consider leaving my new homeland and find another simply because to stay would be to waste my energy fighting to keep things quiet in my life. I might treat my stay in Israel like I would treat a marriage – and have treated marriages in the past. As long as my partner and I are not squabbling and I can concentrate on being at peace with my world, I can stay in a marriage; but when I find myself quarreling with my wife more than communicating with her, it's time to go – for her sake and mine. In my opinion, the Jews might be much better off as a people if they realize that their marriage to Israel is just not working out and that to stay and quarrel with the landlords is just not worth the effort.

Perhaps it is time for the Jewish people to face the truth and realize that, in fact, because they are surrounded by people of another faith, hostile only by circumstance, it is really the same as renting from a landlord. That landlord wants to take the house back and rent it to another – to another of the family. There is no value in continuous struggle in my opinion. All that should matter is for the souls of mankind to be at peace; and sometimes, like in a marriage that terminates before expected, it is better that two quarreling parties give up their hold on a single property and go their separate ways.

Divorce need not be the negative thing we have tended to make it. It can, instead, be simply the manner by which two equal and loving parties are freed to pursue separate but positive courses of human endeavor. Staying together can be very counterproductive if a union restricts the release of potential human fervor that is trapped by virtue of distraction or prevention from expression. If it is suspected that desired expression is being prevented by restriction of marriage, then divorce can be a necessary step to releasing it and making a better use of life. That goes for persons in a marriage and it goes for nations in a marriage. The Jewish people need not continue their marriage to their current homeland if they suspect a better and more productive life elsewhere. Why waste the energy when it can be used so much more positively and creatively elsewhere?

I am sure that somewhere in this world, the Jewish people of Israel can find another homeland and leave Israel behind except for pilgrimage visits now and again. The world can work together to make this happen and the world can know substantial and prolonged peace because of it. There may be many lands in America that could become new Jerusalems, capable of sustaining and fostering most of those who might be allowed to immigrate to America. There are ways to resolve issues in the framework of peace. We just have to open our minds and hearts to discover them.

Should I be invited to visit with Osama Bin Laden and should I survive that rendezvous, I would be willing to go wherever an invitation bid me to go – always with

my heart intact and never with any allowance to make another innocent victim. As I see it now, President Bush and perhaps 90 % of an outraged America are willing to act without hearts and are willing to sacrifice innocent victims to continue a cycle of terror. But if we do act without hearts, we can expect more of the same in return. That is always a definite – heartlessness begets heartlessness - for someone somewhere as an innocent victim loses his or her heart as well, and in anger and fear and viciousness, carries on and creates other victims.

More than this I cannot say – and more than this I cannot offer. I do not know Osama Bin Laden’s language, unless he also knows English; but we do have eyes together. We can look into one another’s eyes and grasp each other’s hands in honor of our mutual humanity – and we can eat together and drink together. We can do a whole lot together even if we cannot speak to one another via words, should that prove to be the case. Maybe his heart has stopped for a time, though it remains to start beating again – and maybe the two of us or any two of us could part with beating hearts intact – and, as my friend, Jesus, would say, Heaven would be at hand.

What would I say should happen if a true Christian effort to conciliate with the terrorists should fail? Then I think Muhammad and the way of Muhammad should be followed. For the sake of world security, terrorism cannot be allowed to be the rule of the day in this world. If the way of Christ and an attempt to peacefully coexist does not work, then open the gates and let Muhammad out; but if we do follow Muhammad and have to overrule the counsel of Christ, let us, at least, practice true Muslim counsel. Let us seek out the perpetrators of terror and deal with them according to the harm they have inflicted upon others, but let us not spray bullets in the general direction of a perpetrator with hopes of getting the perpetrator while taking a chance on victimizing innocents around him – and becoming terrorists ourselves. Fighting terrorists should not be the work of an army intent on laying waste to a territory where an enemy is found; but rather fighting terrorists should be the work of policemen intent on getting their man.

And then if the way of vengeance is chosen, choose those who believe in vengeance to carry it out – and leave us Christians out of it. It is not that we are afraid of the terrorists that we would fail to act Islamic in the issue of vengeance. It is just that we do not choose the way of Muhammad in the issue of vengeance over the way of Christ. But the world is full of those who do believe in vengeance and would have no problem carrying it out. If vengeance is necessary, let them participate who believe in it. Ask a man if he believes in vengeance before insisting that he be a soldier. If he says yes, then make him a soldier. If he says no, make him a nurse. And maybe by allowing those of us who do not believe in vengeance to carry on as we will without pressure to do otherwise, those who have no need of vengeance would grow in number and greater harmony among people will be the result.

Modern Israel – Reasons For Conflict

The End

THANK YOU FOR MY LIFE (A Poem)

Written Oct. 17, 2001

Thank you for my life, my God –
Thank you for my eyes and ears and nose and throat.
Thank you for my life, my God –
Thank you for my arms and hands and legs and feet with toes.
Thank you for my life, my God –
Thank you for my back and spine and breasts and chest.
Thank you for my life, my God –
Thank you for my lungs and liver and bones and flesh.
Thank you for my life, my God –
Thank you for my heart and arteries and veins and blood.
Thank you for my life, my God –
Thank you for my tongue and taste and stomach and food.
Thank you for my life, my God –
You give me a brain by which to think and know - and time to do both.
Thank you for my life, my God –
You give me a soul to memorize my thoughts for the future me to know.
Thank you for my life, my God –
You give me parts to pass on the life you give so free.
Thank you for my life, my God -
by you I come, through you I live, and in you, I am me.

Letter About Adventure Of A Naked Hike – 1/19/2002

(5 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler

January 23rd, 2002

Note: The following is a copy of a letter I sent to friends & family very soon after I moved from Norcross, Ga. to Laramie, Wyo. in January of 2002. I spent the first two weeks in a motel in Laramie while searching for a place to live. Luckily, I was able to find a mobile home available to rent. Part of the reason I settled where I did was because it was close to some mountains to the east of where I would be living. I enjoy hiking in the mountains and this seemed to be a very appropriate fit. I moved in to my new home on January 17th, 2002 – a Thursday, I think. On the following Saturday, I decided to go for my first hike, walking to the mountains to the east from my mobile home. It was about 45 degrees when I set out with no wind, but several hours later as darkness fell, the temperature had fallen to less than 10 degrees and there also developed a wind of at least 40 m.p.h. Before the temperature fell and the winds arose, however, I had decided that since I was alone on my mountain – or in my mountain area – it would be safe to hike naked – or nearly naked. I like to be as natural as I can for my belief that Nature & God are really one. To be close to Nature, for me, is to be close to God. Unfortunately, I paid no attention to the time of day – dusk – and left my clothes with keys to the house in my pants below where I was hiking. Being lost in my serenity, I did not notice how cold it was getting or how quickly the sun was setting. Soon, I found myself in the dark with very little confidence that I could find my clothes below in the dark. So, I did what probably saved my life – I ran for home focusing on the car lights going by on somewhat nearby I-80. Once arriving at I-80, I followed the highway into Laramie. That should prep you for my story below – which I wrote to family & friends to tell of my new address.

P.S. In a future year, a friend, Tobey, asked me to write a short story about my adventure. So I did – in May of 2007. It is called LARAMIE MOUNTAIN – and it is found in Volume 6 of this OUT IN THE OPEN writings series. Enjoy both this letter and my subsequent short story as it pleases you. Thanks! F.W.B.

Hello, Everyone,

As of Jan 17th, I have been relocated from a motel in Laramie, Wyo. to a mobile home park in Laramie – where I will be renting for awhile. I tried to buy this place, but for lack of a job, the finance company would not have me as a client. Gratefully, the sellers are allowing me to rent for a year or until I can earn some income and show

myself worthy of being a buyer. Then, if all goes well, I can sign on the dotted line and become a mortgagee once again.

Next Monday, I will take a bus back to Ga. and retrieve my belongings via Ryder truck and complete my move. I'll go by bus on Jan 28 and return by truck on Feb 3, spending some time in between dates with my lovely daughter, Melissa, who lives where I am going to pick up my stuff. At least that is the plan.

Here in Laramie, I may be poor, having come off a disastrous year, financially, but I am close to the wide-open hills and mountains that I love so much. One has to be careful, however, to not get lost in these hills and mountains as ranges seem to repeat themselves and you can lose your direction. I know that because of growing up in an area where similar hills behind our farm outside of Powell, Wyoming just seemed to repeat themselves –at least to me. I loved them, but I really had to watch that I paid attention to where I was going so that I would know how to return.

Last Saturday, I got my first taste of potentially getting lost in the hills around Laramie, but it was not the mountains that caused me confusion. It was darkness. I found myself lost for a time because of darkness; and I guess I submitted myself to a form of mild panic. You see, it was not only dark, but it was cold as well – and the two could have done me in – or I could have done me in within the two of them.

All of you who are getting this letter are aware of my love for Nature – and you all know that I am somewhat of a nut; and I am, too. I am a nut who can't understand why the world is not full of nuts like me. I am a nut who looks out and sees all sort of unhappiness because people are not acting like a nut like me. I guess that should canonize nuthood as the way to go – at least, Natural Nuthood. Don't you think?

But even a nut can't always plan things out to stay safe. And sometimes being a nut carries a bit of a disadvantage – not a huge one, mind you, but a bit of one that ordinary normal folk never have to address. I am no ordinary nut. I love to go naked as an expression of my fondness for Nature – and for God Which is making Nature. Now, that should categorize me as a very special kind of nut. When this one goes on a hike, given that no one is around to be scandalized by such outrageous behavior, he takes off his clothes and throws up his arms and goes off running like a deer who has just sensed water up ahead. And in his running and yelping, he doesn't find God because he knew God was already there, but he confirms for himself that God is just where he thought It was – in all of Nature.

We nuts make mistakes, though. In the cold we carry on just as we would have, had it been warm. So this nut followed his normal procedure on a hike and got naked last Saturday. Let me tell you he had a ball up on that little mountain with his balls loose in the breeze, but due to a lapse in judgment, he forgot about the dark falling down upon him. Now that would not have been much of a problem for a normal folk. But this nut had left his clothes for everything but his extremities with his keys and everything down below the mountain in some crevice he realized he could not find in the dark.

So, what's a cold nut to do when faced with being on a cold, cold mountain with darkness and temperature falling madly and wind increasing to a gallop from the little walk it was just an hour ago? Now, every nut to himself, but this nut decided he better get off that mountain and get some clothes. I mean enough is enough. Sure, the body can withstand great cold if you keep active like this nut knows; but the body can only do

that so long before it succumbs to a normal state called 'frozen'. Even a nut does not care to descend to such a state. It does bite a bit.

There I was, then, out with my God on the mountain with only darkness and cold below me. I'm told it got to 9 degrees during my stay with God - and the winds brewed to about 40. Not a good place for a permanent nut like me to be. So, if I were to live to be a nut another day, I had to make a decision. Should I waste some potentially precious moments and go searching for my clothes in the dark - or should I head off to the lights which might lead to rescue?

Given the rather stark situation, I mused about it for maybe a minute - and then like a quarterback sensing a big hole in the defense, I darted for the goal post of light. The light was from cars going by on I-80, about a mile north of where I stood naked on the mountain - except for gloves for my hands and shoes for my feet and a hat for my ears. Come on now! Don't expect us nuts to go overboard. Let us hold onto some dignity as we scowl at normalcy.

Interestingly enough, I am writing this letter to be a nut for another day. So, it worked, but not before I crashed headlong into a hidden barbed wire fence established just moments before I got to it just to trip me up. With blood all over my thighs, I grunted something like "you guys are not playing fair" putting that damn fence where I could not see it. I mean the gall of some normal folk. It's almost enough to make a nut go normal - but not quite. If I hadn't been making love with Brother Cold as I ran, I would have seen that wretched thing in the dark.

No matter, though. I reached I-80 as I suspected I might and then traipsed along the highway with lights whizzing by in 9 degree cold, hoping that some motorist would see a naked man trying to hitch a ride in a warm van - but it did not happen. Well, I tried that a bit, and even thought about making myself really known by darting in front of one of those road missiles, but I quickly discouraged that thought, suspecting that an icicle in the way of a missile might not fare too well. So I trudged onward along side the road and not long after saw one of those side roads that sometimes occur by interstates. I crossed another fence to get to it and off I went, jogging along merrily with my hat still on and my frozen balls jumping up and down helping me to keep a rhythm that was crucial for my survival.

Eventually, to my grateful eyes, houses with lights appeared. I stopped at the first one and knocked. No one was home, but the dogs made quite a racket. No matter. There were more houses which could come to my rescue. I looked in the second house and saw two older ladies sitting at a coffee table having tea. I knocked. One came to the door and said, "My Good Man, come right on in and get yourself warm. Hey, Millie, look what God just brought to us?" Sorry! That was not the response. It was more like it was. "Oh My God, that man is naked!" Imagine my surprise when I found that out. Here I thought I had on gloves and hat and shoes. Some people sure do exaggerate.

I stood outside their door, shaking with considerable intensity, for about 5 minutes and then, figuring, that they were not going to share that tea with me, I trotted on to the next house. No one was home, but soon the Laramie police squad came to my rescue. I'm sure they heard about me from the ladies having tea. Sensing I had a gun hidden beneath the icicles on my pubic hair, they commanded that I put my hands over my head. I quickly concluded that my hidden gun wouldn't do me any good anyway; and so I did

what they requested – and sure enough, my weapon fell to the ground. I bet it's still there in the snow because no one picked it up.

The next phase of this gallant wintry evening was as good as it gets for a frozen naked nut out loose in the plains of Laramie, Wyoming. I was shackled with my arms behind me and escorted ever so gently into a nice free-from-the-cold-air police van. I really am not sure why they thought they needed to subdue me like that, but I guess rules are rules. After all, at the first stop light we might come to, I might leave my comfortable cold limousine behind and dash out into the night.

All is well that ends well. I am not sure anyone believed me for the story that I told about what the dickens I was doing out there in the severe cold, naked like that. I told them I just misplaced my clothes in the dark and when I realized I could not find them in the dark, I figured that maybe I should find some other clothes. It just seemed like the thing to do. Know what I mean?

All humor aside now, let me say thank you from the bottom of my heart to the very gentle and kind police and hospital squad of Laramie, Wyoming – and to the two wonderful ladies having tea. Thank you all very, very much! They do listen to reason here, and after hearing my story, they may not have sympathized all that much for not having had a similar experience, but they all adjusted quite well. I was not branded as a criminal, though I was given accommodations in the psychiatric ward of the local hospital for the night – but only after they cleaned me up, warmed me up, did x-rays, urinalysis, blood analysis and made sure I was ok. You know, that is something. I am not sure what they would do if it happened again, but then we nuts do learn from our experiences – and somehow I don't think this one will be repeated.

After spending the night as the paying guest of the local hospital, in the morning, the substitute psychiatrist, Dr. Orcho, though I may have the name wrong, declared I was normal – a nut, but a normal nut I guess – and he gave me a pass to the outside world. Between us, if I had insurance, I suspect I would not have been given that pass, but with no insurance, they really were being kind to me to not press out of me more money than this incident is already going to cost me – probably \$3,000 for a brief 12 hour stay. I think it says something not so good about our world that mistakes should be so expensive, but that's the way it is.

The regular house psychiatrist, Dr. Moreno, called me yesterday and told me that had he been in residence the night of my incident, he would not have let me go. Normal procedure, he says, for patients who might be suffering from some mental illness is to undergo a cat-scan and some considerable evaluation. I guess the cat-scan is to be assured there is no crack in the brain that would make a nut be a nut. He urged that I allow him to complete the process, even though I would not be required to do so, having been released; but that would cost at least another \$1,500.

I declined his offer and am spending the money I would have spent searching my brain for cracks on a weekend ad in the local newspaper – an ad for what I call "Bella Vita." I am actually going to suggest that an institution be established in this world that would favor what I just did – love Nature because it is of God. I really don't have the money to spend on anything that might be called "peripheral" or outside of main needs, but I came here to Laramie to do a job – and even though, my cold stay on a Laramie mountain may have been a test to see if I could be discouraged, I am going to go forward with my plan anyway.

I have been right down mad at myself for having put myself into this fix – mostly because of the expense I could not afford, having very little in funds with which to start my life in Laramie as it is. But it's done. I did not plan it. It happened anyway; and I will get on with what I came here to do. What is that? To live life as fully as I can as a grateful Son of Nature and of God and maybe aid others in doing the same thing. Having been graduated with honors from the University of Nutdom, I think I am especially qualified to lead other nuts down the corridors of time into what should be serenity for all.

In retrospect, I would not trade my mistaken moments in the cold for all the hot tea in England. When you have abandoned yourself so completely to life and even embraced its cold coat of winter air, naked within it, it is as if that cold coat is not really so cold after all. It's warm and cuddly because you know you belong. It may not be all that comfortable, physical wise, but neither is it all that uncomfortable. Take it from a nut who has been there. I was 87 degrees when rescued last Saturday, but when I was out there in the cold and totally caught up with my meditation on the mountain, I felt like I was 98. If only I had not overextended myself, it would have been all right; but I made a mistake. Some of us do. Perhaps I expected more from starlight than what it could offer. I could not find my clothes in the dark. It was too dark for the stars to help me. So, I did what a normal nut would do – I went for the lights.

Come and see me, everyone! I love you all.

All My Love, Your Devoted Nut,

The Laramie Kid,
Will (Frank) Bessler

Letter About Adventure Of A Naked Hike – 1/19/2002

The End

Note: As noted in the beginning of this entry, I did write a short story about this incident that I called LARAMIE MOUNTAIN; but being somewhat dissatisfied with it, I wrote another short story I called PEACE ON EARTH. When compiling Volume 6 to contain writings of 2007, I decided to omit the first story LARAMIE MOUNTAIN and feature only PEACE ON EARTH. See Volume 6 for additional detail.

THE SPIRAL STAIRWAY OF SANTE FE

(11 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler

Written: May 1, 2002

Dedicated to my friends, Nancy & Rich Remmenga

A few days ago, I saw a “miracle” – a spiral stairwell in a little chapel called “The Loretto Chapel” in Santa Fe, New Mexico. That which is amazing about this stairwell is that it appears to have no outside source of support. It stands all on its own.

Supposedly, winding stairways can only stand if they are supported by some independent beam – standing either in the middle of a spiral stairwell or to the sides of it. Only by the presence of some independent means of support can any winding stairway stand. At least this seems to be the common opinion; however, in the Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico, there stands a spiral stairwell without any apparent means of support. It stands on its own, reaching to a choir loft, when it would seem it should fall down because it lacks a beam of support through the middle of it or to the side of it.

People stand in amazement and ask, how can it be? How can a spiral stairway stand all by itself without any means of support? I could offer a guess or two, perhaps, on how it could be – and I will offer one guess – but this paper is not so much on how such a thing can happen. Rather, it is why such a thing is happening. Better put, this paper is one man’s speculation about what the artist who offered the stairwell may have intended by his gift of a spiral stairwell.

I think there is no such thing as an artist who says nothing through his or her work. I think it is fair to conclude the one who made the inexplicable stairs about which this article is about was an artist. As such, he wanted to say something through his art. And that is what this paper is about – to speculate on what the author of the mysterious stairs without support was trying to say through his work. He did not ask for payment. He simply crafted what he did and left without request for compensation. This one was truly an artist – in a way, one who worked for free; but like all artists, he intended to say something through his work.

Did Michelangelo sculpt or paint just for the heck of it? Of course not. He was an artist who was trying to share his thoughts and feelings about life through his work. He crafted his sculpture of David to express his opinion that man – or mankind – is a beautiful expression of God. He made David beautiful, not ugly, because he saw humanity represented by his David as beautiful. Through his work and his art, he shared his beliefs – and taught us in the process about the majesty and magnificence of our own being.

Likewise, the unknown artist of the inexplicable stairs in New Mexico was trying to share his thoughts and feelings about life through his work. And he crafted a strange stairwell to tell his tale. I will try to examine his art to understand his tale.

Unfortunately, an examination of the spiral stairwell artist himself would be almost impossible because nothing is known of the artist. It is my opinion, however, that we can come to know a bit about the artist through his structure. If we can’t know an artist for

lack of history about him, we can know him through his work. According to ancient wisdom that is as true today as ever: **by their fruits, you shall know them.** Among others, Jesus said it. So, having his art to study, we can come to know far more about the artist of the inexplicable stairs than we might have thought possible.

A LITTLE HISTORY

For those not familiar with the story, in the 1870s, a group of nuns called the “Sisters of Loretto,” who were living and working in Santa Fe, New Mexico, wanted a chapel. Residents of the area had previously built a school for them and the good sisters now wanted a chapel too. So the residents built a chapel for them too. It is my understanding that the architect of the chapel, design wise, was the same fellow who had earlier planned the Cathedral of Saint Francis in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

I am not sure how it was allowed, but somehow the residents managed to build a chapel with a choir loft without any means of getting to it. Now, I have a good deal of difficulty understanding how that could be, but supposedly it happened. How can anyone build a loft that is up and then remove the access to it that allowed it to be built in the first place?

No matter. Let us assume that it happened. In Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the 1870s, the residents built a chapel that had a choir loft without any means to get to it. Well, the good Sisters of Loretto had good reason to be perplexed by this strange problem. Given they were ladies of prayer, however, they decided to pray for a solution. They would pray a novena to the patron saint of carpenters – St. Joseph – and he would find a way to solve their problem.

I’m given to understand that some folks about the area tried to build a regularly designed stairway, but for some reason it was concluded that a regular stairway could not be built. I am not sure why such a decision was forthcoming, but for whatever reason, it was concluded that a regular stairway just would not work.

Anyway, on the ninth day of their novena to St. Joseph – the final day – out of nowhere there came a “gray-haired” man who offered his services to the good nuns. He would build them a staircase – though he had only a donkey and a small tool chest, containing a hammer, a saw, and a T square. Legend has it that he took six to eight months to build the structure he would leave – a spiral stairway – and then he left without any word to anyone. He simply disappeared into the night as quickly and as quietly as he had appeared several months previous. No one knows who he was, where he came from, or where he went; and the only evidence of himself he left behind was in the form of a mysterious winding stairway that provided a way to a choir loft.

The stairway he left behind as a gift, however, is no ordinary spiral stairway. According to all “ordinary architects,” the only way any spiral stairway can stand is via support of some additional structure – like a beam or pole up the middle to which a stairway is attached. This one has no such support – and yet, it stands all by itself.

What were the residents of the area doing when our wandering artist with a hammer, a saw, and a T square was working? I guess they were looking the other way because no one seems to know any details of the project – like what did he use as wood for the stairs and how did he put the wood together to make winding steps? Apparently our generous visitor worked totally in secret, offering no evidence of his being there and not needing

any supplies or help for his work. And then the project was completed and he disappeared, leaving us all to wonder about the details.

As one who is now “wondering about the details,” my guess is that the strange stairway left behind is not what it seems to be; but that is only a guess. Supposedly, the amazing stairway contains no nails to keep it together. My guess is that it is not something that needs to be kept together because it is something that may have been sculpted from a single block of wood rather than pieced together with many pieces of wood. I must admit that would seem to be as outrageous as the stairs themselves because it implies that an old man could drag a huge piece of wood into the chapel without anyone seeing the deed. The greatest argument, however, against such a theory is that it should be obvious to those who should know about such things that the stairway was built with pieces of wood or sculpted from a single piece of wood.

Given my one little speculation on how it might have been done, however, I am not near as interested in the answer to that as to why it was done. Regardless of it being many pieces or just one structure that looks like it is made of many pieces, why would anyone choose to build a spiral stairway that winds up and around itself until it reaches the landing up above to which it aspires?

I imagine that our gentle gray-haired anonymous friend was trying to teach something by what he did. Now, given that this is so, that he was trying to teach us a lesson through his gift, what could it possibly mean? What does the notion of “spiral” say? Perhaps it is not so mysterious after all. Perhaps if we understand the notion of spiral, then we can come to understand the stairs – and the one who formed them. Keep in mind, as a secondary thought, he may not have constructed them as a St. Joseph, a carpenter, might, but he may have sculpted them as a Michelangelo, an artist, might, carving them out of wood rather than building them. Perhaps the reason the stairs stand without support is due to their being sculpted, not made. Surely one sturdy, sculpted clump of wood could stand so much more traffic than a composite of woods; but like I said, that is probably a bad guess since it should be obvious that such is so – if it is.

LESSONS OF THE STAIRS

It is my understanding that from the beginning, after the Sisters of Loretto discovered their stairs “complete” and after they realized that the artist had vanished, the stairs he left them could not be used. It seems our generous artist left them without a railing, making it somewhat terrifying to use them. In her exuberance, one of the students of the good sisters’ school, who would later become Sister Mary, climbed the new stairs as excited as a kitten playing with a string; but when she looked down, she became terrified and could not descend the stairs as she ascended them. She walked up them, not needing a banister to hold onto, but she chose to crawl down them on her hands and knees for fear of falling off of them, having no railing to assist her.

Well, it was soon concluded that the new stairs must have a railing. Accordingly, a banister was attached. Now, this is just fine from the standpoint of safety, but it is quite damaging in terms of being able to study the real art left behind. The real artwork was finished without banisters; and so, I think, the really important lessons to be derived from the mysterious artist’s work must be related from the original gift.

So, what does a spiral stairway without railings tell us? I think the lessons are five fold: 1) Life is Useful, 2) Life is Elegant, 3) Life is Balanced, 4) Life is Complete on its own – without adornment – and finally, 5) Life is Unending. Now, perhaps one should replace the word “is” in these five lessons with the phrase “should be.” For the artist who made the stairs, the word is properly “is.” For him, Life “is” virtuous as it is - without adornment of railings; but for the rest of us who are intended to be his students, Life “should be” virtuous without adornment of railings.

Lesson # 1 – Life Is Useful

Any stairs offers this lesson, but it is an important lesson. Life is like a set of stairs we can go up and down in order to reach destinations and leave them when we are ready. A spiral stairway is certainly a bit more exciting as a way of ascent and descent, but useful wise, all stairs are that. It would be to our benefit to not take any stairs for granted, but to be grateful that someone built them to make passage to and from the various residences within life easy.

Lesson # 2 – Life is Elegant

Any nice looking set of stairs should remind us that life is an elegant affair, but a spiral set of stairs says it more graciously, I think. Winding up and around as they do offers a dimension to going up and down in life that adds flair to the basic ingredient of useful. When I think of elegant, I think of not only being useful, but also being attractive, of being beautiful. Life is beautiful as well as useful. For me, spiral stairs offer a message that life is delightful or should be delightful. Ordinary stairs say life is OK, but spiral stairs with their added flair tell me that life is not only OK, but also mighty fine. That’s elegant for me.

Lesson # 3 – Life is Balanced

Again, perhaps I should say life “should be” balanced. The spiral form of architecture also offers that message. By winding up and around as it does, it tells us that life should be a thing of movement and variety – a thing of balance. On a set of spiral stairs, one can go from left to right, automatically, because there is no way around it. First you are on the left side of a spiral structure, then you go to the middle, then to the right, then back to the left again. On a set of spiral stairs, movement left and right and to the middle is not an option, but rather a requirement. On a regular set of stairs, one can stay left or stay in the middle or stay on the right all the way up or down, but on a spiral set of stairs, related to the structure itself, you have to move left and right.

That which is good about this lesson is that moving left and right – or being moved from left to right - keeps you from getting static and, perhaps, boring. Give a bit of flair to your life and do not take it so seriously. Wander from one place to another, taking in all the wonderful varieties that life has to offer. Smell the rose, but also take time to smell the daffodil and the iris and the magnolia blossom. Don’t treat life as if it is one

path, but appreciate that it is full of paths – and all of those paths, geographically speaking at least, are members of a single paradise. Go up in life, but go up with flair. Go down in life, but go down with gusto. Enjoy your passage through life by enjoying its tremendous variety. When you do that, you attain balance in life. Balance is achieved when you taste of the many fruits of life and realize that, though different, they are all part of the one good life.

Balance is also a matter of being aware of the glory of detail as well as of the glory of the general. If I find myself down in mood, and I analyze my attention, I always find that I am attending only to detail or only to the general. Blind attention to either side of that picture leads to a feeling of not belonging. If I pay attention only to the detail of me, for instance, and do not allow for the general of those outside of me, then I get stuck on detail. No one is alone in this life. We are all part of a great big world. We achieve balance in life when we act aware that we are part of a whole, and not the whole. Balance is achieved when we are aware of both our individuality and our own blessedness and sacredness and we are also aware of the blessedness and sacredness of all. If I get down in life, it is because I lack awareness of some part of the full picture of life.

Going up and down a set of spiral stairs can remind us that life should be an awareness of the detail and the general. Of course, we can make it what we choose to make it, but perhaps when we are on the left side of a spiral stairway, we should let it remind us of the need for attention to detail and when we cross over to the right side, we should let that remind us of the need for attention to the general.

Of course, too, there are many degrees of balance in life – and a spiral stairway can be useful in reminding us that we need to participate on as many sides as we can. We need to make money to live, but we also need to be willing to give away what we make to help others too. You can't give if you have not made something to give. So balance in life is achieved when life is used to make a living, but also to help others make a living. If all you do in life is make money for yourself without regard to pleasing others with it, then your life will be a very one sided affair and you will topple for lack of balance. We all need to make a living, but we all need to help others make a living too. That's a form of balance.

Perhaps, duty and beauty is another form of balance. Life should be comprised of both attending to needed, but bleak, tasks as well as to enjoying entertaining events. The wise in life, however, will find a way to make the bleak tasks also entertaining by being aware of all of life as you work away. Looking forward to a movie after work can make work go so much nicer.

Anyway, I think the artist of the inexplicable stairs was trying to offer a sense of balance by his gift. Be willing to taste of the various sides of life, and find balance in the process. Personally, I don't think most of us pay attention to the lesson of balance in life. Too many of us insist on our way and do not encourage others to follow their ways. Too many of us insist that we are more worthy than our neighbor by insisting that the time we spend at work in life should be compensated by a greater pay.

There is no balance in society when we allow extremely diverse payment for time spent, but we can't make a law that requires that payment for work is equal because if we

did, we would be left without options. Having no options in life would leave us without balance. We can't achieve balance except in having the freedom to do so. Forced conduct is not balanced conduct; and that is extremely important. If you can't go up in life, then there can be no balance between an up and down. Can there? Balance – by its very nature – demands freedom; and it is balance in life that I think is the ideal.

There is such a thing as social balance, too. If as individuals we get so caught up with individual prosperity and lose sight of common prosperity, the result is social imbalance. That kind of imbalance can and does lead to terrible violence in life. In a way, prosperity should be an ideal all should be able to enjoy in life; and when it happens that a good many are lacking in prosperity while a good many others are swimming in it, then it is only a matter of time before the ones who have not will rise and change the rules so that they are not left out. The result is war – in one way or another – either between individuals or between nations. I think it is good to keep social balance as an ideal in mind and put forth a lot of effort to achieve it – or else eventually a big price will have to be paid for lack of it.

Did our gentle artist who made the inexplicable stairs in Santa Fe have all this in mind? In general, I think he did. I think he was attempting to teach the need for balance by constructing a spiral staircase rather than a regular up-and-down-without-an-around stairway. Pay attention to yourself, but also pay attention to others is the bottom line of balance; and I think by swaying to and fro, from left to right, we can be reminded of the need for balance by the medium of a spiral staircase.

Of course, we can go up and down a spiral staircase without thought, too – and many would and do – but we can also look at the David of Michelangelo and see only a hunk of rock rather than a beautiful sculpture. An artist by his or her work can only provide an object to ponder. He or she is not responsible for making us ponder. The pondering must be up to us.

Lesson # 4 – Life is Complete

Perhaps it was necessary, but by attaching a railing to the spiral stairs, the fourth lesson of the gentle artist who formed the stairs has been greatly lost. All too often we fail to enjoy life for fear of it. For fear of drowning in a swimming pool, we insist on wearing a life jacket before we chance to swim. That's OK for starters, but if we never get past having need for a life jacket in a swimming pool, we will never experience the wonderful ways of a fish either. Some of us want to have a feel for being a fish in the water – and so for those of us who do, we would have to swim, not only without a life jacket, but also without a swimming suit.

Our gentle artist made a swimming pool without requirement of life jacket when he completed his stairs and did not attach a railing. I think the lack of a railing was intentional because he wanted to teach us that we do not need railings in life to keep us safe. It is nice to be surrounded only with a safety net in this life, but there is a dimension in life we can never experience if we demand protection within that net – and that dimension is a thing called freedom. Though it was well intended by the good nuns of

the Sisters of Loretto, when they attached a banister to the miracle stairs, in a sense, they banned the miracle of them.

Who looks at those stairs now and sees the original art left to the world by the gentle artist of Santa Fe? No one! For the sake of safety, the original art has been lost. Oh, you can see some of the original work if you look real closely through the attached railings, but for the most part, when you look at the stairs of the 1870s today, all you see is the railings. All you can see is the banister that was added, not the steps that were first. Unfortunately, for the sake of safety, the original artwork is nearly overwhelmed by an added banister. Who can see the original “miracle”? No one!

And so it happens all the time in life. As the good Sisters of Loretto did with the wonderful stairway of the generous gray-haired man from nowhere, so also we do with the wonderful gift of life from the Good God from Everywhere. We cover it too – for the same reason – for the sake of safety. But when we cover it, we lose it. That is the terrible price we pay for safety.

Just as behind the banisters of the spiral stairwell in Santa Fe there exists a miracle, behind the banisters of our own lives everywhere in this world there exists many, many miracles. Life itself is a miracle. There can be no greater one than that; and yet for fear of being invaded by others, we have sealed off the miracle of life by insisting on wearing a life jacket in a swimming pool. Now and again, an artist comes along who tries to show us that we should not live so scared; and almost invariably, we fail to hear.

Someday, some authority may realize that the reason why we can't seem to figure out how the stairs in the Loretto Chapel stand all by themselves is because we refuse to look at them. Perhaps if we take down the banisters and gather about the resulting original stairs, we could see what makes them stand on their own. The real question is, however, do we really want to find out what makes them stand on their own? Perhaps our fear of losing a miracle keeps us from believing that there really is an explanation of the stairs. We do not want to lose a miracle; and so we may well be content to keep it hidden to preserve it.

And we can continue to follow that course in life – keep on banning life to preserve it – but, oh, what we lose by our decision to do so. I'm sure the gentle artist of the inexplicable stairwell hoped that mankind would use his stairs to be reminded of the beauty of themselves and not focus on the stairs themselves; but when the railings went up, the focus changed to the stairwell itself and focus on those who use it was lost.

How many say, “How wonderful I am!” when looking at the inexplicable stairs? Very few. How many say, “How wonderful it is!” when looking at the inexplicable stairs? Almost everyone! But I doubt that the gentle artist intended it that way. I'm sure the gentle unknown artist hoped that people would feel good about themselves when they used his stairs and not focus on the stairs themselves. By adding banisters to the stairwell of the Loretto Chapel, we changed the focus from us to it; and that, I'm sure, would not sit well with the artist who formed them.

True artists do not do what they do for attention to themselves, but rather for attention to some theme they are offering via their work. In the case of the gentle artist of Santa Fe, there is no question about this. He did not leave any information about himself

before just vanishing. He could care less about being known for what he did. All he cared about was offering his stairs – and I think the many lessons I have detailed through them. If someone would have insisted that he attach a banister to his work, he probably would have been as upset about such a thing as Michelangelo would have been if another had insisted on his making his David dressed rather than naked.

In my opinion, the stairs in the Loretto Chapel should have been left as unadorned as the author of them left them. I think much was lost when they were “draped” with a banister for the sake of safety. It is my impression from a recent visit that the stairwell is no longer being used because of some kind of frailty and safety factors. If that is the case, then there should be no reason why the added banister has to be retained. Perhaps now that the stairs themselves are no longer being used, the added banisters can be removed. I hope so – because I think that if this were done, we would learn some things from the structure that we have no idea exist. By “draping” the gentle artist’s stairwell with a banister, the real art work has been lost; but what can now be lost if the added “draping” is removed since the stairwell is no longer being used? At least, I think it is a reasonable question.

Another of the lessons that has been lost so far by “draping” the inexplicable stairwell with a banister is the lesson of self-reliance. I think that the gentle artist may have intended that lesson among the many lessons he intended to impart with his work. An unbridled stairwell should remind us that we should be willing to stand on our own – as the inexplicable stairwell seems to stand on its own. Having railings to latch onto is fine for safety, but not so fine to learn the great lesson of self-reliance. The stairs are there to teach us that we can stand on our own – that we do not need crutches to walk, that we can walk on our own, that we can go in life without having to lean on some additional support.

One of the great failures of mankind, I think, is that we have failed to be impressed with our own divinity. Michelangelo tried to correct our misperception of our being faulty and lacking in divinity with his carving of David – showing us through David that we should embrace life and not reject it by covering it in shame; and the gentle artist of Santa Fe, I think, tried to correct the misperception of our being weak with the gift of his stairwell. It was as if he was saying via his stairs – “Hey, you can stand on your own just as my stairwell stands on its own. It does not need any additional support – and neither do you.”

Lesson # 5 - Life is Unending

That brings us to the final lesson of the spiral stairwell of the Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Even though any spiral stairwell does, in fact, end – in this case, at a choir loft, the image of its going on and on is quite entertaining, I think. It is hard to imagine life ending – and a spiral stairwell leaves me with the impression that life keeps going and going and going – around and around and around. Not only does life keep going, but it keeps going as we are making it go. It’s like we have no way to avoid ourselves because we keep on meeting ourselves just around the next bend. There is no escaping ourselves. The notion of a spiral leaves us without hope that life can be avoided, though we may try to avoid it. It’s of no use to try to avoid it because we are

powerless to do it. So, if we are powerless to avoid life, we better darn well get our act in order and choose for ourselves that which we like – and not waste time fearing life or doing what we don't like.

That image should tell us that it is not smart to do what we don't like because we will have to continue doing what we don't like until such time as we stop it. An image of a spiral, however, does not leave me with any kind of impression that something else will stop me from being me. If life is like a spiral, the only thing that will stop me from being me is me. Likewise, if life is like a spiral – and I do believe it is – nothing will allow me to be me but me. In other words, if life is like a spiral, I am in total control of me. I think that is a great notion – and a great belief.

It tells me I have to take responsibility for me because no one else can. Others may think they can take control of me, but their control is only temporary. I am the one who will keep winding around and around and around – and others can only be temporary aids or enemies along the way. In the end, no enemy can control me – unless I choose to be controlled. And if I choose to be controlled, then that's a decision I make and will have to abide by until I choose otherwise.

The image of a spiral for me is that life is unending; and so, a spiral stairwell is very useful in reminding me of that. We all need to be reminded of that which we believe is important in life – and for me, it is very important that I have a sense that life is ongoing and after this life, there will be another – and another - and another. If one is comfortable with the notion of going on, then unending life must be as wonderful a notion as possible; but if one is not comfortable with life, I doubt that life on a spiral stairwell would offer any solace. Would it?

THE LORETTO MAN

Perhaps, now, we can better describe the unknown fellow who made the seemingly inexplicable stairs that administer the Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico. By the character of his artwork, we can know him – though we have no name for him. Let us just call him “The Loretto Man.”

Unless he was a bit of a fraud and did not live as he “preached” through his art, The Loretto Man must have been high on self-reliance. He built or formed a stairway that reflected his character. Like he probably was himself, he offered a stairway that stands on its own – or seems to. He must have been a somewhat colorful man, too, as he offered a product with flair. Certainly, any spiral stairwell has flair – a good degree of the unusual. He must have been dedicated to doing what he considered useful in life, too, as he offered something as a gift that was extremely useful – at least in his mind – though I guess the good Sisters of Loretto found his stairs much more useful after railings were attached.

The Loretto Man must have loved the elegant, too, as he took great pains to leave behind him a very elegant gift – a fantastic and unique spiral stairway. We may not know his name, but through his labor, we sure do know a good bit about him. Thank you, Loretto Man, for your gift to the world in the artwork of your spiral stairway without a support and the lessons of life it teaches. It teaches those lessons even if The Loretto Man did not intend the instruction, but I suspect The Loretto Man was quite aware of his

providence and his calling when he chose to teach the way he did. Thanks, Loretto Man!
We appreciate it!

An Ode To The Inexplicable Stairs (a poem)

*Note: For what it's worth, I have tried to "imitate"
a spiral form below. I tried to locate my poem
within a single page for the best effect; but it
may not transpire as such with your pc. In any case,
enjoy my "creation" as you can and will.*

Thanks! F.W.B.

We are told, it can't be explained –
how the stairs stand all alone.
It can't be done, it is said.
It's like meat without a bone.
When I look at the stairs, I am amazed,
but mostly I see a banister.
The original steps have been betrayed,
hidden from sight as if sinister.
The banister attached to the stairs
is a thing pleasing to the sight,
but what has happened to the steps
has turned confidence into fright.
We should not rule our lives in fear
and fear to take a chance,
but with rails about the steps,
we are led to refuse to dance.
Take down the rails and let us see
the steps left by an old gray-haired man,
and then maybe we will learn
just what he wanted us to understand.
It is said the stairwell is a miracle,
and of that I have no doubt,
but no more a miracle than you or me.
About that truth, we should shout.
So, let us listen to him who made them
and go up his stairs to the choir loft,
there to sing about all of life,
finally aware of what we've lost.
I'm sure the man who made it says,
you can stand like my stairwell,
going here and going there,
alone and self-reliant, by yourself.
Let me finish now with my little ode
to the inexplicable stairs,
by saying thanks to the one who made them,
to the old man with the gray hair.

**Let us stand together on his steps
as they parade around and round,
knowing that as we go,
praise for God and Life will abound.**

THE SPIRAL STAIRWAY OF SANTE FE

THE END

SOCRATES, JESUS, & ME

Written July 7th, 2002. Modified a bit May 8th, 2009.

What is the meaning of life? It's a question we all should ask.
Asking that question and searching for answers should be our greatest task.
It seems to me it's the only way that each of us can be free;
and if you don't believe it, just ask the likes of Socrates, Jesus & me.

Socrates was a questioning gent who lived 400 years before Christ.
He led the way for Jesus, I think, to find his life quite divine.
He said, question everything, my friend, to find the truths of divinity;
and I must say that has been the way of Socrates, Jesus & me.

Don't be afraid of life, Jesus would say, take it and cherish it bold.
Don't fear what you can't see – just love all that you can hold.
Know what is in your sight and what's hidden you will see;
and that is the key of knowing life by Socrates, Jesus & me.

If you do not love what you can see, then how can you love what you can't?
Just embrace life for all that it is and ignore those that say, thy shan't.
Life is meant to be lived and known as much as we can allow it to be.
You can know life as much as we – Socrates, Jesus & me.

Life is a mystery and always will be and there's much we can never know,
but as long as we love the mystery, we cannot fail to grow.
Generously question while searching for answers. That's the key to being free.
Enjoy your questioning and your answers as we have - Socrates, Jesus & me.

Be not subdued by the questions for which answers do not come.
Enjoy the rays of light that shine even as you may never understand the sun.
Ask why there is light, but be not discouraged if the answer you never see.
Love life as the gift it is – that's what we know – Socrates, Jesus & me.

I have only a little more to offer and then I will let you go.
Ask what you will, but never allow anyone to dictate what you must know.
Love what you know and also that which you would like so much to see;
and you will be hitching a ride with the likes of Socrates, Jesus & me.

CLOTHES OFF TO THE MYSTERY OF LIFE (A Poem)

Written Oct. 3, 2002

Clothes off to the Mystery of Life.
May Life forever stand.
It is not for me to know it all,
or think I can understand.
Life is Beautiful for what it is -
always has and always will be.
There is no God That is in Time,
That's not also in Eternity.

Clothes off to the Mystery of Life.
Embrace all you are without sin.
Know that God is not apart from you
because God is our Movement within.
To love Life outside and not love yourself
is to miss the greatest lesson of all.
It's because God is in you and me and in them
that between us should be no wall.

Clothes off to the Mystery of Life,
as my friend, Jesus, might say.
Love Life because it is of God
and neither shall ever pass away.
Don't pretend that you have knowledge
just because a spirit talks to you.
God is in that spirit that talks,
but just as much in the skies of blue.

Clothes off to the Mystery of Life.
Let your soul wonder and dream.
The Soul takes a body because it allows it
to watch the flow of the stream.
Be amazed at that flow as you see it,
and always know it is right.
Embrace Life as it is – from God –
and you can only gain insight.

Clothes off to the Mystery of Life.
Say Thanks for all that Life is.
You'll never know it – nor will I.
Keep in mind that Life's not a quiz.
Instead, Life is a Doctor and a Teacher
That shows the Grandeur of Being.
And all we must to do to live life well
is to treat Nature from God as a Queen.

REMEMBERING SISTER DOROTHY

By

Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

January 9th, 2003

Today, January 9th, at around 9 A.M., an angel changed her form. She was almost 74, just shy of it by a week. Dorothy was an angel – as all of us who knew her and loved her know. Today turned out to be her day of Greatest Blessing because she lived for the day that she would join her Blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus. Jan. 9th (2003) – as July 7th (1966) – will now become days of celebration for the remaining family of Dad and Mom. We shall not mourn either of these days because these were the days the mysterious new beginning came for Dad and Dorothy. These two have led the way that all of us must someday follow.

And so, Dear Dorothy, I – for one – am mighty proud that we Besslers have added an angel to the ranks of what many think is heavenly. We have two now – of the original family – to reach the ranks of winged angels. Adding Rudy and Bev to that number, we have four. I shall feel a little bit better in that I will feel that four angels of the winged version will be about to help those of us who are left. Only three have been there to guide us up to now – but now we have four. I am sure that Dad and Rudy and Bev are mighty thankful that another of us has joined them. I am sure they are saying – Hey – it's about time we got some help up here!

Thanks, Lovely Sister Dorothy, The Dot of the Besslers, for spending the time you did here with us earthlings when you did, but thanks, too, for becoming free of this world so that you can begin to enjoy the rewards of a life lived oh so well. In the order of things, I guess it was right that you be the first of the siblings to end the earthly sojourn, simply because you were the first to become of earthly rank. Now, you are the first to become of heavenly rank. It seems right.

Dorothy, we who are left both congratulate you and, in some sense, envy you. We congratulate you because you lived a life free of the burdens of boastfulness and arrogance. Like Dad, you lived simple truth and simple beauty – unadorned with complicated forms of both. Thus, your reward will be to continue enjoying simple truth and simple beauty. And I, for one, am just a little bit envious. But I will look forward to that one beautiful January 9th of my existence when at 9 in the morning of that day – even if it's an October day in the afternoon or other – I, too, will rise to the ranks of the winged angels. You go before us, but not for long. Surely, one of us will follow fairly soon. Maybe that one will be Mom – or maybe another of the eight kids – or a spouse thereof. Only time will tell.

Anyway, Dear Dorothy, tell Dad and Rudy and Bev hello. We who are left have great love for each other; and it is truly a tribute to Leo and Clara that in spite of our different paths in life, **WE ARE FAMILY!** And to that union, we all shall remain!

Enjoy the New Paradise, Dorothy! & Thanks for being one of us!

SPIRITUAL NUDITY

(2 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler

May, 2003

I love nudity mostly for spiritual reasons. As try as I might, I can't imagine a better way to express gratitude. For me, my life is like being a product of an artist. As such, since I am not that artist and am not making myself, I should live my life grateful for what the artist of life is doing for me. There is not a whole lot more to it than that for me. Nudity for me is a way for me to tell the artist of life that is making me that I am grateful for what it is doing.

On the other hand, to insist on covering myself seems to me to be a bit of a slap in the face of the artist that is making me. It is like I am telling Life – as the artist behind my creation – that it is not doing what I think is proper and therefore, I am going to cover up myself to spite my maker.

I love going without clothes because it puts me immediately in touch with the miracle of life that just happens to be me. I love seeing others without clothes too because the miracle that is me is also the miracle that is them. We are all into the miracle of life together. So to see anyone naked, me or another, from a baby to an ancient, is to look upon a terrific miracle – a grand expression of the Holiness that is Life. To cover that Holiness is not only a useless thing to do, but it is also a very disrespectful thing to do.

It is difficult for me to see how anyone can claim to respect life if all they do is cover it. Nudity is the ultimate respect – or can be if that is my intention for going nude. Now, if I am not going nude to respect Creation, then I can't claim nudity as an expression of respect; but if I am going nude as an expression of respect for my Creator, then I think it is true that nudity is the ultimate expression of respect.

When I go nude, I feel like I am one with my Creator. It almost feels to me like I am a partner in my own creation, even though I did not create myself; but in feeling so comfortable with my creation and my created being, it is almost like I was there when I was started. It is absolutely wonderful to be at home with life and to know that life is Holy because it comes from the Grand Creator – be that creator a process or a being.

I believe in Heaven, but my Heaven is only being aware that Life is Good. Should I be alive in the body I currently have and be aware of the Presence of Good within me, then I am in Heaven in this experience; and should I die and continue on elsewhere, as long as I continue to be aware of the Goodness of All about me, then I will continue to be in Heaven. Nudity, for me, is a way that I can accent awareness of the Goodness of Life; and accordingly, nudity is perhaps the ideal prayer in life.

If prayer amounts to awareness of the Goodness of Life, as I think it does, then nudity is prayer because it facilitates awareness for me that I am Good. For me, there can be no more ideal prayer than nudity. To accept myself entirely as I am because I am the product of Goodness, I must go nude. There is no better way for me to express gratitude

for life than to embrace life as it is and to constantly say thank you to Creation, which in some mysterious way has included me in its process.

I don't think it useful to take anything in Creation for granted – whether that created being is myself or another. It is not for me to take that great miracle of life for granted as if it is an unworthy expression of something Bad. It is only for me to be grateful for the great miracle of life and to be grateful that I am privileged to be a part of it. Nothing says gratitude for life better than going nude because it is an expression of acceptance. At least, that is the way I live my life.

And it should make no difference if I am alone or with others. I feel that since I am completely Good because something completely Good is making me, I am Good completely unto myself. I do not need another nude being to make me complete. I am complete unto myself as a Good Being, as all are.

No one should need another to feel complete. Nudity, for me, is being aware of that and knowing that if I were the only person in this world, I should be just as happy as I am knowing I am not the only person in the world. It matters not really – that I am or am not the only person in the world. As long as I have my nudity, I am blessed with the only real companion that I need. I can extend that companionship and share that companionship with others, but nudity, I think, should start with a sense of individual wholesomeness – being whole unto oneself – and then extend to others. And if all felt that way, imagine just how wonderful it would be.

I thank you for listening.

THE MYTH OF COUNTRY MEADOWS

Written June 5, 2003

Refrain:

*I live in a place called Country Meadows.
We may be poor, but we try to be mellow.
The ladies are nice and so are the fellows
in this mythical place called Country Meadows.*

So come on down and take off your shoes.
Remove your worries and take off your blues.
Reach for the sky and know that God is there
and don't believe that God's not here
in the midst of all the brown and the green
where the children of God have great esteem.
It's a land of Koolaid and bowls of Jello –
this wonderful land called Country Meadows. **Refrain**

The kids all know the place is fine
and blessed with loads of what's divine.
They skip around and laugh and giggle
as they watch each other as they wiggle.
Life's not meant to be forlorn
as sure as each of us was born.
Heaven is here, we don't have to die
to find God and all that's sublime. **Refrain**

Country Meadows is a Paradise
where Adam and Eve could have got it right.
It wasn't eating the fruit that was wrong, you see.
It was eating some of it and wasting the seed.
It was in biting but part and tossing the core
that caused mankind to stray from the Lord.
If we are not grateful for what God has done,
then that's how we sin and miss the fun. **Refrain**

In Country Meadows, we embrace what's right,
starting with ourselves both day and night.
We enjoy our forms in full array
from a baby to those of us old in days.
Each of us reflects the wonder of God
and upon no one, do we trod.
We do not fret and apologize
for all that we are as blessings in life. **Refrain**

Let this be a warning to all who would hate
and expect to live here and plunder and rape.
If you do this, you can no longer belong;
for in Country Meadows, it's not right to do wrong.
We will not punish if you do these things,
but you can't be a member and with us sing.
We are a land not of laws, but of rule of the heart.
Come join us now and gain a new start. ***Refrain.***
(Repeat first verse and end with another ***Refrain.***)

HAIL TO THE PEOPLE OF POWELL

Written July, 2003

Refrain:

Hail to the people of Powell, for a lifetime that's been great.

Hail to the people of Powell, known as the Garden Spot of the state.

Listen, my friends, and I will tell you, a tale of my youth.

I grew up in Powell, Wyoming – and there began to know the truth. ***Refrain.***

Let me continue the tale of my childhood, with attendance in the Powell schools.

My second home there was the library – where I began to learn the meaning of cool.

Refrain.

When you've had as great a lifetime, as I did way back then,

You can always hear children singing – though it may only be the wind. ***Refrain.***

Whatever I learned in my youth in Powell, I've taken with me wherever I've gone.

No matter where I live in the world – Powell, Wyoming will always be my home.

Refrain.

Repeat ***Refrain*** a few times.

CONSENSUS ON IRAQ (A Free Style Song)

Written Sept., 2003

Refrain 1:

*We're stabbing people in the back in Iraq
and we're turning our face from Jesus.
We're stabbing people in the back in Iraq
and it seems to be the general consensus.*

Several thousand years ago,
a man named Jesus walked this earth.
He said, no matter what you do,
violence is never justified.
If you want to enter the Kingdom of my Father,
there's only one way in;
And that, My Friend,
is the way of being kind – but - *Refrain 1.*

Jesus said to be kind to your enemy
and not just your friends.
Bombing the guilty may seem smart,
but it kills the innocent as well.
An eye for an eye and a life for a life
is the wail of only fools.
Two thousand years ago, he said it.
That's what he came to tell – but - *Refrain 1.*

When Peter drew his sword
for his friend, Jesus, to defend.
Jesus quickly scolded him
to put his sword back into its sheath.
Then rather than do violence to another,
he let them put him on a cross.
To do different would have entailed force
and his soul to make weak – but, still – *Refrain 1.*

When will we ever learn
that to kill is to kill yourself?
To harm or to punish another
does the same to your soul.
No matter why you do it –
if you kill another man,
You've lost a chance to be brave
and attend wisdom's school – but - *Refrain 1.*

In September of 2001,
 some fools destroyed twin towers
expecting to gain revenge
 for some previous hurt done to them.
In March of 2003,
 victims chose to strike at others
to even the score perhaps,
 but no hurt can it ever mend – and - ***Refrain 1.***

What fools we were when Jesus lived
 and how deaf we still are.
Lessons then were never heard,
 yet for those lessons, Jesus died.
We still continue to defend life with force
 and think we are not vain.
How little we have learned by one man's life
 to march on and on as blind – still - ***Refrain 1.***

A wise man does not kill
 because earlier he was killed;
For if he does, it will go on and on
 and he will have to kill again.
There's only one way to be free
 and that's not to take a life.
Instead be kind, even to the cruel,
 lest you become one of them.

Refrain 2:
Let's not stab anyone – in the back - or anywhere.
And let's not turn our face from Jesus.
Let's be kind to all who are - everywhere
And let that be our new consensus.
Repeat ***Refrain 2*** several times.

THE AWFUL MISUSE OF THE CRUCIFIXION

(6 Pages)

By Francis William Bessler

Laramie, Wyoming

Feb. 18th, 2004

Next week, we shall enter the spiritual season known as *Lent*. I am not sure what the term itself means, but I am very aware of what the event at the end of *Lent* has come to mean to many. That event is – or was – the *crucifixion* of Christ. *Lent* has no meaning outside of that awful event of history.

But what does the season of *Lent* and the event of the *crucifixion* really mean? I think it means that *someone must suffer*. It started out that Jesus was the one who had to suffer for the good of all; but it translates into everyone must be willing to suffer for the good of all. Did Jesus have to suffer for the good of all? Personally, I don't think so. Personally, I think Jesus was a victim of the time that demanded a sacrifice "for the good of all." His death may have been nothing more than being an innocent victim of the demands of some overall notion of justice.

So what was the overall notion of justice for which Jesus was allowed to die? I think it was mostly because he was making the Jews of the day suffer by offering that they were not the special people of God that they purported themselves to be. In making the Jews suffer by somehow challenging their esteemed notion of themselves, it was considered justifiable that Jesus should be made to suffer for the suffering he caused others.

So the Jews made Jesus suffer because he had made them suffer. But what do many followers of Jesus do? They use the suffering and death of Jesus to justify a continuation of suffering. Thus, it was not only Jesus who died on that cross. It is the "duty" of everyone after Jesus to be willing to do his or her part in the "wonderful world of suffering." We say that Jesus died for us all; but that translates into we must be willing to suffer and die for him.

There is tremendous danger in honoring the crucifixion of Jesus in the awful light of sacrifice because it tends to justify the perpetration of suffering in the world. Since Jesus – as innocent – suffered and did not deserve to suffer, then it becomes entirely appropriate for all to suffer for the good of all – innocent or not. Thus, George W. Bush sees no problem in justifying the use of suffering and death on the part of many Iraqis in exchange for the suffering that some Islamic person or persons have been causing Americans.

George W. Bush probably reveres the crucifixion of Jesus as being the only justification that is needed to make others suffer because of the ideal of sacrifice that it esteems. And therein is the great danger of honoring the crucifixion of Jesus as a needed sacrifice. It makes sacrifice as an ideal honorable when there is no value to the act of

sacrifice in and of itself whatsoever. We may grow by virtue of our own sacrifice; and in that way, it may be useful; but suffering in and of itself does nothing whatsoever to lessen the pain of anyone else. It has been argued that Jesus suffered in my place to reduce my own suffering; but, in fact, no suffering of Jesus has affected any suffering of my own; and unfortunately the suffering of Jesus has been used to canonize suffering in general.

And not only has it canonized suffering – it has canonized sacrifice too. Like a tax dodger tries to create pseudo transactions to reduce his taxes, people in power love to use the “sacrifice” of Jesus as a ploy to get others to do their dirty work for them. It is a terribly dangerous concept. One who rules argues – look, Jesus was willing to die for me. Who are you who are so much lower than Jesus to object to sacrificing – not for me, but for the cause for which we both believe? So rulers in general love the concept of the crucifixion of Jesus as sacrifice and not execution to gain support for some scheme of their own; and that scheme may have nothing whatsoever to do with the salvation of the soul.

The Jews were among the early peoples who saw value in letting someone or something suffer in place of others. Thus, they had no compunction for killing a lamb and letting it be the standard bearer of suffering. In fact, they may have burned lambs alive in order to exact a greater degree of suffering. But did that suffering of the lamb replace or diminish the suffering of the Jewish people? Of course not! In fact, thinking that it would probably only continued the plight of the Jews to continue on their misconceived trail of thinking that something they might do might influence God. ***In truth, God is not outside of us to be influenced, but rather inside of us to make us real.*** In the end, the suffering of one for many does nothing but encourage the practice of making some suffer for the good of all.

Does George Bush lose any sleep over the loss of lives in Iraq – either on the part of the so called coalition forces or on the part of the Iraqis? I doubt it. Why? Because he believes in the value of suffering – one for another – as long as the one who has to suffer is not himself or his family or his buddies. That is one of the great problems of honoring suffering of one for many. If someone must suffer, then it is just fine if it is not me – just as long as someone fulfills the demand. George Bush probably actually believes he is a major part of some military victory simply because he rallied the troops. Others paid the price, but it is George who will claim the victory.

Look at the American Civil War. In the end, he paid with his life by virtue of being assassinated, but did Abraham Lincoln really participate in the Civil War? He called for millions of soldiers on both sides to fight between themselves to confirm a union, but he did not engage in the fight himself. And you can be sure that Abraham Lincoln believed in the sacrifice of Jesus and saw that as an example to rally the troops. Love and admiration for sacrifice has caused many a battle by deflecting from peaceful solution of conflict. Oh, how we love conflict – and how willing we are to demand that others pay the price. Often it does not matter who pays the price for something – just as long as someone does. The idea of sacrifice lays the foundation of one doing the crime and another doing the time. It’s danger in terms of potential can be devastating.

I watched a program on the Discovery Channel a few days ago that sickened me. In 1997, in some small Illinois community, Lawrenceville, a young boy died at the hands of a stabbing. The mother was sleeping just 20 feet away from the murdered boy. She offered to the police that she awoke to what she thought were screams outside the house.

She rose, thinking her son was screaming outside the house. As it happened, her son had been killed in the room next to hers. But she offered that she awoke, darted out of her room, and saw this stranger in her house. Thinking the stranger had hurt her boy outside, she ran after him, clawing at him and begging for news for what he had done. In the pursuit, nothing was overturned in the house. Glass was broken from the inside out in a back door in the ensuing struggle between mother and murderer. At the end, the murderer who had a ski mask on took it off and let the mother see his face – as if deliberately revealing himself - before leaping over a fence and getting away.

The prosecution offered that this tale was preposterous. They offered that the young mother had broken the glass in the door to make it look like there had been a struggle, but since nothing was overturned in the kitchen on the way to the door, it had to be a staged act. A bloody knife from the kitchen was found in the hall, but the prosecution argued that it had to be placed there deliberately because there seemed to be no splatter as there would have been if a bloody knife had been dropped. They argued that the mother had to “place” the knife down on the carpet; and as such, the scene had to be “staged.” The mother was asked to take a lie detector test. She took it twice and passed it both times. Still, the prosecution insisted that it was the young mother who had taken the life of her child to keep her child away from her divorced husband. Three years passed, but eventually, the young mother would be convicted of the crime and sentenced to 65 years. Justice had to be served; and it would not matter who would have to pay.

In Texas, some reporter heard about some guy who was on death row for killing young children. He said he liked to do it to make the parents suffer. That would explain why he would have removed his ski mask in the case of the killing in Illinois if he had been the one to do that. In the case at hand, the victims and the assailant had met previously. In the mindset of the assailant, to increase the suffering of the parent, it would be essential that the parent know who it was who killed the child. So, it would make sense that he would do just as the victim claimed. He would have made it a point to reveal himself to take credit for causing the suffering.

Anyway, the reporter visited the condemned murderer in Texas to see if there may be some connection to his crimes in Texas and the killing of the boy in Illinois. This guy admitted to being in the area on the night of the murder in Illinois in 1997 – and had killed another kid just 1 ½ miles away. He offered that he had done the murder of which the young mother had been accused too – describing in detail what went on; and it was almost just as the young mother had offered. He offered that earlier that day or the previous day, he had been talking with the young kid. The mother found them together and had nervously retrieved her son. The man on death row said that angered him because the mother acted rude. Accordingly, he followed her to her home and did the deed of which she was accused. I may be out of my mind, but that sounds mighty convincing to me that the wrong one may have been convicted of this crime.

Now, for the really horrible part of this story. You would think that the prosecutors in Illinois who had probably falsely convicted an innocent person of a murder would recant and admit they made a mistake; but to date, the young mother continues to serve out a 65 year penalty for the death of her child. At the very least, you would think that with the confession of the man on death row in Texas that a new trial would be allowed; but to this date, no such trial has been arranged. Assumed justice being served is so often prosecution that is blind.

I suspect that in the minds of the prosecutors of this case in Illinois that it does not matter who pays for the crime – just as long as someone pays for it. It matters not in the end if the one who pays is innocent or guilty. It only matters that justice is done and that someone pays; and if in the process of making others pay for crimes done by some, innocents are allowed to fulfill the demands of justice – so be it. It has been the way of the human race from time immemorial. It has served us well in the past; and it will continue to be the grand hallmark by which society itself survives. Sacrificing one for another seems to be the very nature of our society; and oh, how willing we often are to do it; and for Christians, it all began with the crucifixion of Jesus. It all began with: *I do the sin, but Jesus paid the price.*

And therein is the great danger of honoring the tale of the crucifixion as a tale of sacrifice. By believing in the crucifixion of Jesus as a sacrifice for others and not the plain and simple execution for heresy it was, it becomes a rally argument – not for peace for which Jesus died, but for more sacrifice on the part of any who might claim allegiance to Jesus. It puts us constantly in mind that “*someone must pay*” – and if that one is innocent, as was Jesus, hey, that’s even better. Jesus was innocent of the charges against him as may be this young mother in Illinois; but those who honor the tale of the crucifixion have very little compunction about them in arguing to themselves that any punishment arranged for others is not justifiable. Punishment for one merely gets thrown into some general pot of suffering and sacrifice. We look at Jesus suffering on the cross and are led to think: he did his part in this thing called suffering. I guess I must do mine. It’s merely punishment in general that becomes important; and it matters little who is punished just as long as someone is.

It is this non concern about making sure the right one is punished that puts punishment itself in the very light of sacrifice. The notion of sacrifice says that something I do can take the place of something else. That which one does can serve as a substitute for what another might have done him or herself. I can do for you that which you could have done for yourself. That’s sacrifice. Justice often demands punishment for crime; and sacrifice of one for another often proves to be the case. One does the crime. Another does the time. That’s sacrifice. It is the idea and act of punishment that becomes the ideal – regardless of actual culprit. You may kill. I may be punished; but because punishment and suffering is the focus, it matters little that it is I who is punished and suffers instead of you. That’s sacrifice; and that is also the tale of the crucifixion of Jesus as many have been led to believe. It may be a wonderful tale of love; but it serves equally well as a perversion of responsibility. It serves as an example of thinking that one can stand in for another; and in that light, it diminishes the ideal of independence that Jesus lived for and died for.

In the Jewish world, surely no one could believe that a lamb could have been guilty of some assumed violation of God. Yet the Jews thought that suffering of someone or something was necessary to atone for some assumed act of disloyalty to God. The lamb was completely innocent. Yet it was a lamb that was chosen to suffer for the good of all. Suffering in itself became the ideal. It became of no consequence who or what suffered just as long as someone or something did.

Likewise, by virtue of the crucifixion of Jesus and holding it up to the light as a needed sacrifice rather than merely as a vengeful act of injustice, suffering itself has been

put on a pedestal; and it makes little difference who suffers just as long as someone does. Many do not see the suffering and death of Jesus as an arbitrary thing at all. It was required "for the good of all." As long as we hold up the suffering and death of Jesus as being absolutely necessary and in no way arbitrary, we sanctify suffering itself. We may have not realized it; but I think we have canonized suffering in and of itself by our love of the crucifixion of Jesus. Since Jesus suffered, we have concluded that all can suffer – and some must. There must be suffering as long as we have Jesus on a cross in front of us. And we have forgotten that Jesus took but one day to die in suffering whereas he lived in joy for 33 years.

There is tremendous danger in believing in sacrifice – be it the assumed sacrifice of Jesus on a cross or the assumed sacrifice of an innocent lamb begging for its life on top of some fiery furnace of suffering – or asking a young mother to pay the penalty for someone else taking the life of her child. Does the life of Jesus mean nothing more to us than to keep a dead notion of sacrifice alive? When will we learn that the suffering of one is only that – suffering? When will we learn that suffering in itself is of no use? When will we learn that it is wrong to justify suffering of some to avenge others who have made us suffer?

Does George Bush care that many are being killed by his say so? Perhaps he does; but he overrides that care by thoughts of duty. All he is choosing to be mindful of is that on Sept. 11th, 2001 – during his watch – thousands of innocent Americans were killed. In the manner of sacrifice, that means that thousands of innocents on the other side must be killed to atone for the killing of the first set of innocents. Someone or ones must pay; and it doesn't matter much who just as long as those in general who pay are close to those who may have initiated an agitation.

It becomes of no consequence if 100 children in a school yard are killed by a bomb thrown in a school yard as long as the principal is killed in the process. In the end, George Bush probably reveres the telling of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross – and uses that to justify the ongoing practice of humanity of demanding suffering on the part of some for the benefit of all. Those 100 children that may be killed to get to the principal become highlights of the sacrifice of humanity that was necessary to attain peace in the world. They become the new lambs offered in sacrifice for the overall good of humanity. One life for the sake of many is an ideal of sacrifice; and by and large, it has been the idea of the crucifixion of Jesus that has kept that ideal going strong for so many who call themselves Christian.

We pay no mind that in life Jesus taught non-violence and that he died in violence to keep from being violent himself. We claim to be Christian; and yet we allow the death of Jesus to be used as a ploy to get us to murder others. We are led to look at the cross and see that suffering and be willing to suffer as did our lord and master, Jesus; but we are obliged to ignore the lesson of his life that no man or woman has the right to take up arms against another – regardless of the excuse. Soldiers look at Jesus on the cross and say, he suffered; and then they think that suffering in general is ok; but it is not.

Jesus did not live and die in the ways he did to offer any such example. Suffering in general is not ok; only suffering for the right cause is ok. You can't take the crucifixion of Jesus and use it as an apology for all suffering. Jesus could have chosen to suffer by taking up arms against the cruel and invading Romans; but if he had, his suffering would

not have been justifiable to his own soul; and neither should any suffering that we may incur by taking up arms against another be justifiable to our own souls either.

Will we ever realize just how foolish we humans often are? I do not know. I hope so. It might help, though, that some day we might wake up and realize that terrorizing lambs to offset our own suffering never did work; and killing and punishing others for what we perceive as some injustice will only continue the stupidity that caused the first injustice in the first place.

The only value I see for myself in the crucifixion of my Friend, Jesus, is that one man illustrated to what extent another person should go to not take up arms against another. There is no sacrifice in the crucifixion of Jesus for me. He did not die so that I might live. He died so that he might live – or continue to live in eternity as he had in mortality. The soul goes on and must inherit itself. Jesus knew that. He would have been a fool to take up arms against his fellow man to save himself, given his belief in pacifism. He had to submit to crucifixion in order to not betray his pacifism. But it could have been otherwise. He only had to die the way he did because the time and the people of the time in which he lived demanded it. But it was no sacrifice or intended substitution of himself for others. ***It was murder. It was execution. But it was not sacrifice.***

No amount of suffering that he did there has diminished any suffering on my own part. Nothing that Jesus did resolves me from having to do the same thing myself. But there is value in the example of Jesus in light of his crucifixion. It wasn't for nothing. It proved to Jesus how far he was willing to go to demonstrate his belief in pacifism, not war and taking up arms to avenge a perceived injustice; and it demonstrated by example how far I should be willing to go because it is right.

Thanks for listening!

THE AWFUL MISUSE OF THE CRUCIFIXION

THE END

THE MEANING OF THE CRUCIFIXION (for me) (9 Pages)

By Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
Feb. 26^h, 2004

Last week I wrote a bit of an article that concentrated on my judgment that tradition has pretty much misunderstood the crucifixion of Jesus and because of that misunderstanding, a whole lot of misery has been justified down through history in the light of that misunderstanding. Basically, tradition has offered that the crucifixion of Jesus was a needed sacrifice. If you read my first article entitled **The Awful Misuse (or Danger) of the Crucifixion**, you know that I disagree.

I have not yet seen the new Mel Gibson movie dealing with the passion and death of Jesus, though I may decide to do so. I am under the impression, however, that Mel is a deep believer in Jesus as needed sacrifice. I hope you go and see Mel's movie, if you haven't already. Compare, then, our two different visions of Jesus. It might prove to be interesting.

In my earlier article, I stated that the crucifixion of Jesus was an "awful event." Indeed, it was that, but I prefer to see it as a *worthy* event, too, in that it offered to me confirmation of a direction in which I believe in life. I am not glad that Jesus had to die in the way he did, but I am glad for the lesson he taught me in doing so. Getting away from all the negatives I wrote about earlier, by pursuing the nonviolent course that he did in spite of being violated himself, Jesus taught me that for the soul, no provocation to violence is worth it – even violence to another in self-defense.

As all who are somewhat familiar with the story of Jesus know, allegedly Jesus made an exception to his rule of nonviolence when he lost his temper and whipped at some in a temple in Jerusalem. Many point to that and argue from that incident that sometimes a degree of violence is justified. I do not agree with that. Having ideals is one thing. Attending to them is another.

One of the things I admire about the stories of Jesus is that he seemed to be a man of ideals, but he also seemed to be one who honored those ideals to a great extent. I guess you could say that with Jesus, for the most part, his ideal met with his real. For the most part, the idealistic Jesus was not different from the realistic Jesus – or the real Jesus. But it seems, if the story of his whipping the salesmen in the temple is correct, there was a bit of slippage even in his life.

I can relate to the ideal of nonviolence in my life; and I can also relate to acting out of accord with that ideal. I have not resorted to violence in my life much, but I have a little. And I can tell you in those very few occasions in my life where I have reacted with

violence, it was like I opened up a door and some wind within me went out. I did not like it at all.

I can remember two incidents in my adult life when I have allowed myself to slip away from my chosen ideals. I have been married three times. During my first marriage, my first wife, Dee, became very angry at me for something I had done. She was so angry at me that she came at me with a knife, not to stab me, but to ask me to stab her. I was so shocked by her action that I got mad at her. I did not take the knife Dee was entrusting to me, but I did slap her lightly on the face to, as it were, slap some sense into her. The very idea that she would react as she did caused me to temporarily lose my cool. In my response, I slapped her. But I can tell you, I was not proud of it.

Twenty years later, I would repeat the slapping in the face thing. Again I was married. Again a wife would provoke me into slapping her lightly in the face. This time, my wife, Ann, was inebriated and had slapped me quite hard, contesting again something I had done that had made her mad. It was only in 2001 that the last incident occurred. I have already forgotten the details, but regardless of details, once again, I reacted with a very minor fit of violence. In this second marital incidence, I was slapped first and I only slapped back in a kind of defense; but the result was the same. It felt to me like a door in me had opened and some of my own spirit slipped out of me. I did not like it.

If Jesus did whip those salesmen in the temple out of loss of his own cool, like it is claimed he did, from my own experience, given that our temperaments are similar, I can assure you he did not like it. And I can assure you that he would not have gone about arguing that what he had done was right. It wasn't right for his soul – anymore than my slapping two separate wives was right for me. In both our cases, for one moment, the ideal and the real did not meet.

In a way, the slapping incidents in my life ended well because they confirmed within me of how disgusting I find the idea of inequality. It was almost foreign to me. Once I had slapped either of my wives, it was like my favored ideal of equality was being challenged. I think that more than anything else, violence, even that violence we might consider as justifiable, destroys any sense of equality that may have preceded it. By striking another, regardless of circumstance, a sense of equality goes out the door for so many of us. Perhaps, there are many in the world who have to strike another to feel equal to them, but for some of us, it is only by *not* striking another that our sense of equality can be maintained. Thus, for those of us who are prone to losing our sense of equality by striking another, unfortunately, we cannot strike at others at all.

You may be wondering where this is leading. Let me make it plain. For Jesus, any kind of violence offered another would have challenged his sense of equality. We may argue why Jesus regarded a sense of equality as high as he did, but from my own experience, I suspect that he had to do what he did to safeguard his own temperament of soul. Let us just say that he was caught in a trap. He could not strike out at his captors and still maintain the nonviolent ideals of his soul. He could not slap his wife on the face, even if his wife had slapped him first, because he could not afford to lose the temperament of his soul.

Well, that's not entirely true. He could have, but he chose not to. He may have slipped a bit in the temple when he whipped at those who were making him angry, but he knew he could not justify that kind of action on a continuous basis – lest he lose his own

soul in the process. So, he surrendered without a fight. It was the only way he could save himself.

Why did Jesus submit to such a cruel end as crucifixion? I think it was to demonstrate to both himself and any other wise soul that equality is the way to go. He said it himself. Not many might choose such a course; but any who are truly wise will. Each of us inherits ourselves – both in this life and in any life hereafter. If Jesus had put forth a struggle against his captors, he would have had to inherit that movement of struggle within his soul. He chose to avoid putting his soul in jeopardy by making sure that he did not alter the course of his soul from being at peace to being anxious. Accordingly, after his soul left his body, it went forward in peace. For a wise soul, in the light of Jesus, that is the only course that makes sense.

Now, for those souls who want or need power over others, surrendering may not be the right course to take. If I read Jesus correct, however, his was the kind of soul that does not want power over another – nor will he accept it if it is offered to him. Keep in mind that in all of this, it is I who could be reading Jesus wrong. I am only offering my impression of the man and his ideals. It is my read of him that offers that he did not want any power – nor would he ever accept any.

Many, of course, do not see Jesus in the same light as I do. Many are absolutely convinced that Jesus does not only want power in some imagined kingdom, but there will come a day when he will insist on such power – locking out any who may have failed some previous loyalty test. I do not read Jesus that way. I read Jesus – perhaps as I read myself – without any need whatever of power over anyone but myself.

I can hear the objections! But Jesus was The Son of God? You are making him into just one of us by claiming he has no designs on a kingdom of power. There are two separate issues there. There is an issue of being a son of God and an issue of being of a kingdom – though not necessarily a kingdom of power.

I agree that Jesus was a son of God, but so also am I; and so also are you. I agree that Jesus was divine; but so also am I; and so also are you. I have no doubt that Jesus was and is truly “*a*” son of God, but not “*The*” Son of God. Everyone is a son or daughter of God who comes from God. We all come from God - or are created of God. How, then, can it be that we are not all equally sons and daughters of God? I have no doubt that Jesus was and is also divine; but neither do I have any doubt that any of us are divine. That which separates the wise from the unwise is not being divine or not, but rather knowing ones own divinity. Those who are wise know that no one lacks divinity because all who are wise know that all are equally blessed with the Presence of God.

That is so because God is Infinite – meaning everywhere or without bounds. How could God be God if it were different? Can there be such a thing as a finite or limited God? The wise soul knows there cannot be – even as the wise soul also knows there can be many finite gods. A God is that Infinity that is Everywhere and in Everything – from Which and through Which all creation mysteriously happens. A god is that finite entity that thinks it has the right to rule another. We should beware of letting gods take over where only God should be admitted.

It is knowing that all are divine that allows for a wise soul to submit to an unwise one because a wise one knows that such submission is only an illusion. If I let you take me, it is only an illusion that you did so. My soul will go on and slip through your fingers like water through a sieve. No wise soul can be held or detained by capture because souls are

immaterial and cannot be restrained by the material. It is in knowing this that a wise soul can submit to temporary restraint. It cannot last; and the movement that I establish in my soul will go on forever – or at least until I change the course of the movement.

That which Jesus did for me by submitting as he did to an unchallenged capture and death was to show me that I need not fear what others may do to me. My only fear that should be a fear is what I may allow for myself. Should I assume a course of struggling against you, then that is the movement in my soul that I will set in force. It is for each of us to choose as we will; but as we choose, we will have to continue until we change course. That is the true nature of judgment; and no one can avoid it.

I realize full well that my view of Jesus as being one who chooses independent solitary worth and recommends that way for all is not supportive of many views that has Jesus tied in time to some kind of general power among some selected ones. I realize that my Jesus is in no way interested in any power over anyone – and thus could never materialize in time to usher in any kind of domination of others. My view of Jesus is not consistent with domination in any way, shape, or form. My view of the crucifixion, then, becomes necessarily inconsistent with any view that looks upon Jesus as lord and master of anyone. Those who see Jesus in that light see a different Jesus than I do.

I need not fear that other Jesus who would want to dominate others because I am independent of him. In truth, my Jesus and I are not in any way interested in power. There is no change in the Jesus that was to the Jesus that is for me; and there will be no change in a future Jesus either. Those who see a lord in a different light in the future than what happened in the past may find their different lord, but it will never be mine. My Jesus is the same now as he was then. As my Jesus was not interested in power over anyone when he lived 2,000 years ago, neither is my current Jesus interested in any power; and there will never come a time when my Jesus will want any power. How could he and still stand for the same equality he stood for so long ago? For those who seek a powerful Jesus, I think they are chasing a mirage and a contradiction; but they have the right to chase that mirage as I have the right to stick with my own.

Now – about that kingdom of Jesus! Everyone belongs to a kingdom by virtue of the way they believe and act. Just because Jesus does not want power and does not represent a kingdom based on power does not mean there is no **Kingdom Of Jesus!** Let us just say that there are probably many kingdoms of Jesus in the world – or Jesus-like kingdoms.

I believe I am part of such a kingdom. I belong to a Jesus-like kingdom in that I have no desire of anything in this life or another that is not equality based. In reality, in my life, I have run away every time my soul encountered having to deal with inequality. If I sense being in a circumstance where inequality is being offered on the menu of life, I'm history. I am not offering by this that everyone should do as I have done. Not at all; but I am saying that everyone must do in life whatever it is that he or she deems to be conducive to maintaining membership in their own chosen kingdom.

And when I die? Well, how could it not be so? If my soul is an independent entity and does, in fact, go on, you can be sure that it will go to a membership or community that shares common ideals. Who knows where anyone goes after they die? Who knows how it all is in that mysterious hereafter? Regardless of details, however, I am as convinced as I can be that should a community of souls be waiting to greet me when I pass from this wonderful world into the next, more than likely, we and they will likely

share a common belief in the standard of equality. Each of us must choose our own ideals in this life very carefully because we will have to live with them in the next – or live with those who share them. And it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to leave the choosing to someone else. Does it?

I realize full well that there must be some explanation as to why and how Jesus was declared to be a messiah rather than just a wise one. I am offering this comment in much smaller letters to indicate the importance of knowing the answer to that question. It is not a question that needs to be answered; and thus, I apply toward it in very small letters. It would all be pure speculation as it must be pure speculation for anyone in trying to resolve the great mystery of Jesus. What happened to turn Jesus from merely a wise one having no interest whatever in power into a grand Jewish Messiah in whom all power is expected to reside? Well, I have no detailed answers, but I have thought about it. That speculation can never be on the par of the intellectual offering that I have submitted above; but in part, I offer some speculation on the matter below. I will return to larger letters, however, to make an easier read.

On the Conversion of Jesus from Wise One to Messiah

In all likelihood, Jesus was nominated, elected, and appointed to the seat of being the Jewish Messiah after he died. Before he died, he may have had some significant recognition as a wisdom teacher; but probably no more than that. But he became far more significant after his death than before it. Something happened after his death that drew attention to him and offered the possibility that he had, in fact, been the Jewish Messiah. I suspect that he appeared to some of his friends in apparition form. That could have been the start of an eventual process that would turn Jesus from merely a wisdom teacher into a Jewish Messiah.

In the 1970's, an airliner went down in the Everglades and all were lost, including a flight engineer by the name of Dom Comolli. After the fatal accident, Dom appeared to a number of his old crew and warned them of a particular part of a plane he thought was defective as he became aware from his strange loft of that defect. Apparently, he was convinced that his plane had gone down due to some neglect on his part to detect a defective part which caused the plane to go down; and he was sticking around to care for his fellow crew. For a time – for a few weeks or months – he was able to appear in some strange apparition form and it would be just like he was actually there. Needless to say, it was very spooky.

Looking as if he was really there, dressed in his spiffy uniform, Dom Comolli would appear with a crew member and say: ***Look at part # 89. It is defective and should be replaced to avoid a tragedy.*** And, sure enough, part # 89 would be found to be defective. I am not sure if it is available or not, but I am relying on my memory of a made for tv movie in the 1980s for this story of Dom Comolli. I think it was called **Ghost of Flight 401** – or something like that. It is quite a story. In the movie, Ernest Borgnine plays the part of Dom Comolli.

Some would say that the crew who saw the “ghost” of Dom Comilli were having hallucinations; but I don't think so. I think that some souls must fall into a rare kind of spiritual or soulful space when they die that they can actually manifest as their former self for awhile – perhaps relying on a channel of energy from their contacts to themselves. Apparently, such ability to manifest in a physical appearance does not last

for long, but for awhile some may have that ability. In the case of Dom Comolli – who was a very ordinary kind of fellow in life – he stuck around for a bit, and then appeared no more. I do not know if the actual body of Dom Comolli was ever recovered from the swamp. It may have been swallowed in the Everglades. I do not know; but maybe I will try to research that aspect of the story in time and find out. Do souls that appear in apparition have bodies in graves – or are they somehow linked to those for whom no bodies are actually found? It is an interesting question. I do not know.

Anyway, given that this actually happened, transfer that as a possibility to the event of Jesus after his death. Like Dom Comolli, Jesus was claimed to have appeared to his disciples after his death for awhile – and then, eventually he stopped his appearances too. Remember? After a while, he was claimed to “ascend into Heaven.” If that happened, imagine the possibilities. Everyone who would have seen the apparition of Jesus made manifest in physical form after his death would have concluded that Jesus had resurrected from the dead. Now, add to that little scenario the temporary aspect of it. In time, Jesus would appear no more and those left behind would be left to themselves to tell their own stories and come to their own conclusions.

With no Jesus around to correct them, I suspect that many of the Jews among them concluded that Jesus had been the expected messiah. How could it not be since this Jesus would have appeared to have such miraculous powers to “resurrect” from the dead? Having now a messiah on their hands where previously only a wisdom teacher had stood, the natural tendency would have been to fit him in as needed or fit him as needed to measure up to what would have been expected of a Jewish messiah. Accordingly, legends began offering Jesus as from the house of David, born in Bethlehem, born of a virgin, etc – according to expected prophecies of Jewish tradition. In other words, Jesus would have been fabricated to fit the role as needed. Given their history of offering legend to keep the membership in line, I am sure the few Jews at the time who may have come to believe in Jesus as their messiah would have had no trouble continuing the legend making.

No one who would have done this would have considered this deceit. In fact, they may have actually believed their own concocted stories because they probably really believed that Jesus had been the messiah; and quite likely, none of them knew that their concocted stories were not really true. In other words, they had a portrait of a Jewish messiah. Thinking that Jesus was truly that messiah, they merely assumed that all the attendant details were true because they had to be true.

The problem was – and is – however, Jesus may have not fit the role. While Jesus was alive, a student of Jesus – like Thomas – may have jotted down some of the things that the master, Jesus, had taught; and that could be the basis of what we have come to know as **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**. Absolutely convinced that Jesus had been the real messiah, the sayings that Thomas may have jotted down could have become the basis of all gospels to come, rearranged and retold as necessary according to the impression of the author – while omitting completely those verses that made no sense to them; and there were a lot of those.

Thus, stories could have been fabricated around the Jesus as depicted in the sayings of Thomas – with each subsequent story teller changing things to suit himself. It may have all been done with great sincerity; but as legends go, in the end, the greater truth of Jesus could have become lost in fabricated legend.

For those who are not aware of **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**, in 1945, a peasant in Egypt stumbled on a jar of ancient manuscripts in a remote cave off the Nile River. Experts have dated those manuscripts to be at least 1600 years old. It has been suspected that they were hidden away in the 4th Century because of a purge of suspect gospels at that time. Only the canonized gospels were supposed to be allowed – and anything outside of that canon was supposed to be destroyed – by order of both the church and the emperor of the day. Apparently, however, somebody disobeyed the order and stashed the **Gospel of Thomas** and others away and did not destroy them. Experts suspect – though they do not know for sure – that the Gospel attributed to Thomas may be tracked back to Thomas, the Apostle of Jesus.

Regardless of source, however, the **Gospel of Thomas** suggests that Jesus was not the person he is claimed to be in the other gospels. It may be my own personal read only, but I see the Gospel of Thomas defining Jesus as strictly a master and not a lord. The Gospel of Thomas consists of 114 different sayings of Jesus – but offers nothing on what Jesus may have done. It seems far more likely to me that original notes might be taken of what Jesus said – not what Jesus did. Based on the probability of someone catching or recording what Jesus said rather than what he did, it is my guess that the Gospel of Thomas may have been the first document about Jesus. I can see others repeating what Jesus said and fabricating action stories around that – rather than the other way around. I suspect that few would agree with me on the order of things – in terms of which gospel was first – but, for what it's worth, that is how I see it.

Anyway, getting back to the evolving legend of Jesus, add into this scenario a guy like Saul who had never known Jesus in life. Jesus is not the only one who might have the power of temporary manifestation. Consider the possibility of some scoundrel type soul appearing to Saul in some striking paranormal way and leading Saul to think that it was Jesus who was appearing to him. Saul would have no real way to distinguish the real Jesus from a false Jesus, having never known the real Jesus. Thinking that the real Jesus had appeared to him, Saul could have become the famous Paul – who would have naturally proceeded in all sincerity to teach that Jesus had been the Jewish Messiah and would return, in time, to assume his expected role as King.

With Jesus now firmly anointed forever as the Jewish Messiah, by a combination of incidental apparition and intended spirit deceit on the part of some departed souls desirous of control, the way was clear to define the real Jesus who had lived in almost strictly unreal ways. Given that an expected Jewish Messiah was all about power, the unreal Jesus could have been cast in that light. Thus, we have Jesus turned into one destined to return in power when in reality, Jesus never was and never will be about power. In life, he may not have performed miracles; but after death, it could have been assumed that he must have – given his expected power as a messiah.

And so it might have gone. Of course, this is all speculation. It may or may not have happened in some similar fashion; but it would explain why a real Jesus could have become so distorted in legend that he has become lost in fact. Of course, if this scenario is true, Jesus is not really lost. Only the truth about him would be.

In the end, it might not matter at all. Regardless of any of this latter speculation that may well turn out to be strictly fiction, realistically I believe in the Jesus I do because the Jesus of the messianic tale makes no sense whatever. The messianic Jesus is claimed to

have been one who has power over Satan. That is to assume that such a Satan can exist. Analyze it. Satan is claimed to be one who can oppose God – and supposedly did; but if no one can oppose God for not being able to displace God from anything, how, then, could there be a Satan? How can One Which is Infinite be displaced from anything in which It resides?

If there can be no Satan because there can be no opposition to God, neither, then, can there be need for any messiah to restore man to God when man could have never been lost from God. Realistically, separation from God is impossible because God must be in everything. Accordingly, no separation from God could have ever happened that would have justified any need for any tradition to restore man to God. With that, all Jewish claims that they are the chosen race to restore man to God become useless bits of nonsense.

Realistically, there can be no Satan because there can be no place where God is not. Satan is claimed to have been cast out of Heaven, assuming that Heaven is the Presence of God. No one can be cast out of the Presence of God because God is Everywhere. So, where did this Satan go who was cast out of Heaven? It is an impossible tale.

Given that Satan is an impossible tale, what does that do to the entire legend that Satan stole mankind from God as the Jewish legends claim? That is not to say that scoundrel souls do not exist who want us to believe there is a Satan. For reasons of establishing control over others, a dictation of an impossible foe like Satan could prove very handy; and I suspect that there are many scoundrel type souls who do their best to encourage belief in Satan and separation from God and all of that which allows for potential control of souls by outside agents. Yes, I do believe that devils exist who pretend that Satan does exist for purposes of trying to control others by laying the stage for some need of salvation from Satan, via the age old formula of fear; but I do not believe in the Satan they claim to be their leader because such a one is impossible.

So, there it is. There is no Satan because there can't be. Necessarily, then, there need be no Prince of the Heavens to oppose and crush a Satan that does not exist.

I think that it is a very good possibility that the students of Jesus heard him say things in life that after his death they misconstrued. Jesus may have offered that there is no Satan, but they could have later thought he meant that a real Satan had no power over him. All of this could have been in great sincerity. Paul could have really believed that he had been in touch with his expected messiah and could have considered him as one with him. How could he have thought otherwise? He could not have been in any position to think other than he did. If one believes in Satan and that such a one can really divide us from God, how is it that one could not believe that it was not Jesus who appeared in a paranormal experience if that one claimed to be Jesus?

Once, I believed in Satan, too – or I believed that Satan could be. Once, I could have been fooled if a spirit had appeared to me and claimed to be either Satan or Jesus. Once I could have been; and I think that my once which has long since disappeared from life was part of Paul's entire experience and is part of a whole lot of sincere believer lives. If you believe that a Satan is possible, then it is almost impossible that you can rule your life without regard to the idea.

But I do not believe that Jesus believed in Satan as a reality. I could be wrong. I always admit that; but I have no more chance of being wrong than those who believe

there can be a Satan have in being right. Throw it out as a 50-50 if you like. Even at those very unlikely odds, I would be a fool to see the crucifixion of Jesus in any different light than I do.

My belief of and in powerlessness is based on concept, not from an urge from the outside. Power over another makes no sense to me. I can see Jesus in the light of powerlessness because it makes sense. For the wise person, having power is to not be free because power over another restrains a soul. It does not free a soul. I can't imagine not being a free soul. So I can't imagine wanting power over another. It is far more an intellectual judgment than a hope that leads me to my conclusions about Jesus and life in general. My view of the crucifixion is far more of a conceptual thing than a thing of faith. *I have no need to believe in something I cannot know because I can know everything in which I should believe.* I think it is a great way to go; but to each, his or her own.

In conclusion, just to offer a bit of a possibility that I might be right about this business of Jesus being an advocate of powerlessness, in the unknown and previously unaccepted gospel – **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS** – in verse 81 of 114, Jesus said: *let him who has power renounce it.* You can't assume that I may be right from one verse. I admit that; but it's a start. Right?

Thanks for listening!
Francis William Bessler

**THE
MEANING OF
THE CRUCIFIXION
(for me)**

THE END

My Credo

By

Francis William Bessler

(March-2004)

(Featuring Seven Basic Beliefs)

- 1. I believe the two greatest and most liberating phrases of the human language are *Thank You & You're Welcome*. Gratitude lightens the heart and sharpens the vision.**
- 2. I believe in the *Natural Way* because I see Nature as Divine. No one need go beyond the Natural to find the Divine because the Divine is in the Natural. That is so because the Infinite Presence of God Which makes everything Divine is Everywhere. If God is in the All, how could the All not be Divine?**
- 3. I believe that each has an individual soul that naturally continues on a course it sets for itself – by belief or conduct – though each soul can change its course at will.**
- 4. I believe that a soul selects a body for a purpose – and ultimately, that purpose is to use a body to express itself. Naturally, if a soul can select a body, it must precede the body as an independent entity and survive it as well. Accordingly, once born, souls are probably immortal and reincarnate at will.**
- 5. I believe that the ideal of my soul is to act free, meaning necessarily that if a free soul, I cannot impose on any other soul. Imposition, however, is not so much doing in your presence something with which you do not agree. It's making you do what I do. Freedom of soul requires a lack of restraint between souls. If I restrain you, I am not free. If you restrain me, I am not free. True freedom of soul is only possible by a sense of independent worth.**

- 6. I believe in God, but my God is not a personal God, but rather only a *Creative God*. God can't be personal because to be so, It would have to be capable of not existing within a given entity. Being Infinite & Everywhere, God must exist in all entities and therefore no entity can be independent of God. If God has to exist within me, how, then, could It be a person with Which I could relate? Persons are such because they exist as independent entities that can relate to one another. God can't be a person like me because God is in me. I have no need to fear God because I am one with God. One need only fear that which is outside himself or herself. God is outside of me, but also inside of me. Being inside of me, it is absolutely useless to fear God.**

- 7. I believe that all life is Good and nothing in life is inherently evil because God Which is the Presence that is behind it, and in it, makes it all Good. God is *Creativity* – not morality. If I hurt you or kiss you, it is because of the Energy Presence of God that I can do so. God is only the *Creative Energy* that sustains us. People decide their own morality. The trouble often is that some people insist on making their morality a general morality; and that is what causes all types of evil because *evil is nothing more than one imposing on another*.**

WORK IN PROGRESS (A Master Poem)

Written March 21, 2004

Thank you, Heavenly Parents, for my wonderful life.
I awake in the morning, having slept quietly in the night.
I jump out of bed and run naturally in the house
to get a feel for living and to make of life my spouse.
I look in the mirror at the reflection that looks at me
as I see all I am and to see life springing free.
The hormones in my body get slimmer as I grow old
and members act a bit more tired and less and less bold.
But it's good to know the life I have whatever that life is
because I'm a *work in progress*, and in me, there is no sin.

But it's just not my gender, I attend to, you see.
There's more than genitals that comprise the one that is me.
I look into the mirror and I see a chest there too
and I know that beneath it, a heart is beating that makes my pulse a truth.
A person is a fool, I think, who does not recognize
that life itself is a miracle and should be seen as a prize.
Every time you look at your self, it should seem like you just won
the grandest lottery of all, for you are God's son -
or perhaps God's daughter, for a girl is as good as a guy
because we are all *works in progress*, spirits energized.

People tell me you cannot accept the person that you are
because long ago your parents fell and it's for you to stick like tar.
They say that because your mother may have felt weak,
when you were born, you inherited her and like her must speak.
I love my parents, but I know it need not be the case
that if my father was, in fact, weak, I need not repeat his state.
Each of us is free to make of life what we will
and no one who has gone before us need be used as a still
to make the same wine that our heritage saw fit to make
because we are *works in progress*, and progress should be our fate.

So let those who think that conduct should be the way it's always been
stand aside and make room for one who knows no sin.
I am full of God and there is no room for sin in me to abide;
for where God is, no sin can be, and if no sin, no reason to be shy.
I am not creating myself, anymore than you are creating you
and I have no right to denounce my Creator by feeling blue.
Life is a gift, but it also comes attached with an obligation.
If you want to know all you are, then give in to celebration.
Go natural all you can – to know all you can be
and know that you are a *work in progress*, born to be free.

It's said that Jesus died on the cross so that I may live,
but let us never forget, he gave what was his to give.
The lesson of his death should let us know the reason that he died
and that was to show himself and us how our souls can be wise.
You cannot live by taking life – no matter what the reason;
and those who take another's life are guilty of soulful treason.
Any time I bid myself or another to swing at you, I swing back at me
and I punch me in the soul and lose my liberty.
So, yes, Christ did die for me to show me how to go;
and, as a *work in progress*, I accept his show.

It is said that Jesus rose into heaven after he had died;
but the truth is he was always in heaven, even in this life.
For heaven is more than just a place; it's also a state of soul.
If one is in heaven, it's so wherever one does go.
And so it is too with hell – should that be your direction.
If hell is your choice now, then hell will likely be your next selection.
Our lives here in this place are only the beginning
of where we choose to take our souls and do our soulful spinning.
I think Jesus lived and died to free souls from hateful captivity;
and as a *work in progress*, I am being drawn to be free.

Life is perhaps complicated, but it's also simple too.
We need not know the details to be sure of the simple truth.
The simple truth is that all are divine for God is everywhere
and no one need worry about being banned by God in fear.
God is everywhere and therefore inside of each of us.
Knowing that is what makes of any life one that is just.
Jesus lived to tell us that all are equally children of God
because God is making us all and upon no one does God tread.
And so I leave you to ponder just what I've stated in these lines.
Like me, you are a *work in progress*, unfolding in life and time.

IN MEMORY OF Mom

By
Francis William Bessler
May 16th, 2004

The Greatest Gift!

Memories are fine when that which is remembered is fine. I have fond memories of a dear lady, *Clara*, who partnered with a dear man, *Leo*, to bring me into the world. That same pair also were responsible for seven others who made a successful entry into the world – and maybe one or two who could not quite get out of Mom’s womb before they passed. I guess it is almost like one of those rockets that try to lift up into the air. Eight of us rockets made it, but one or two lacked the booster strength to make it.

Leo and Clara joined together in 1941 in my particular case to start my current adventure. Others of my siblings got their respective starts in different years. Dorothy, who passed in January of 2003, got her start in 1929. Rita then came bumping along a few years later. I think it was 1932. Then Helen was given her chance to join the new fledgling flock – 1934, I think. Or was it, 1933? It seems that Leo and Clara had this thing with getting the girls into the picture first – because the first three were girls. Then the boys started and did not end. Nick came along in 1936 – or so I think it was. Paul followed in 1938. Denny popped into the picture in 1940. Then me in 1941 – and lastly, Bob in 1943. After that, Mom brushed her brow and told Dad to stop trying for another girl. I think Dad was going for another girl, but after five tries, Mom and Dad finally settled for what they had – three girls and five boys.

And now after that beginning, we have come to the end already. I do not want to belabor all the details in the middle because I prefer to think of the present. Dad passed in 1966 and Mom passed this morning on May 16th, 2004; but that which I feel so good about with both my loving parents is that death did not stop their giving. No death really does. Mom will never stop giving whatever it was that she gave to me in life. In my case, I think that is a lot. I have a wonderfully peaceful existence. Mom was part of that – as was Dad. My peace will not end with the passing of Mom. Accordingly, that which she gave to me in life just keeps on being given.

I want to thank *Clara Elizabeth Gregory Bessler* for the peace she had in life and the gift of peace she has passed on to me. Her stature continues in all of her children. Each of us is very independent, but all very much aware that our expression of independence stems considerably from our parents who taught us to make up our own minds. I am sure the family has wished down through the years that I had used my right of independence to be less independent than that which I have become, but regardless of how I have used my independence, I think we would all agree that it is good.

The point I'd like to make is – ***Mom continues***. She continues as a person as we each continue on a personal level, but her influence continues in her children too. Mom can be proud of that influence. She has earned the right by being half the earthly duo that gave eight kids a start in this world. None of us are rich in the ways of the world, but in the ways of peace, I think we are doing just fine. As we celebrate Mom's passing, let us never forget that what she gave she is continuing to give. It doesn't end with death, be that gift one of darkness or light. In our case, we eight were blessed with far more light than darkness by virtue of the independence we were taught. Mom has now left eight very independent souls behind to continue to strive as they were striving when she was here. That includes Dorothy, though she preceded Mom in death. Still, Dorothy goes on; and she goes on with so much of what she was given in life by Leo and Clara.

Each of us siblings can only speak for ourselves; but as for me, I am deeply grateful for the life of a dear lady, ***Clara***, who encouraged in me a sense of independence. I will continue with that independence. ***As far as I am concerned, a sense of independence is the greatest gift a parent can give.***

Thanks, Clara!
Thanks, Mom!

WHEN THE ROSES BLOOM AGAIN

Written April 16, 2003 (1st four verses)

Written May 16th, 2004 (5th and last verse)

It was the spring of the year and I was twelve and one.
My Gramma called me to her bed and said her life would soon be done.
I said, Gramma, I don't want you to go. I don't want to say Goodbye.
She smiled and winked her eye at me and offered me this line.
She said:

Refrain:

I'll see you when the roses bloom again.

I'll not be dead, I'll be alive, I'll be around, My Friend.

In everything you should see me cause in everything I am.

And you are too, I'll look for you in the love that you will send.

I'll see you when the roses bloom again.

Yes, I'll see you when the roses bloom again.

It was the summer of the year and I was twenty-four.
My father called me to his bed and said his life would be no more.
I said, Dad, must you go – can't you change your mind and stay?
He smiled and winked his eye at me and said, Son, I'm not really going away.
He said: ***Refrain.***

It was the fall of the year and I was forty-three.
My friend called me to his bed, said his soul would soon be free.
I said, Emmett, My Friend, it's been a lotta fun. I'd rather you not go.
He smiled and winked his eye at me and said, Will, I'll see you just beyond the snow.
He said: ***Refrain.***

It was the winter of the year and I was sixty-one.
My sister called me to her bed, said it was time to move on.
I said, Dorothy, I sure am glad for all the times we've had together.
She smiled and winked her eye at me and said, Francis, it's been a sweet moment of forever.
She said: ***Refrain.***

It was spring of the year and I was sixty-two.
My mother called me to her bed, said it was time to bid Adieu.
I said, Mom, I know it's your time – go now with my blessing.
She smiled and winked her eye at me and said, Son, I'll be back, look for me.
She said: ***Refrain.***

I'VE GOT A BONE TO PICK

Written May 22, 2004. (On the way home from my Mother's funeral.)

Refrain:

I've got a bone to pick with you, my friend. I've got a bone to pick with you.

I've got a bone to pick with you, my friend. I've got a bone to pick with you.

I've got a bone to pick with you, my friend. I do not think you know my end.

You say that I am going to hell - if I don't listen to what you tell.

I've got a bone to pick with you.

You say you think you know the Christ – and have the right to wield his might.

You dare to use the sign of the cross – to make yourself my own boss.

I've got a bone to pick with you. **Refrain (tho it may be skipped too).**

Christ did not die for you to think – you have the right to make me think just like you do or go to hell. You have no right to urge a spell.

I've got a bone to pick with you.

You claim Paul as your righteous leader - but he didn't know Christ any better than Peter.

Jesus said his rule is not of this world - but Peter & Paul still want to rule the girls.

I've got a bone to pick with you. **Refrain (tho it may be skipped too).**

You say you know Jesus as a friend – and that you will follow him to the end, but you won't listen to what he said – or attend to the reason his blood was shed.

I have a bone to pick with you.

Christ only died cause he could not wield – in his own defense cause he could not kill.

Yet you think you rule with the cross of Christ –

when your rule is only with power & might.

I have a bone to pick with you. **Refrain (tho it may be skipped too).**

Well, maybe it's time we listened to – the Christ that was and not the few who think that the way of the cross is might – and that somehow rule justifies all strife.

I have a bone to pick with you.

Christ did not come to bind and rope. The one I know led to give me hope

that if I treat all alike – with love & compassion, I could be a Christ.

I have a bone to pick with you. **Refrain (tho it may be skipped too).**

The Kingdom of Jesus is not a place – as much as it is a state of grace.

To know Jesus is to be kind to all – to black or white or short or tall.

I have a bone to pick with you.

It's not who you know that matters, friend –

but what you know that will form your trends.

And it's the trends in your heart that will make – all you do and love your own fate.

I have a bone to pick with you. **Refrain (tho it may be skipped too).**

For Jesus, there was neither Jew nor Greek – anymore than there was slave or priest.
The only slavery that hurts any soul – is the slavery to arrogance that makes one foul.
I have a bone to pick with you.
So, get on with your life and know – that nothing you do is only for show.
Because what you do is what you are – and only you can change it, be you near or far.
I have a bone to pick with you. **Refrain (tho it may be skipped too).**

No matter how I'm dressed or clothed – it only matters that I know
that all of life is good and fine – because God being in it makes it Divine.
I have a bone to pick with you. **Refrain (several times if desired).**

CONFLICT IN THE WORLD

(3 Pages)

By

Francis William Bessler

Originally written May 31st, 2004; modified somewhat 5/10/2011

Many, I think, try to juggle life between the Commercial and the Natural. People sense that there is nothing but beauty in Nature and they love to align themselves with the Natural for its beauty, but most pay far more attention to the commerce of man than the nature of man. It is, in fact, the commercial aspect of life that takes up most of most peoples' lives. It is in buying and selling and having the power to buy and sell that occupies most peoples' minds – and time.

I know that when I get depressed, it is because I have allowed myself to be distracted by the commercial aspect of life. I get unhappy because I don't have a nicer rug or a nicer car when I should be happy that I have any rug or any car. But paying attention to the Commercial camp of thought about the usefulness of life won't let me see the already present Natural Benefits that are already mine – like the air I breathe and the water I drink and the grass upon which I lie or walk. If I am aware of these Natural Benefits and charge myself to enjoy them, then my lack of Commercial things becomes unimportant.

I do not think I am any different than anyone else in this world. I think we all want to have nice things; but I think that it is in the time and effort we spend to attain those nice things that tell us of how much we belong to the two camps – the Commercial camp and the Natural camp. Being realistic, I think it is safe to say that we all belong somewhat to both camps, but of course each of us belongs to one camp to a different degree than the other. I may belong to the Natural camp of thought 70 % of my awareness time and only 30 % to the Commercial camp. Or I may belong to the Natural camp only 30 % of my awareness time and belong to the Commercial camp 70 % of my awareness time.

I may be wrong, but I suspect that most of the conflict in the world arises out of the Commercial camp of thought of life. I think that to the degree that I can claim to belong to the Natural camp of thought is the same degree that I can claim peace. I do not think that peace is possible within the Commercial camp. The best that can be attained in that camp of thought is truce or compromise – even with oneself – but true peace is only possible within the Natural camp of thought.

Perhaps life on this earth is some kind of testing ground to find the peaceful. Maybe the peaceful will be granted some reward to life among only the peaceful in a life or lives to come. I have no way of knowing about that, one way or another; but I think it is within my power to know that here or somewhere else, peace must be the ultimate achievement in life. To the degree that I can know that I have found peace is also to the degree that I can claim that illusive thing called happiness. I think that Jesus realized that long ago and tried to share those thoughts with many who likely stayed more Commercially oriented than Naturally oriented after he left the scene. How do you

appeal to one who is very unaware that life is good as it is and influence him or her to become more aware of life as it is when their penchant is with the unnatural and needing to make over life in some way for seeing it as unacceptable or deficient as it is?

So, many think they can know Jesus because they have no idea of the reality of peace. They suspect it is possible, but in not knowing it for themselves, they can only conjecture as to what is required to attain it. Jesus had peace. They think that peace is like any other commercial commodity. If one has it, another can get it from him – for some price. The whole idea of price, however, leads them in the attempted acquisition of peace. Someone has to pay a price. That is what commercial is all about. So they conjecture that Jesus bought for them some future prize at the cost of his life. Because they are caught within a Commercial mindset about life, they have no idea that you cannot buy peace.

How many have you heard declare that through the sacrifice on the cross that Jesus bought life eternal for those who believe in him? Those who are caught within the Commercial camp of thought cannot even see that they are attaching their own commercial standards to that illusive thing called peace. They are into buying and selling – or being commercial – and they think that peace is just another commodity available within the marketplace of the soul. But it is in not knowing that peace cannot be bought – at any price – that makes peace & understanding the illusive things they are.

Conflict? What is it? *I think it is basically a struggle between the different standards or different camps represented by the Commercial perspective of life and the Natural perspective of life.* Within the Natural perspective of life, there is no conflict because those who are Naturally oriented are content with what they are and content also with all of the rest of Nature. Few are 100 % Naturally oriented – including yours truly. I do think it is the ideal, however, and in seeing it as an ideal, I have a better than average chance of raising my awareness from Commercial to Natural.

All human conflict arises within the Commercial mode of thought. Those who think that life is a matter of buying and selling and achieving and dispensing or purchasing power are those who will remain in constant conflict. We all have to live in the world of commerce, but we do not have to let commerce be our main standard. It is those who have commerce as their main standard and their objective in life that allow for all the conflict in the world. It is in the struggles brought on by unrestricted gain for some and not for others that sets the table for conflict. It is customary – though not Natural – for people to want what they do not have and refuse to lose what they do have that makes for conflict.

It's OK as long as we know what we are choosing and what we are accepting. In the end, each of us must choose for ourselves how much of the Commercial we want to attend in life and how much of the Natural. It just stands to reason – the more the Commercial, the less the Natural – or being satisfied with the Natural. Likewise, the more the attention to the Natural, the less the attention possible to the Commercial. Like most, I have some of both in me; but life has taught me that the greater my concentration on the Commercial, the less I can attend to that which is really important – The Natural. Commerce is of man. Nature is of God. Commerce is not wrong, but it is a choice that allows for a lot of conflict – and war. Peace can never become a matter of Commerce. It cannot be bought.

Spiritualists or the Religious can be Commercial or Natural too. Anytime one thinks that he can “buy” peace by some exchange, it is a Commercial thing he or she does. Those who think they can “buy” a piece of heaven by some sacrifice they might offer as the price are dealing only within the ranks of the Commercial. I know it is common thought that peace can be attained by some dedication to another – be it an Allah or a Jehovah or a Jesus – but if that dedication is in the form of a barter or a promise to do this if another will do that, then no real peace can result from it. Those who attain peace do so only as the result of being satisfied with the gift of life. Peace is not a reward to be handed out later for what you may do now. It is an Immediate Knowing that all is well – not an assumption that all will be well.

Life is inherently good or bad. Which is it – good or bad? It is the answer to that question, I think, that determines – in general – if one is apt to have conflict in life – or lack it. I have long answered that question in the affirmative. Life is good – in and of itself. As long as I stay mindful of that – and do not cross over to the camp of thought that declares life is somehow lacking and is bad, I will avoid conflict in this world and the next. It is strictly a matter of choice. See life as inherently good and act like it – and presto – no conflict in life. See life as inherently bad and act like it – and presto – nothing but conflict in life.

In truth, I think, conflict is impossible if one is satisfied with life. Conflict is not only possible, but likely, if one is not satisfied with life. If I feel I have to get something I don’t have or go somewhere I am not, then that is a path strewn with conflict. It’s ok to choose such a path if conflict is acceptable, but if conflict is not acceptable, then such a path of dissatisfaction is not a good choice. Is it? I believe that the key to finding peace and avoiding conflict is to enjoy the going and make it the focus in life – as opposed to anticipating some joy at another place and another time.

Of course, it is to each, his or her own, but I vote for peace and no conflict. I choose to embrace my life as a gift and I am committed to enjoying that gift – as long as I have it. When that gift ends, another will begin. It is all so simple. Why waste a beautiful life wanting another beautiful life? Let me live keeping my eyes on the prize – and the prize is life itself. Or so I believe.

CONFLICT IN THE WORLD



THE END

JUST WALKIN IN THE SUN

Written June, 2004.

*As a variation of a song by Jim Reeves called "Just Walkin in the Rain."
Same melody – different verses.*

Just walkin in the sun – taking in the rays –
commending to my heart – the wonder of the day.
Just walkin in the sun – embracing all the good –
loving everything – in God's great brotherhood.
People come to windows – they all look at me –
still shake their heads, but smile – saying who can this guy be?
Just walking in the sun – thinking dear of you –
hoping that you're fine – and that you're happy too.

CHRISTIANITY – AS I KNOW IT

(6 Pages)

Dedicated to “Julia”

By

Francis William Bessler

Originally written June 2, 2004; addendum added 5/10/2011

George & Laura Bush are Christians. Not in their bleakest days would they bear arms to fight in Iraq. Can you imagine George Bush as non president taking up arms to oust Saddam Hussein? Can you imagine Laura Bush putting down her apron and pencil to put on armor to go fight in any trench – or even serve as a nurse in any combat hospital? No! Neither George nor Laura would do such a thing – perhaps partly because it is against their faith. They hold Jesus Christ as their leader and commander and lord; and they know that Jesus could not condone such participation on their part. Yet, as President Bush and First Lady Bush, they can agree to do in office what they could never do in private. Does not anyone find this a little implausible?

Jesus said that a true Christ person must do as he did – live with love & compassion, which is to treat all alike as if all are equal children of God. For Jesus, there are no outcasts in the family of God. To treat even one person as an outcast is to bring shame upon one’s soul. Allegedly, he visited the lepers to prove his point. In his day, lepers were seen as outcasts; yet Jesus went down among them and embraced them to show both himself and the world that his love and compassion was – and is – uniform. Jesus told us that we must treat even our enemy with kindness. If one were to take from us our coat, we should give him our shirt as well. He chided those who would not have stopped to help an outcast Samaritan; and lastly, he surrendered to Roman authorities without a fight and died on the cross rather than take up arms against the cruel and brutal Romans.

Was Jesus wrong in being so weak? No Christian would dare say that – because no true Christian believes it was weakness. Every true Christian holds the death on the cross of Christ with utmost honor. **Yes, Jesus, I would do as Thee!** Every true Christian who kneels below a form of a suffering Jesus on the cross, pledges that he or she would do just as Jesus did if it came to that. *I will follow you, Lord, till the end of my days!* I am sure that George & Laura Bush have said that many times; and yet, strangely in office, they can discount any personal pledge and consider support for a non Christian call to arms as actually Christian. Not only is it OK to bear arms within some official capacity, but it becomes mandatory; and anyone who does not support bearing arms against an enemy becomes somehow – anti-Christ.

It has been one of the great ironies of life – and, I think, contradictions of souls. Somehow, if one puts on a uniform, they are completely excused from doing what they could not do out of uniform. George Bush could not do out of office what he is doing in office in terms of taking up arms against an enemy. Most who serve in the military are the same. Even many Generals could not justify killing a next door neighbor if that neighbor offered some terrible challenge. That is, if that General was out of uniform. Amazingly, people feel justified to do with a uniform what they could never do outside of a uniform.

Now, if you are not a Christian, who allegedly believes that hurting an enemy is wrong, you may not face any great dilemma in choosing to change your ways, depending upon uniform or non-uniform; but a Christian should find him or herself contradicting their Lord & Master, Jesus, by taking up arms against an enemy. Yet, many do not. The question is, **WHY?**

I have often asked myself that question. Why do Christians act in the world like chameleons? How can they embrace both love & compassion to an enemy and then on the other hand, be willing to smite that enemy and if necessary, any collateral innocents that may be standing by? How could George & Laura Bush, true Christians they think, urge their daughters that they must be kind to all – friend or enemy – and yet dare to do differently in some strange official capacity?

I think the answer lies in what might be called the almost **inherent weakness of traditional Christianity**. I say “traditional” Christianity, not just Christianity in general. I consider myself Christian because I believe in the counsel of Jesus; but I am not one of many traditional Christians who think that action in office can differ from action in private. For me, there is no difference. I am not a different kind of Christian, depending upon uniform. I am a Christian, in and out of uniform. I try to be alike regardless of circumstance. I don’t always succeed, of course; but I believe I should be the same in all circumstances. I believe that I should treat all alike – friend or enemy. That would preclude me taking up arms against anyone. I think that is what being Christian should be all about.

Yet, many who are Christians who have heard the same counsel as I see no problem in becoming non-Christian for a time and taking up arms against an enemy. Why? I think it is because they are **counting on forgiveness**. They actually believe that they can do anything at all and it will be OK because of the forgiveness principle of Christianity. They think they can always count on Jesus to do for them as he allegedly asked his Father in Heaven to do in his last moments in life. Jesus was dying on the cross – we are told – and yet he asked his Father to forgive his executioners. ***Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.***

When asked earlier in his life how many times one should forgive another, he said ***seventy time seventy*** or some such. The lesson is that forgiveness must be eternal. It is to say in a figurative way that there must be no end to forgiveness. I think that many Christians consider that Jesus will forgive them endlessly by virtue of these statements. It is that sense of forgiveness that allows many to commit sin after sin after sin, thinking that Jesus will forgive anything they do as long as they call him, Lord & Savior. And therein is the almost inherent weakness within traditional Christianity.

In his life, Jesus was not talking about being forgiven. He was talking about the need to forgive; but I think many traditional Christians turn that around and expect to be forgiven. How could it not be so? At his death, Jesus said, ***forgive them for they know not what they do.*** In that statement, men assume that Jesus will forgive them for anything they do because it is almost like he cannot do otherwise. Traditional Christians expect forgiveness. Sadly, that expectation is what allows them to plunder others in the very name of Jesus. Jesus will forgive them of whatever they do as long as they hold fast to him as Lord & Savior.

Amazingly, then, George & Laura Bush can hear a counsel of Jesus that tells them to be kind to friend and enemy and take no offensive action against anyone and still

override that counsel with the expectation of forgiveness. Consequently, Christians who are supposed to be kind to all turn out to be just the opposite. Deep down they know it is wrong to strike one who has struck them, but all they hear – or want to hear – is ***Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*** In fact, just as amazingly, they are even proud of the idea that they can transgress. They proclaim with steadfast earnestness that they are sinners and cannot be otherwise. Thus, in being sinners and having the right to be that way, they actually feel good in being unchristian.

So, it seems to me that a counsel that Jesus offered that is supposed to be about forgiving others is turned around. Life for many Christians does not amount to forgiving, but being forgiven. It is that notion that Christians can be forgiven for whatever they do without end – ***seventy times seventy*** – that has turned Christianity into a very weak religion, compared to what Jesus may have expected it be. Christians think they can do anything they damn well please and they will be forgiven. What they do not know is that it does not work that way.

Forgiveness should be looked upon as a one way street, not a two way street. Jesus did not intend for us to take his counsel and turn it around so that, in effect, we do not have to forgive. Those who expect Jesus to forgive them of what they do that is not right will not in the end find Jesus laying his hands on them and telling them, ***It's OK, Bubba. I know you are weak. I will forgive you of your transgressions against my counsel to be kind to everyone.***

It won't work that way; and the reason it won't is because of the principle of judgment. ***Judgment is only having to recover an attitude that one had before.*** That is all it is. There is no one to judge us after life but ourselves; and our judgment is that we must continue with whatever attitude we had before. If I am kind one moment, I will be kind the next moment. If I am harsh one moment, the chances are I will be harsh the next moment. There is no forgiveness of judgment – though forgiveness can and should be a judgment.

Jesus, I think, was almost outrageously simple. He only taught that we recover or relive what we have been. Forgiveness is intended to be a one way street in that it is never a matter of your forgiving me. It must always be a matter of my forgiving you. You have your own requirement to live a good life; and you will have your judgment. My concern should not be about your judgment, but about my own, and my own only. Jesus taught kindness as a principle because it is the only worthwhile judgment to receive upon oneself. It is a very selfish thing to be kind to all because within that kindness – even to one who hurts you – that attitude will come back upon you. If you insist on hurting others – regardless of reason – then that will be the judgment upon you.

Unfortunately, the gospel writers did not spell that out. They left us with the impression that there will be an outside judge, standing just over some line, waiting to lower the boom or embrace a given individual. The gospel writers probably believed in an outside judgment; and they probably did not understand that judgment is only a matter of recovering or reliving an attitude. I tend to agree with Jesus that kindness is the only attitude I will ever want to recover or relive. That is why it is so important to be kind to all.

Jesus said that anyone can be kind to a friend. That takes nothing to do; but it takes a lot more to be kind to someone who was not kind to you. The test in being kind to an enemy is to prove to yourself that you believe in kindness. It is not easy to be kind to one

who has been unkind; but should I be unkind in response to an unkindness, it is unkindness itself that becomes my own judgment. Now, how smart is that?

George and Laura Bush won't be able to count on forgiveness for their choosing to be unkind to an unkind Saddam Hussein. It doesn't work that way. They won't even know they are being judged and being judged by themselves in carrying on the attitude of what they may think is *justice*. If justice is their choice, as they see it, then they will only recover that sentiment in the next hour and the next day and the next year – and maybe even the next life.

Life is all so very simple – but most traditional Christians do not see it. They have misunderstood the counsel of forgiveness and have chosen to turn it back on themselves. They call themselves sinners and believe themselves to be sinners; but what they do not realize is that seeing themselves as sinners is a judgment unto itself. If they choose to take pride in their sinning, expecting forgiveness, then they will continue being the sinners they so much take pride in. That is judgment.

I believe that if Christ had really been believed for what he actually taught – and had been understood for his counsel – the world would have long ago become a Paradise on Earth. Why? Because attitude is contagious. If I am kind to you, even though you may have been unkind to me, there is some chance that you will change and be kind too; but if I am unkind to you because you were unkind to me, then unkindness grows and consumes me as well as you.

I think that Christianity in its misunderstanding of the need for kindness and forgiveness has long ago betrayed Jesus. Every time I return unkindness for unkindness, I not only betray myself for having to continue with my attitude of unkindness, but I also betray Jesus – who taught only kindness to all. Jesus was not the man men have thought him to be. He was a man who understood the principle of judgment. He taught forgiveness as a one way street, not as something I should expect from others. He taught forgiveness because un-forgiveness is a horrible judgment. If only the followers of Jesus had known him for what and who he really was, then the kindness he preached would have passed from one to another; and today, there would be no unkindness left.

Instead, the Jesus we have been passed is a judgmental Jesus – the exact opposite of the one who lived. Instead, we have been passed fear of a Jesus who will on some proverbial last day and hand down some eternal judgment. Jesus could no more judge me on some proverbial last day than he could if I had been one in his audience 2,000 years ago. Jesus cannot change from being non judgmental to being judgmental. It is so sad that men have believed that it could be so. In believing such nonsense, they have refused the living counsel of one of the wisest men who have ever lived. I can assure you that the Jesus that I know has no desire whatever to judge me. Of what value would that be to him?

No! Jesus was not a judge of others when he lived; and he will never be a judge. Jesus was the same as he is now and he will be the same as he is now. Jesus did not preach judgment from without, but only judgment from within. Judgment is not the arbitrary thing that most Christians have come to think it is. It is as sure as there is a continuation of life. You may consider that judgment stops with death. If the soul does, then it will; but if the soul goes on, then judgment will go on with it. It is as simple as that.

Some will say, I am judging George & Laura Bush and that I am being unchristian in the process. It is not so. I am only stating what I think is true of George & Laura Bush, but they are their own judges. There is nothing that I can say or do that will judge them in terms of command them. Judgment is a command, not just an opinion. My opinion of George & Laura Bush – as much as I love them – is not a judgment. I cannot command the future of George & Laura Bush. Only they can do that. Only they can judge themselves; and that is my whole point.

To end this little essay, though, let me say that it is no different today than it was 2,000 years ago. Starting today, the real Jesus can be heard. Starting today, we can start to be kind to everyone and seek for ways to be kind – even forsaking justice. In time, one being kind to another and passing on the attitude can change the world just as Jesus envisioned it 2,000 years ago. It is never too late to start forgiving and stop expecting forgiveness. It is never too late to take our judgment in our hands and throw off sin and see and do only good. It is never too late to take our lives in our commands and be kind to all, friend and enemy alike, knowing that one earnest handshake can do more to make a secure world than all the *Bombs wasted on Baghdad!*

Addendum of 5/10/2011

I wrote the above in June of 2004, commenting somewhat on justice that President George Bush thought that Saddam Hussein “deserved.” To that end, we were willing as a nation to do whatever it took to remove Saddam from power – all the time believing that our intended “justice” is entirely within a true Christian mode of conduct. I think we have been confused about a “true Christianity” for a long time – perhaps only continuing a previous sense of “Jewish Justice” of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Since then, another has assumed the office of the Presidency – and in the regard of seeing no conflict between Christian ideals and justice, the current president – Barack Obama – has just ordered and carried out the killing of another so called “terrorist” – this time, one Osama Bin Laden. I think it was last Sunday night that the “execution” of Osama Bin Laden took place – at some compound deep within Pakistan. President Obama offered that it was only a matter of justice. Osama “deserved” to be killed because he had so wantonly commanded the killing of so many others. Then President Obama added – **if someone thinks that Osama did not deserve what he got, they ought to have their head examined.**

Well, I guess I ought to have my head examined because I do not see our killing someone else because they killed others a true Christian ideal. I guess you could call this justice for Osama a **limited retaliation** thing, but it is not Christian – as I know Christianity. I offer the term **limited retaliation** because it is my understanding that Osama believed in such – at least partly because the founder of Islam of which he was a part believed in it. Mohammed believed that retaliation for wrong done is justifiable as long as it is “limited” to the original aggression and aggressor. I do believe that Osama very much stretched his interpretation of **limited retaliation** to be inclusive of everyone within an offending group. If one American was guilty of some standard of his, then all Americans are guilty. His idea of “limited,” I think, probably violated Mohammed’s original idea of “limited,” but be that as it may, Osama was part of a religion that holds

that retaliation is justifiable. Obama is part of a religion that holds that retaliation – in terms of an eye for an eye – is not justifiable. But it seems that, in reality, President Obama – like President Bush before him – are more Moslem than Christian in the matter of so called “justice.”

I am adding this little addendum simply because it reflects that “the beat goes on.” One could say that Moslem Christians are still in control – as they have been for eons of time. Perhaps Ideal Christianity in a justice minded world is as impossible today as it was in the time of Jesus; but that does not change the way it should be – as far as I am concerned.

I guess justice will continue to be the focus of the world – regardless of religion – but judgment will also stay the same. Judgment says that you continue as you are – inheriting whatever testament you choose for yourself – without regard to pretended classification. You can claim to be a Christian – and believe strongly you are one – but if it is in name only, you cannot be a true Christian. That is not to say you are lost. It is only to say you are not really Christian. True Christianity is not a label one can claim as a license to enter some perceived heaven. It is a mode of momentum and conduct that once started only continues.

Why did President Obama insist on the execution of Osama and not allow for a capture and subsequent treatment with kindness? Because President Obama believes that kindness cannot override the need for justice. Justice is more important than kindness. President Obama – like President Bush before him – chose in his time of decision to go with justice. Well, that is OK. Judgment says he will continue that mode of thinking; and that is a good point too.

Perhaps Osama did “deserve to die” because he killed others. I will not argue against that; but my argument is not that Osama deserved to die. My argument is that Obama did not deserve to kill him – or arrange for his killing. Now, the hands of the clock continue. Obama becomes the one who “deserves to die” in the minds of his opposition. Where does it end?

The answer to that, of course, is that it ends with “judgment.” **As long as one continues any line of thinking or any conduct, that thinking and that conduct is his judgment. That, in my opinion, is TRUE CHRISTIANITY.** We all have to inherit what we believe; and it is strictly a matter of choice as to what we choose to inherit. I think kindness is the best option of my soul. That is what I want to be. That is what I want to inherit. So, that is my decision; but your decision must be your own – as Osama’s was his own and Obama’s is his own. Time marches on. Isn’t it wonderful that each of us has a choice as to how time marches on for ourselves. Judgment is oh so wonderful – as it is oh so definite. Isn’t it?

CHRISTIANITY – AS I KNOW IT

THE END

SPENDING SOME TIME

Written June 13, 2004.

Refrain:

I'm just spending some time – taking in the moment.

I'm just spending some time – (Oh, Ah) what a wonderful moment!

I'm just spending some time – it's what I want to do.

I'm just spending some time – and I'm in love with you.

When I wake up in the morning and I look into the mirror
I say, hey, my good fellow, let us have some good cheer.
Life is really simple if you start with loving the one you see.
So I just begin my day my loving the one that is me. ***Refrain.***

Mirrors are so wonderful. They can tell us all we need to know.
No one needs another to carry on with one's own show.
Just look at the image before you as if it is another guy
and before you know it, you have fallen in love with life. ***Refrain.***

I could spend a whole day without a stitch of clothes on.
Loving who and what you are should be the most important bond
that you have with life because your life extends from you.
And if you hate yourself, your whole world will be blue. ***Refrain.***

Every one of us should begin by loving the one we are
cause by doing that, we fall in love with all that's in the jar.
No one is an island – we are all the same, you see.
By loving the one you are, you are also loving the one that's me. ***Refrain.***

What a wonderful world it would be, if we all had love of self.
Then loving others could come easily – and the whole world could be well.
It's such a simple way to go – why don't we understand?
Starting with true love of self, nothing in life is bland.
(or – everything in life is grand). ***Refrain.***

So, listen if you will, to this tale that I have told.
Let it be yourself that is the first one that you know.
Fall in love with that one – then add others as you go.
Pretty soon, you'll have the whole world in a wonderful show. ***Refrain.***

THE OPEN MIND

Written June 18, 2004.

The following was written according to the melody of "Wayward Wind,"

In a nice white house on a western farm, he was born one fine day.
He learned to love the wondrous soul he had, loving life & God, in all manner of ways.

Refrain:

*Oh, the open mind, is a yearning mind – a yearning mind that wants to ponder.
And he was born to fill his mind, with will & truth, and embrace of life.*

Oh, he left the farm to go to school, with his childhood in his soul.
He vowed never to let the child in him down, and to keep faith with his wondrous goal.

Refrain.

SONG OF MY DIVINE NATURISM (Recitation with Refrain)

Written June 28, 2004. Verses are to be recited.

Refrain:

*I'm in love with life and God as if the two are one.
I have no doubt whatever that whatever is – is God's son.
God is the Divine – and Nature is God's Prism.
That's why I call my wondrous belief "Divine Naturism."*

As I watch from a window, I see a cloud go by.
I'm amazed at it all and wonder how it can all be so fine.
As I ponder about the sun and its generous sunshine,
I have no doubt in my mind that all that is – is Divine.
It is not only life that has the spark of Divinity, you see.
Even the sand must contain the wondrous mystery.
For life itself springs from the sand – as if therein is the seed.
God is present in it all – just as It is - in you and me. **Refrain.**

People ask me, where is God, and I answer "everywhere."
God is not a person, but rather a Creative Presence of Infinite Care.
There is nothing that can exist that can exist on its own.
God is the wonderful principle by which all that is – is sown.
People have this idea that when they die they go to God.
But if God is in everything, then now should begin the applause.
God is not something that can only come to some of us later.
It must be something that right now every single being can savor. **Refrain.**

And God can't be in the business of judging me and you
because a judge has to be outside that which is viewed.
God is inside of all that is and therefore cannot be a judge.
That leaves it up to each of us to live without a grudge.
Judgment is only having to continue as I begin.
I am my own judge and it is for me to determine what is sin.
Virtue is only embracing that which sets my soul free.
So I choose to love all that is like all that is – is me. **Refrain.**

I am asked many things, but one question is, do I have a soul?
I say I don't know for sure, but it's only smart to act like it is so.
If I do have a soul, then it can only serve as a record of me.
It is then up to me to make sure that I keep that record clean.
Assuming that I have a soul, it only makes sense that I fill that vessel
only with that I'd like to recover – and for me, that's only the gentle.
Surely, it is to each his own, but however we fill our soul,
we will have to inherit later all that we put into our bowl. **Refrain.**

I have but one rule that I think Jesus tried to get all to mind.
It's really not very complicated. That single rule is – Be Kind.
Kindness is its own reward because by being kind, I'm always at peace.
It doesn't matter where I go, what I do, or who or what I meet.
People tell me that you can't be kind to those who are unkind.
They say that justice demands that they must pay the price.
But being unkind to the unkind only makes two who are fools.
No one who is wise would ever attend such a school. **Refrain.**

Jesus tried to teach kindness to all two thousand years ago,
but the rulers of the day claimed it to be an impossible way to go.
And anyone who would ask it must be put up on the cross.
Otherwise, society at large would reap tremendous loss.
And so it has continued down through the many, many years.
Justice over kindness has shed a jillion tears.
And today, mankind still loves to go to war and fight
and find in their claimed acts of justice that which they think is right. **Refrain.**

The beat goes on. It cannot stop until mankind stops punishing the kind
and allows the Heaven they want sometime later to be here in time.
When Jesus said that Heaven is at hand, he did not mean tomorrow.
If you put off until tomorrow, all you'll gain is endless sorrow.
Heaven is something that is ours once we come to realize
that Heaven is only being aware that everything is Divine.
Life itself can only be a mystery, but the results of it need never be.
As the twig is bent, so it will grow – and the twig that grows is only me. **Refrain.**

THE BALLAD OF SACAJAWEA (70 Verses) **(Recitation with Refrain)**

Written July/Aug., 2004 for a VHS video program I produced called
LOOKING FOR SACAJAWEA.

Note:

It is hard to know the truth about Sacajawea. Her story is laced with unknowns, making conjecture easy; and many have conjectured, too, each wanting to tell the tale according to some motivation precisely his or her own. That includes me, of course. I am not exempt from speculating incorrectly for my own reasons. I live in Wyoming. I may want to resolve that Sacajawea lived here – even if she didn't; but others who may place Sacajawea where they do may be just as prejudiced from their own point of view. I became engrossed with the tale of Sacajawea from a PBS program about her that ended claiming the end days of Sacajawea are very much open to speculation.

No one seems to know for sure where she died; though no one seems to doubt that it was either in South Dakota in 1812 at around age 25 from a putrid fever or in Wyoming in 1884 at the age of 96 on the Wind River Indian Reservation. I have approached my study with an admitted Wyoming and Shoshoni Indian bias. That may prevent me from being as objective as I'd like to be; but my bias notwithstanding, I have related my speculation in the following 70 verse epic poem.

For sure, my own perspective agrees with none of my sources. I have tried to take that which seems reasonable from each one and, as it were, concoct an entirely separate view.

For what it's worth, here are the sources from which my own story of Sacajawea has been taken (or concocted):

1. SACAJAWEA – HER TRUE STORY
By Rich Haney, Copyright – 1999
2. WINGED MOCCASINS – THE STORY OF SACAJAWEA
By Frances Joyce Farnsworth, Copyright – 1954
3. INTERPRETERS WITH LEWIS & CLARK –
THE STORY OF SACAGAWEA AND TOUSSAINT CHARBONNEAU
By W. Dale Nelson, Copyright – 2003
4. SACAJAWEA
By Grace Raymond Hebard, Copyright – 1932
5. DEPT. OF HISTORY COLLECTION – SOUTH DAKOTA – Volume 12
By Doane Robinson, South Dakota state historian – 1924
6. PROBING THE RIDDLE OF THE BIRD WOMAN
By Irving W. Anderson – Fall of 1973
Featured article in “*Montana – The Magazine of Western History*”
7. HISTORY OF WYOMING – 2ND Edition
By Taft A. Larson – Copyright 2003?

*Of the above, authors Rich Haney, Frances Farnsworth, and Grace Hebard incline toward Wyoming being the death site of Sacajawea in 1884. W. Dale Nelson, Doane Robinson, Irving W. Anderson, and Taft Larson believe strongly that Sacajawea died in 1812 in South Dakota. I have reviewed the seven of them, perhaps taking a little from each of them, and concluding with what might be called an *eighth perspective*.*

Refrain:

*Oh, Sacajawea, my pretty Indian lady.
Oh, Sacajawea, I thank you for your spirit.
Oh, Sacajawea, my lovely Shoshoni lady
I thank you for your generous gift.*

Listen, if you will, to my tale of a fine American girl,
born in Idaho so proudly of her Shoshoni tribe.
It was about 1788 or so that she came into this world
in the Rocky Mountains just east of the Great Divide.

In those days, the whole tribe would go searching,
moving camp, looking for food to satisfy the family.
When our little girl was about twelve, she was camping
with her people near Three Forks in Montana country.

As it happened, some rival Indians attacked the place
of the little Indian girl and wiped out most of the tribe;
but some got away and some were taken away as slaves.
Among those that were kidnapped was the young Indian child.

I'm told the tribe that did the raid was called Gros Ventre, (Gross Ventree)
and they took the little girl east into the Dakotas.
There she was passed to a cousin tribe, perhaps the Minatarees
who passed her at last to another cousin tribe called the Hidatsa.

Somewhere along the line, our little girl was given a name.
She may have been called "Sacajawe" before, but now it was *Sacajawea*.
In Hidatsa, it means "Bird Woman" – and that was to become her fame.
Some years have passed now and she has grown into a teen.

As the story goes, a French Canadian living with that tribe
won the young teenager Sacajawea in a friendly game
and decided to make that which he won one of several wives
and took her into his command and she became his slave.

It was a fellow by the name of Toussaint Charbonneau – (Char bun o)
quite a ladies man, he might think, to have so many loves.
One was called Otter Woman, another captured Shoshoni squaw
who gave him a son named Bazile, who would call Sacajawea step mom.

After Bazile was born to the lady by the name of Otter Woman,
our friend named Charbonneau made Sacajawea with child.
After someone named Jean Baptiste, he gave that name to the new one.
And then he went off to trade for furs with Indians in the wild. *Refrain*

But soon Charbonneau was back again and he met up with Lewis & Clark
who were looking for a guide for their expedition west.
Sacajawea impressed them too and they wanted her to be part
of the journey because Sacajawea might know the country best.

As it happened, though, Sacajawea was with child.
So they waited for Baptiste to be born before they would go.
In April of 1805, off they went down the Missouri into the wild -
looking to go by river most of the way to the Pacific Coast.

Soon, all 32 men who were going on the great escapade
fell in love with Sacajawea because she was very good help.
She carried her child on her back all along the way
and never once complained, thinking very little of herself.

Once in a river, one of the boats was knocked over by a flood
and valuable instruments & records fell into the raging river.
Without a thought for herself, she grabbed what she could
and saved the day, though the icy cold made her shiver.

Eventually, they reached the Three Forks in Montana
where the Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin rivers combine
to start the Missouri that will flow into the Dakotas;
and there where she had been stolen, she would recognize.

It would be just up the Jefferson River they could find
her Shoshone people if they were alive that day.
The Expedition needed horses to cross the Great Divide
and Sacajawea promised that her people could lend some aid.

She was right and her brother, Chief Cameahwait
was glad to see her and welcome all into the camp.
The Shoshoni Indians were ones who tried not to hate
and be friends where they could. Kindness was their stamp.

In this nice encounter, Sacajawea met with an old friend,
one called Rabbit Ears – who with her had been seized
back when she was twelve when her family was rent
by the tragic killing and vicious raid by the Gros Ventres.

Back then, Rabbit ears was captured and made a slave,
but she managed to escape and return to her tribe.
As we know now, Sacajawea met another fate;
but in another way, she was determined to survive. *Refrain*

It has been told that Captain Clark fell in love on the way,
but I think that it was just as true for Sacajawea on her side.
Visiting her people, she found that her sister had passed away,
leaving an orphan boy that she adopted but had to leave behind.

Some say that Sacajawea would take the boy to direct,
but in the journals of Lewis & Clark, of that there is no mention.
So, it seems unlikely that the tale is at all correct.
It is most likely that the boy was left with his Shoshoni nation.

Be that as it may, onward with the trip, in November of 1805,
Lewis and Clark and their band at last reached the Pacific.
Rowing in many boats up the Columbia to finally reach the tide,
they would claim for all a route that could be called specific.

After that, our teenage guide, Sacajawea, would often claim
that she saw the Great Water and witnessed a great big fish.
With baby Baptiste on her back, she gained much worthy fame
for helping Lewis and Clark find their way out west.

In March of 1806, it was time to return to far away Fort Mandan
in North Dakota on the Missouri from where they left.
Rowing the rivers to the Missouri in a different tandem,
while taking different trails and learning as they went.

Captain Clark took some of his men up the Yellowstone
and Captain Lewis followed the Missouri until they met.
Then with all together, including Sacajawea and Charbonneau,
by August of 1806, they arrived from where they left. *Refrain*

Captain Clark offered to have Baptiste in St. Louis educated
and he loved to call Baptiste his dancing boy.
Shoshone people dance a lot for it is their way.
Little Pomp, as Sacajawea called him, liked to dance for joy.

Lewis and Clark then went on to complete their journey;
and Toussaint Charbonneau returned to his life and wives.
For years after that, now and then, they would meet
with Captain Clark in St. Louis and renew their expedition ties.

Then in 1811, while Sacajawea was being helped by Clark in St. Louis,
Charbonneau went up the Missouri with his wife, Otter Woman.
But in December of 1812, Otter Woman got very sick
and died leaving Lizette, a baby daughter, and Bazile, her son.

This all happened in South Dakota at a place called Fort Manuel.
Charbonneau was off trading for furs at this time and was away
with fellow fur traders of whom by the Indians, many were killed.
It was thought Charbonneau was included, but he survived and lived another day.

Now before I go on, let me say many think it was Sacajawea who in the last days of 1812, passed away at Fort Manuel. A clerk named Luttig reported that Charbonneau's wife had deceased, but he claimed the one who passed had a little girl.

Sacajawea bore Charbonneau a son, but not a female child. I think it is unlikely then that it was Sacajawea who passed. Fort Manuel to this day claims to be the Bird Woman's death site. Many agree, but others feel wife Otter Woman defines it best.

Those who claim Fort Manuel as Sacajawea's death site also refer to a note written by a passenger on the boat in 1811. He claimed that Charbonneau was aboard with a wife who had accompanied the now famed Lewis & Clark Expedition.

This wife of Charbonneau was sick too and so it led to speculation that passenger witness Judge Brackenridge knew it was Sacajawea. But Brackenridge was probably only guessing without examination. Without knowing of another wife, confusion would be easy.

And then, too, there is a third offering of Fort Manuel testimony Discovered around 1920, it claims that in 1826,

Captain Clark wrote "Sacajawea – Dead."

Perhaps Captain Clark was truly under that impression truthfully; but he may have been noting previous false impressions instead.

Previous to that note in 1826, though, in 1825, Clark was asked about what happened to Sacajawea? He said, "she's happy." If he had known she had died in 1812, it would have been his task to admit she had died. He didn't. So, the 1826 note may be a forgery.

It seems to me that lots of skeptics have assumed way too much in insisting that in 1812, Sacajawea was the one who died. In the case of Sacajawea, it appears that many who think they are in touch are simply connected only within the lines of their minds.

In truth, there is no grave at Fort Manuel and of course, no name. From notes that were written in journals, we have had to decide. A note here and a note there – all released for an argument to frame; and just because something's found in a journal, that doesn't make it right.

As I see it, those who insist that Sacajawea died in 1812 are simply willing to erase the last 72 years of a life. The Shoshone Indians are not good for writing for themselves, but many of them knew and loved Sacajawea after that time.

A true legend should not just exist in some words on paper.
There should be some basis for it too in the heart.
Many would deny that the Shoshoni knew Sacajawea later,
but I think they stash their objections in a file in the dark.

As for me, I tend to believe the Shoshoni tales that say
that Sacajawea may have wandered many miles in life;
but in the end their heroine would come home to them to stay;
and it's largely that tale that can't be discarded in the night.

Congress was also confused, but in 1924, they commissioned a study.
They chose an Indian expert, a Sioux by the name of Charles Eastman
to research the various legends to determine which tale to believe.
He reported that the one who died in 1812 was probably Otter Woman.

Many still insist it had to be Sacajawea for reasons of their own
who died in 1812 from a putrid fever as it was named.
It is said that legends do die hard and once a seed is sown,
some people just will not believe, no matter what research might say.

I do not know which tale is right for sure, but neither was I there;
but I choose to believe most of the study conducted by the Congress.
And it's that official report that is forming much of my tale here.
With that, my friends, let us continue after this temporary digress. *Refrain*

In 1813, thinking Charbonneau dead by Indians, a court in St. Louie
granted William Clark custody of Bazile and Lizette.
As a matter of honor, Clark agreed to take them into his custody.
It's said that Sacajawea loved their mother and asked him to do it.

No one knows what happened to Lizette, the youngest child.
It is assumed she died in childhood. Not much more is known.
But out of love for the son, and as one of Charbonneau's wives,
Sacajawea adopted Otter Woman's son, Bazile, now ten years old.

While in the care of William Clark, Baptiste, one of Sacajawea's boys
was educated in St. Louis by a Protestant minister named Mr. Welch.
For some reason, Sacajawea's other boy, Bazile, was taught in the employ
of a Catholic school and by a Catholic priest, Father Neil, was helped.

For awhile, then, Captain Clark cared for Sacajawea and her sons;
but later, Charbonneau unexpectedly turned up with Eagle, another of his wives.
Taking his boys and his wives with him, toward the southwest, he did run;
but soon he whipped Sacajawea and she left him for her life.

It can only be surmised, but Charles Eastman says that Bazile & Baptiste were angry with their father for beating their mother and left him behind. Baptiste probably returned to St. Louis to continue with his teaching as Bazile may have gone westward toward his mother's Shoshone tribe.

It is quite well known that later with Clark, Baptiste gained recognition by some traveling German prince who asked him to go with him. So Baptiste went abroad and toured many European nations. For six great years, in the 1820s, many in Europe became his kin.

Meanwhile, leaving Charbonneau and his other wives to themselves, Sacajawea then found satisfaction among the Comanche. (Co man chee) In Oklahoma territory, she was Jerk Meat's wife for over 26 years and happily bore him five kids, though three died in infancy.

While living with husband, Jerk Meat, and the Comanche, Sacajawea was known as the Shoshoni Indian called Porivo. She was happy being his wife, though she yearned for her Shoshones. Still for 26 or 27 years, as a wife, she proved to love him so.

Then Jerk Meat was killed in an Indian battle or skirmish and Sacajawea wandered off with her daughter I've heard called Yoga-wasier. Her son from Jerk Meat, Ticannaf, now well into his twenties looked for her in vain and labeled her Lost Woman, in Comanche, Wadziwiper. *Refrain*

Legends are often full of holes – and this one is often clueless. It's hard to know just what was Yoga-wasier's fate; but in a few years, Sacajawea found her way back to St. Louis - perhaps looking for Captain Clark who passed away in 1838.

Time does pass, and life goes on, but at this time of our tale, my guess is that it's close to 1850 and approaching America's Civil War. Princess Sacajawea is now 60 and getting well on in age; but she hopped aboard a Missouri River boat and traveled far.

Even though she was getting old, Sacajawea thought herself spry and fell in love with a Frenchman, and married him in truth. They lived from fort to fort along the Missouri for awhile - but Sacajawea longed to go back home to the people of her youth.

Then when she was 70, she told her husband it was time to go. They were to take different paths from where they lived at Fort Union. They were to meet at the mouth of the river called Yellowstone; but only Sacajawea got there and she had to go on alone.

It's said that her husband may have been killed, but no one knows.
It matters little now I guess because as our tale is getting on,
her adventures are nearing completion as she's getting close to home.
It's just a little way now, for Sacajawea to reach completion.

From some fur traders, she heard Bazile was in Wyoming at Fort Bridger.
Imagine how happy she must have been to think she could reach him to love.
Down the Big Horn River and into the valley known as Wind River -
she heard her people had settled there and she wanted to be as one. *Refrain*

She was known somewhat now as the Indian maiden of the voyage
that took Lewis and Clark from St. Louis to the Great Ocean.
In 1868, she joined with Chief Washakie of great Shoshoni fame
to complete a treaty that would create the Wind River Indian Reservation.

Sacajawea was old now, perhaps reaching close to eighty.
She asked that her adopted son, Bazile, would be allowed to sign instead.
And so it was, a pact was signed for all the upcoming ages.
The Shoshoni, and later the Arapaho, would have a lasting homestead.

Sacajawea lived at Fort Washakie with her adopted son, Bazile
who had a cousin named Bat-tez living but three miles away.
Some think that Bat-tez was really Baptiste, but I tend to disagree;
for Baptiste to death in 1866 in Oregon can be traced.

After returning home to America from Europe after six years there,
Baptiste had made some fame by becoming an Indian guide.
Living mostly in the West, including the California shore,
he fell sick and died in 1866 in Oregon on his way to a Montana gold strike.

It might seem strange, but I think the Shoshone called Bat-tez
was not Baptiste – Charbonneau and Sacajawea's boy.
Instead he was probably Sacajawea's nephew, full blood Shoshone
who Sacajawea had found orphaned on the expedition of 1805.

Perhaps, Baptiste and Bat-tez have been confused
to be the same one, but I do not believe it's so.
Bat-tez was not really Sacajawea's son, but only a nephew
who had been born of Sacajawea's sister back in Idaho.

Written notes seem to be lacking, but while living at Wind River,
the lady many believe was Sacajawea offered many recollections.
She talked of Lewis and Captain Clark and their friendship forever
and loved to show off a Medal given to her by President Jefferson.

On a nice and comfortable evening, late on April 9th, 1884,
the Lost Woman – at age of 96 – would finally breathe her last.
She could reach past home in spirit now, at peace forever more.
Sacajawea, My Indian Love, thanks for all your past.

In the next year, 1885, Bat-tez would become deceased.
Like I say, I believe he was Bazil's cousin, not brother.
He was about the age, though, as would have been Jean Baptiste;
and because Sacajawea adopted him in 1805, she was indeed his mother.

Bat-tez was about 80 when he passed to enjoy death's heavenly feast.
One year later, in 1886, Bazile would make it a trinity.
At around age 83, Otter Woman's son joined Sacajawea & Bat-tez;
and the three of them now belong to Shoshone American History.

Personally, I find myself in love with the generous spirit of Sacajawea.
Perhaps I am an eternal romantic and cannot help myself.
But the Bird Woman has inspired me, and though that's not a panacea,
It helps to know one can survive and escape one's own hell.

So, if you ever get down to Wyoming and want to say hello
to an American Princess of the great Shoshoni tribe,
just stop at Fort Washakie and stand at her grave, facing the sun's glow
and offer a salute to Sacajawea, a legend of the night.

I am indeed from Wyoming, but first I am American.
I do believe in saying thanks to those who've led the way.
If Lewis and Clark were here, they'd say that they were captains;
but Sacajawea while oh so young led with her heart –
and still does so today. *Refrain (several times)*

ONCE UPON A TIME – THERE WAS A NATION (A Poem)

Written July 13, 2004

Once upon a time, there was a nation – that believed its people were free.
Once upon a time, there was a nation – that claimed to believe in liberty.
But somewhere along the line, that nation – became confused and lost its dream.
For fear of losing freedom on the mainland, it began to make war across the seas.

Once upon a time, there was a people – who believed only in independence.
Once upon a time, there was a people – who stood tall and without arrogance.
But somewhere along the line, that people, became confused and lost their drive
and became instead ones to become dependent on foreign reserves for their lives.

Once upon a time, there was a union – that believed without union, all would be wrong.
Once upon a time, there was a union – that believed with consensus, all could be strong.
But somewhere along the line, that union, became confused and lost its dedication
and became instead a divider of nations, unwilling to listen to the world of nations.

But that nation and that people and that union can return to its principles of old.
It doesn't have to continue to make war to make peace – or to depend on foreign gold.
In the next election, let us vote for those who respect the necessity of independence
by depending only on ourselves, standing on our own two feet and using common sense.

That is not to say that we shouldn't be willing to lend a helping hand in foreign lands.
It's only to say we must first be strong with what we have before extending our hands.
Surely, it should be clear that depending on foreign fuel to make the American engine run
only makes a few industrialists rich and makes the rest of us dependent on their guns.

There is a war now going on, taking lives and maiming bodies on both sides of the fence.
The bottom line is that peace could have worked if we had only been independent.
I believe that depending on foreign oil has clouded our ability to make rational decisions.
We claim we war to free a people, but our need for oil is what really forms our vision.

If ever we are to turn that around and allow for a stronger and less dependent tomorrow,
we must again rely on our own reserves. To do less will only extend the sorrow.
Where there's a will, there's a way, but if that will is to depend upon another
then true strength disappears when that other goes and all begin to smother.

We can get back to the independence that was once ours, but only if we realize
that some industrialist's desire to make a fortune in foreign lands has blinded enterprise.
We cannot do anything for the greater world if we are not strong at home.
So for a stronger tomorrow, more independent and free, in November,
let's be aware and vote.

PEACE WITHOUT POWER OR THE TRUE NATURE OF PEACE

(8 Pages)

An essay by
Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
August, 2004

I don't think the world has ever known real peace – as a world, that is. Sure, a few of us have known peace individually, but in general, the world has never known peace. It might be useful to ask, why? So, let me ask it – **why has not the world ever known peace?**

I think it is because, strange as it might seem, **it fears peace**. Who in the world would want something that they fear? I must admit – no one; but why is it that the world in general does not want peace? As far as I can see, there is no doubt that it does not want it because it has never placed any kind of priority on it. Peace as a past time has never been one of the chosen ideals of mankind. In truth, we – in general – have never wanted it; and it should never come as a surprise, then, that we have never achieved it either. Why in the world go out of your way to achieve something that is not wanted?

What do you mean, I do not want peace? I am sure some of you are mocking me about now. Yes, I want peace. I have always wanted peace. My answer to that is that, in general, that has not been true. There can be no doubt that the world has never attained any long lasting peace. Though there may be plenty of reason for disagreement on why we have never attained any long lasting peace, I think it is because we have feared peace. We have feared peace while pretending to place it as an ideal that we simply must attain in time. Well, we might at that – but not until we have stopped fearing it.

Why have we placed peace on the top of the list as the most unwanted prospect of humanity? I think it's because we fear the boredom that it represents – or that we think it represents. Most people I know and can see in public life consider peace to be too dull to be worth while. I really do not think that people know that they think that way, but I think they do. Nobody wants to be bored in life. Peace has a sense of boredom about it. Who would want to be bored? Therefore, who wants peace?

Ah, but the other side of the spectrum? Wow! There is plenty of excitement on that end of things. Given that excitement equates to a lack of boredom, peace as an alternative choice loses out. What is the opposite of peace? I have no doubt of the answer to that – **power!** Power is not only the antithesis of peace, in terms of being its opposite; but, for many, it is also the far more exciting and attractive of the two. Who wants peace when power is so much more exciting?

The trouble is most people have not taken the time to analyze this thing about peace and power. Many think the two can stand side by side and that even one must depend

upon the other. But think about it. What is peace? What is power? Then tell me I am wrong.

What is peace? Correct me if I am wrong. *Peace is being at ease with my world, including myself.* Pretty simple, right? Can anyone argue with that? If so, how would you define peace?

Now, what is power? Again, correct me if I am wrong. *Power is the ability to change either myself or my surroundings to theoretically land me in peace.* Ah, some may argue, there you have said it. Peace is not the opposite of power. It is the end of power. Peace is the reason why I should want and employ power in my life.

Ok, I agree. Peace could be seen as an objective of power; but that does not preclude it from being the opposite of peace. It is absolutely amazing how that works. Draw a line and define peace and power on that line. Almost everyone would put power on the left to be directed toward peace on the right. But by doing that, peace and power become opposites.

But it does not have to be that way. Peace does not have to be dependent on power. Take power out of the line and see only peace everywhere on the line without need of power to attain it; and presto, it's heaven on earth for those who do it. This is quite an exercise. Isn't it? Who would have ever suspected that power and peace are opposites unless we take some time to think about it? The trouble is, from the beginning of power to its continuation in the present, almost no one takes the time to think about it.

Jesus took the time. I think he knew of what I am speaking. In the unbiblical **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THOMAS**, Jesus was reported to have said – *let him who has power renounce it.* Yes, Jesus knew long before I knew.

Amazingly, however, Jesus is not equated to peace as much as he is equated to power. Yes, it is peace that is seen to be the objective of power; but almost no one even suspects that peace is possible without power. Because power is considered the necessary prerequisite of peace, it has been assumed that Jesus equates to power. Almost no one thinks of Jesus outside of the mysterious realm of power. Am I not correct?

When was the last time you ever heard anyone speak of Jesus outside of a reference of a *kingdom of God*? That imagined kingdom is nothing more than some achievement of power. That kingdom is power; and power is the kingdom. Jesus is considered to be the king of that kingdom, sitting at the right hand of God to delve out punishment to all the evil doers and attaboys to the ones who have dedicated their lives to him.

Sorry, guys! It ain't gonna happen. Jesus was never about power. He was about peace. And he will never be about power. As Jesus, the imagined king of power, realized long time ago, peace and power cannot ever exist as contemporaries. They must always exist as opposites. Realizing this, as Jesus did, is the key for the world to attain peace. Without such realization, it is unlikely that peace can ever come to the world in general.

Truthfully, however, the world at large does not understand this principle. I do believe it is capable of understanding it, but to date, it has not. How many of you have just responded that I am out of my mind? My guess is that quite a few of you – if not all of you – have concluded to my insanity. I would have been among the incredulous if I had not taken the time to think the matter out and then try to live it. As it is, no one can really be sure of that which I am offering unless they have lived it. First, however, you must think it. Then you can live it.

But all the many priests in the world, from the lowest to the highest, have not even suspected that I am right. Why? Because they have not suspected that they are wrong in thinking that power equates to peace.

In the near future, the current *high priest* of civilization will pass on. That high priest is **Pope John Paul II**. That high priest is absolutely sure that he will meet God on the other side of death and that the meeting will result in a *sharing of power*. It is, in fact, why John Paul II is a priest in the first place – to be in a position to share power with the Almighty. But essentially, it is not peace that occupies the mind – and soul – of John Paul II. It is power. It is seen that only with power can peace be achieved. Thus, John Paul II is absolutely sure that his life of dedication to the *prince of power* – *Jesus* – will fit him with a very nice robe by which he will *share in the power of Jesus*.

But, but, but, but! You can't be right! You can't be right! You can't be right! One more time now – you can't be right! Well, it is possible I am wrong. I will give you that; but if I am right, there goes all the reason for loving power. If you know that power is the opposite of peace, then you can go forward and bypass power to attain the ever more wonderful prospect of peace.

What is peace? Again, it is nothing more than being comfortable with your world, including yourself. The key, I think, is to assume peace and then go forward to deny that which is opposed to peace – power. Start looking at yourself in the mirror and be happy with what you see. That does not mean you have to stay the same. Change some outward appearance if you want, but essentially start with being happy with yourself. But, above all else, forsake trying to change anyone outside of you when that change is intended to *make them fit* into your world. Insisting on changing another is power; and power is, at it were, the natural enemy of peace.

The key word there is *make*. It is ok to encourage another to follow your practice. That is not an inclusion of power in your life. It is only *making* another do what you want that demonstrates the use of power and the abandonment of peace. No one needs to impose him or herself on another if they are first happy with what they are; and anyone who thinks that they have a right to impose their standards on others to make those others *fit in* cannot have peace themselves. Those who are at peace can never impose. Anyone who thinks he or she must impose some righteous or unrighteous thought or practice on someone else lacks peace because peace is the very opposite of imposition.

I disagree with a lot of people; but I have no desire to change them in terms of imposing my ways on them. Yes, I would like them to change on their own accord; but I have not a single impulse in me to do anything to change someone without their consent. If you give me your consent, I will gladly do what I can to change you. That is not a violation of peace. But without consent, it is a complete abandonment of peace – my peace – that I should even begin to make you comply with my standards. You notice I said *my peace* – not peace in general. As Jesus said so long ago, *if the salt loses its flavor, with what will it be salted?* That is to say that if I yield my peace so that theoretically you can attain peace, then the biggest fool in that picture is me. How, then, could I go forward and argue for peace – or comfort with life – if I lose my own comfort with it?

It is a bit of misnomer, though, to even say that I would be willing to change you with your consent. It could never be up to me to change you – even with your consent – because that implies power once again. It is demanding or insistent change that is the primary undesirable in the path to peace. What I really meant to say is that with your consent, I would be willing to help you change your perspective of yourself – but not yourself.

Yeah, Jesus was a *prince of peace*, but he was not a *prince of power*. How many Jesus churches in the world know that? Go down the road and note the signs outside the various churches. How many of them promise peace without power? In truth, almost no one, though all are sincere in their ignorance. Almost every Jesus person in the world is sure without a smidge of a doubt that I am totally off base.

Personally, I think the reason for that is the *righteous six* – Peter, Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John – did not realize the truth of it. No one can blame another for his or her ignorance. It is as it is. The six did not suspect what I am saying. Therefore, they had no way to even imagine that what I am saying could be right. How can you entertain an opposite idea unless you first suspect its contrary? You can't. The six who passed on Jesus to an unsuspecting world passed on a Jesus they did not know. They did not even begin to suspect that peace and power are opposites because they were taught that power is necessary for peace. Perhaps they can't be faulted for *not seeing* they had life all wrong. Who would suspect it? It is quite a thought. Isn't it?

Can you imagine Constantine – the emperor – adopting Christianity in the 4th Century if he did not see it as an alignment with power? Constantine was all about power like so many who rule today. Power is not something any one of authority wants to yield. Constantine saw Jesus as consistent with his designs on power. He saw Jesus as a way into the hearts and minds of those he wanted to rule. He used Jesus because he really thought that Jesus was about power. All who use Jesus as a power ploy are sincere in seeing Jesus as they do; but that does not make them right. Would Constantine have ever adopted Jesus into his family of power if he did not see Jesus as a fellow king? Of course not!

But let me get back now to my previous argument – the main reason we have not attained peace in the world is because we have not seen it as desirable. I have great confidence in humanity that if it sees peace as desirable, it will pursue it eagerly; but in not seeing it as desirable, our general response has been – *who cares?* I mean who can care about peace when power is so much more adorable and inviting? When peace is only an afterthought and considered to be a result of power, then power itself remains the only desirable emotion – or motion.

Is power so all-fired superlative to peace, though? Why should it be considered to be more entertaining than peace? I think the answer to that is that, generally speaking, we have taken our focus off life itself and have concentrated on what we can do with life. In making of life what we want our main focus, then enjoying life as it is becomes blah, blah, blah, blah, blah! In seeing life as it is as blah, we have never had a chance of overcoming the blues associated with that blah-ness. But the most exciting thing of all has been within our grasp all the time. We have simply overlooked it by wanting to change it. The operative word there is *change*. Very few have lived life not wanting to change it, but rather accept it. That includes the one who is writing this essay.

Oh, how I have wanted to change life in the past. I know why others think as they do because I once thought that way too. How many times have I wished I had a bigger this or that, or smaller this or that. I need reference no particulars because everyone can relate. Right? I have been there. I am still there. I am not above the fray just because I know the problem. I still look in the mirror and argue with myself a bit, but not a lot. You see, I have been on this pathway for a long, long time. Ask any of my children. They can tell you I have been *working out my own acceptance*. My youngest is 25. My oldest, if you want to call all my ex step children in the lot, is 44. Most of them, if not all of them, can tell you *Ole Dad has been working it out*.

I am 62. Much of that which I had trouble accepting and embracing is beyond me now. Even if I could change it, change has become less desirable now. I am close to that wonderful thing called *peace* that Jesus had so long ago. I have been beyond the need for power over others in any way for most of my life. Power over myself has taken more time; but I am getting there. What a wonderful thing it is to have no power – or to want it. How many do you know who can say that?

I have become as a little kid, though, waking up to accept me as I am. I have become acceptable to myself. Why? *Because I have no fear of peace*.

For me, peace is not boring. For me, wanting to know life as it is without trying to change it has become my main focus. I am not without temptation to enhance this aspect of life or that; but even the temptation to enhance some part of me to add to my excitement with life has not damaged my peace. I don't *need to change myself*. If I tinker with this or that product that offers to enhance some aspect of my life, I do so only out of curiosity, not need. I am not beyond curiosity, however. I find curiosity terribly exciting because without it, life as it is could not be known. I want to know life as it is without regard to having to change it – *or power over it*.

Earlier you may have noticed that I said *demanding or insistent change* is the primary undesirable in the path to peace. That is not to say that all change is opposed to peace. It is only to say that such change as is considered necessary for happiness is opposed to peace.

Change itself is ok as long as I don't require it to be happy. Let me give you an example. I can look in the mirror and be pleased with what I see. Say I am – as I was – about 225 lbs. with an interesting looking paunch in the middle – a bit of an overhang over the belt, if you know what I mean. As long as I am happy with weighing in at 225 and being a bit chubby, I can diet to reduce and still be happy. You could call it satisfaction, too, but *happy* says it better for me.

Now if I look in the mirror and see a chubby fellow and am depressed and then because of that depression, I choose to diet, that is the kind of demanding or insistent change that is undesirable in the path to peace. Chances are that if I am not happy being chubby and 225, I will be equally unhappy for other reasons when I am down to 195. If I am happy with myself at 225, but choose to reduce for better health perhaps, then it's likely that I will be just as happy when I'm 195 as when I was 225. As long as my happiness is not dependent on change, change is no obstacle to peace; but the moment I *require* change to be happy, then change can become a monster. If I do not succeed with some objective when motivated by depression, more than likely my depression will turn into despair. Despair means *no hope*. Hopelessness is the end of the road. It only makes sense, then, that any change be *managed in happiness*.

Change need be no obstacle to peace, though, as long as it is managed in and by happiness. I know there is much objection. How can I be happy if I need to change? My response is, you can't. That is precisely my argument. If you feel you *need* to change to be happy, then change probably won't work for you; but if you start with emphasizing gratitude for what you do have and let that be your focus and drive in life, you can change and carry your happiness along with the change. That's the key. You should *manage change in happiness*. Let gratitude for what you have be primary in your life and make desire for something else secondary. Then change to what is secondary can be managed in happiness. If you do not succeed with your objective, then your world will not end because you failed. It is only a fool who will allow potential failure to be eventually equated with despair. Start out in happiness – and all you can do is stay happy, regardless of success or failure.

Ideally, however, change should not be the most important priority in life. Unfortunately, I think many, if not most, people live their lives expecting change as if without change, they would simply die. Anytime change is the main focus in life, that is a dead give away that unhappiness with what we have is our disposition. No one needs to change if they are happy with what they are and if they are happy with what they have. Constant change is a form of insistent change; and it is insistent or demanding change that is the primary obstacle to peace. How can anyone be at peace if all they want in life is *something new*? We live in a society that pretends that satisfaction is impossible unless the old is constantly being amended with the new. Amending the old with the new is considered *progress*; but that so called progress can be a *sign of unhappiness*.

But why is constant change for anyone so important? I return to my earlier argument. I think it is because we fear peace. We think of peace as being some blank wall beyond which there is no excitement. So we resist it. It is precisely for that reason that the human race has never experienced any lasting peace; and as long as we continue thinking of peace as some kind of blank wall with nothing to offer for happiness, we will continue resisting peace and will continue making progress and continue making war and continue making unhappiness.

What a wonderful world it would be if all felt as I do! *No necessary change, No power, just peace*. To be excited with life without need of changing it is not powerful; but it is peaceful. I need power to change life. I have no need of power if I am satisfied with it. Makes sense. Right? When people are afraid of peace, they are afraid that after peace, nothing. They think that once peace is attained, there will be no further excitement with life. I think this is a real fear – a fear of peace for assuming it to be boring.

As one who has acquired peace in life – at least periodically - and is not bored with myself or life itself for having done so, let me offer that I think the fear of peace is not very useful. After peace – nothing! It just isn't so, Folks. One who has acquired peace is never bored with life because life itself continues and continues and continues. Along with obsession with life, excitement continues and continues and continues. Do not fear peace because you suspect it would be boring. It ain't! How could it ever be boring when it is so miraculous? But then I guess it might be boring if you do not consider it miraculous.

If you don't think it is miraculous, however, reach up and touch your ear. Now, plug it to suppress your hearing. Now remove the plug. Hearing is pretty nice, huh? It is quite miraculous. Isn't it? Reach up and cover your eyes to imagine blindness. Now uncover them. Isn't it better to see than not see? It is quite miraculous. Isn't it? Now caress yourself to witness your sense of touch! Take away your hand. It is quite miraculous. Isn't it? Is there a part you should not touch? Which part is God not making – or at least, in? Does that answer your question?

Now, pinch your nose closed to try to deny your sense of smell. Hard to breathe, huh? Now remove the pinch. It is quite miraculous. Isn't it? Now put your hands in your mouth to be aware of your sense of taste. Hope you had something nice on them to taste. Now remove your hands from your mouth. Take a few moments to savor the flavor. It is quite miraculous. Isn't it?

So what is boring about that? *After peace – nothing! No way!* But make no mistake about it. It doesn't take power to make peace; and anyone who thinks that power is a requirement of peace is doomed to repeat the ageless foolishness of loving power and forsaking peace.

In the real world, however, peace is often confused with what is called *truce* or *ceasefire*. I would prefer to call it *stalemate*; but however it is called, it is not peace. It is often considered that people can *make peace*. In some situations, that may be true, but only if both parties of an agreement are totally happy with a result. I think such cases where two conflicting parties come together and actually make peace is very rare – if not non-existent.

Peace is what it is and should not be confused with what might be better called *compromise*. Compromise is not peace either. *Compromise is settling for less than what is considered ideal*. Peace cannot be compromised; and you cannot compromise to attain peace. Why? Because if a person has to give up some of what he thinks he needs, how can he be happy with what he gets? If he was happy with less than what he ends up with in the first place, why did he fight for more? Anytime there is compromise, it necessarily means that conflicting parties agree to settle for less than what they thought they needed. Peace is being happy with what you have. I suppose it is possible that one can be totally satisfied with less than he wanted before a conflict, but it is not likely. Is it?

Realistically, then, we live in a world where true peace is but an impossible ideal and truce or stalemate or compromise is the state of life. In the public arena, perhaps that will always be so – at least until the world becomes filled with only peaceful souls.

I think it is worthwhile to realize the truth, though. People need to realize that peace is not truce or stalemate or compromise. If it is true peace that people want, then that can most easily happen with satisfaction with self. In isolation, peace should be an easy thing to accomplish. In communion or mixing with others, it will certainly be harder to achieve because more than one has to be satisfied. That is not to say peace between more than one is impossible. It is just to say it is less likely and harder to come by. In the end, each of us must decide just how important peace really is – and then act accordingly.

It does irritate me a bit, however, that most do not understand the notion of peace and assume that peace can be forced to happen. Peace can never be forced to happen. No one can be coerced to commit to peace. If you strike me to make me bend to your will, you have not pacified me. You have conquered me – for a time. Given that I do not like

it that you have conquered me, I may simply find another way to defeat you in the future; but make no mistake – the lull between any two combatants between engagements is not peace - because complete contentment with the outcome most likely does not happen.

For what it's worth, I think it is worth while to ponder this whole study of peace here so as to know about any prospects of peace. It is good to know that if I should go to war with you that I cannot expect peace should I conquer you because it is most unlikely you will be happy with my ways or you would not have fought with me in the first place. As long as two combatants realize that peace is not a possible objective for fighting, then let the war go on – if it seems more worthy than peace in another way.

If I disagree with you, however, it is entirely possible that I could attain peace and you could attain peace on an individual basis if the two of us backed off one another and let each to his or her own pleasure and space. Realistically, in a world of conflict, that might be a workable solution whereas the result would at least be close to a true peace. Realistically, too, though, most conflicting parties will not back off and retreat to their various corners. One may be willing, but the other may insist on imposing. So what do you in such a case?

That is not for me to say in this essay. That is for each to decide. All I want to offer here is that we need to realize that peace is often confused with stalemate or lull or compromise or truce. To be fair to ourselves, we should not allow such confusion and call things as they are. Peace is an ideal that should always remain an ideal and not be confused with less than it is. Otherwise, peace becomes compromised itself. If we lose sight of peace, as I think we often do in our quest for truces, then we allow ourselves to settle for far less in life than we should.

To each his or her own, but peace is the single most important ideal in life for me. For me, gratitude for what I have is far more important than success with what I do. I do not quest for knowledge or wealth or recognition or anything the world often offers as much as I quest for peace. It is perhaps because peace has been my most cherished quest in life that I realize its relationship – or non relationship – with power. Most quest for power in life, thinking it may lead to peace. I realized long ago that power in the quest for peace makes no sense. In seeing that it makes no sense, it has been somewhat easy for me to find the peace I have sought.

Most, however, probably disagree. Peace without power may be as senseless to others as it makes sense to me. I offer these thoughts not to change the world so much as to share with the world how one man has found the peace he wants. Do with my pondering what you will. You will have to admit. It came free.

PEACE WITHOUT POWER OR THE TRUE NATURE OF PEACE

THE END

ALONE – A Perspective

A Very Brief Essay by
Francis William Bessler
Laramie, Wyoming
Aug. 22nd, 2004

Just can't resist this one. Whenever I find an idea that I find fascinating, I'm like a little kid with a brand new toy. I belong to a Sunday morning discussion group that meets at the United Church of Christ here in Laramie each Sunday. Often, I come away from that experience with an idea that really deserves exploration. Today was one of those Sundays. Reverend Sally offered that one could take the word *alone* and dissect it into *al one* or *all one* and see the word *alone* in a different way than just seeing someone in isolation – as the word *alone* often implies.

In one of Reverend Sally's favorite expressions – **WOW!** Is that ever true! Before this morning, I had no idea that *alone* could mean so much. Again – **WOW!** I have often sensed a meaning in solitude, but this one little word almost spells it out. All my life, I have tried to look at the world through my eyes and not define myself through the world. *Alone* can now translate for me my life in one simple word. I have always felt that I am no different than anyone else, but I have desired to know what this *everyone* I am about is. For me, it has been simple, start with the center – me – and go outward. **Know everyone else by knowing myself. It works that way because we are all the same. We are all one.**

It's brief, but I think it's a good idea. Don't you? To be alone should not mean to be lonely if lonely means "sad." To be alone should be exciting because being one with everyone and everything is exciting. At least, for me, it is. And it means I am One with God too. I am indeed *all one* – with the Infinite God Which is in me and everyone else equally – and with all of you, my wonderful fellow creatures. I can harm none of you because I respect all of you. My being *alone* requires respect for you as an image and replication of myself. **I care for me. How could I not care for you who are like me?**

Now, How would you like to be ALONE – with me or by yourself?

IT'S CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY

Written Dec. 16, 2004

Fourth & fifth verses added March 9, 2009

Note: The following song (hymn) is based on my interpretation of the 1st of 5 verses of THE GOSPEL OF MARY (Magdalene).
If it seems to offer a different Jesus, I think it does.
To each, his or her own, but think of how sad it is to think we may have missed the real instruction and message of Jesus all through the years? "Power" through another is missing from the following version of Jesus.
Each of us must ask, why has *power* through Christ rather than *Personal Virtue* through his teachings been the stalwart of Christianity? Then ask, which tale is right?

Refrain:

***It's Christmas every day. It's Christmas every night
when you learn to love the truth Jesus brought with his light.
It's Christmas all through the year if you live without fear.
It's Christmas every season if you live within reason.
It's Christmas every day. It's Christmas every night
when you learn to love the wisdom Jesus brought with his sight.***

Jesus was asked about sin. He said there's no such thing -
except when you create it with improper mingling.
Mingling is sinful if you think you need another
to make of you a child of God, a sister or a brother.
No one needs another for life to be sanctified.
Everything is holy because it's filled with the Divine. ***Refrain.***

Jesus said you become sick and die because you love what deceives you.
You think your life is not right and you follow after fools.
You think you cannot be a Christ because another told you so
but a Christ is only one who knows that life is good to know.
A Christ cannot act in shame because a Christ knows she's divine
and a Christ is only one who lives according to that light. ***Refrain.***

Jesus said we should be encouraged by the wonder of all life.
Do not be discouraged by loving what causes strife.
He said, be encouraged by the diversity in Nature
and know that you are equal to all of that with equal measure.
Whoever has ears to hear, let it be for that one exciting
to know that all of life should be seen as inviting. ***Refrain.***

Jesus commented about Heaven. He said, do not be fooled if someone claims it's here or there or available through a school. Heaven is everywhere because it's everywhere God is. God is in everything – and in nothing can there be sin. We sin when we fail with each other to realize that each life is holy and filled with the divine. **Refrain.**

Jesus commented about law. He said, do not establish it. Look only for the **child of humanity** within you and follow that. Those who seek it will find it – it's the good news of the Kingdom. If you think that humanity itself is sinful, you will only find conundrum. He said, lay down no other rule than this that I have given. Laws only bind and do not free. Only to my rule, pay attention. **Refrain.**

Finish with repeat of last of Refrain:

***It's Christmas every day. It's Christmas every night
when you learn to love the wisdom Jesus brought with his sight.
It's Christmas every day. It's Christmas every night
when you learn to love the wisdom Jesus brought with his sight,
when you learn to love the wisdom Jesus brought with his sight,
when you learn to love the wisdom Jesus brought with his sight.***

EPILOG: *SPIRITUAL-LOGICALLY SPEAKING*

So, what do you think? Is a “spiritual-logical” approach to learning about and living life worth anything? In the **Gospel of Thomas**, Jesus said: *Know what is in your sight; and what is hidden will be revealed to you.* The emphasis is on “know” – not “believe” what another has told you – even one like Jesus. I do not think Jesus was one to have me believe something just because he said it – or offered it. If I read the **Gospel of Thomas** right, Jesus was into encouraging people to use their minds to know things for themselves; and it is in such a way one becomes a master in life.

I realize other gospel writers present a different Jesus – a “lord & savior” Jesus to whom we should look for his truth. I think it is good to keep in mind that is certainly one view of Jesus that should be appraised. Maybe that was the Jesus that really lived; but, on the other hand, maybe it was the **Jesus of Thomas & Mary** that really lived too. Did the powers of government and church have a right to ban views of Jesus they did not like in the 4th Century? Did those powers have a right to dictate only one view of Jesus – a Jesus of power and authority – and disallow any other view?

Personally, I am so grateful that a couple of wonderful friends told me about the **Gospel of Thomas** in 1979 when I was first introduced to that gospel. Before then, I had no idea such a gospel even existed. Only a few were aware of it in 1979 – and strangely only a few are still aware of it.

In my view, the importance of the **Gospel of Thomas** is humongous – not so much for what it might say, but far more for the tale it tells of what may have happened in the 4th Century to suppress people from being able to think for themselves. That is huge! Even if the **Gospel of Thomas** is totally fiction, it is not right that any authority has a right to ban it as if it is definitely fiction. And if it is not fiction, what then? By allowing any authority to ban it, you have allowed a banning of the truth.

I wonder where I would be today without the **Gospel of Thomas**. I was one who was so committed to Jesus that if I had not been introduced to “another Jesus,” I would have lost so much in life. Of course, I would not have lost everything; but being so dedicated as I was to the wonderful person of Jesus, I would not have been able to find what I think of as a **spiritual-logical** Jesus – as opposed to the only view I was allowed of Jesus before my introduction to a “new” Jesus: a **lord & savior** Jesus.

Would I have ever developed my idea of *Divine Naturism* without knowing about the **Gospel of Thomas**? I do not know. I may have; but I can tell you that with the **Gospel of Thomas**, I was able to go from a “thinker” to a “believer.” Lots of us can “think” about some issue, but it often takes hearing the same thing from another source to turn us into a “believer.”

In verse 113 of the **Gospel of Thomas**, Jesus was asked about when the great kingdom would come about. He answered: *The Kingdom of the Father is spread upon the earth and men do not see it.* I suspected that before being introduced to the **Gospel**

of Thomas, but hearing it put forth by another source helped me to see that maybe my suspicions about Heaven being everywhere and every time just might be true – and to hear it from the mouth of my favorite person in all the world – Jesus. Wow!

But that ought to tell you why the **Gospel of Thomas** was banned in the 4th Century by Emperor Constantine and agreeing bishops. Who in authority would want people to think they are already where they are supposed to be? Who in authority would want people to be satisfied with what they have? Who in authority would want even the suggestion that Heaven is already here? If Heaven is already here, then no one needs to do anything to “earn” Heaven elsewhere. If what we want for the future is already at hand, of what good is that idea to one who wants power?

In the **Gospel of Thomas**, Jesus said: *let him who has power renounce it!* How do you think that would go over to an emperor who depends on power to keep his kingdom in tact? And yet to one like me, it makes all the sense in the world. All I have to do is observe my fellow human beings and see what power does for any of them. Who among the powerful are free? Who among the powerful are as free as I am without any power at all? None! It makes sense then. I can see it played out on a constant basis when observing humanity. Those with power are strangely without freedom. Little do they know why they are not free; but the truth is they are not free.

Each of us must decide for him or herself if he or she wants to be free, though. Some, I guess do not want freedom and feel so much more secure if they can hide within the coattails of another who has power. But oh how revealing the **Gospel of Thomas** is in regard to suggesting that one who many are counting on for his “coattails” may have never promised any such thing in his life. *Not thinking for yourself can be a very dangerous thing!*

Well, Friends, that will do it for the 3rd volume of my 8 volume set of **OUT IN THE OPEN**. It is a wonderful life we have – not that I have, but “we” have. When I think of my heart beating, I am overwhelmed with joy. I was telling a friend at a coffee chat this morning that I am so amazed that for 69 years my heart has been beating so wonderfully well. What a miracle! Unbelievable Miracle! That’s Life! And how many take a moment of their day to think about it? How many are much more concerned about some power they do not have and think they deserve?

Me? I realize like Jesus offered so long ago – **any who want true freedom better renounce power**. Power is like a millstone around one’s neck. It constrains. It does not free. So when you dream about having some great power with Jesus or whomever at some future time, you better be careful about what you dream. **You may get your wish.**

See you next time – for Volume 4 of my **OUT IN THE OPEN** series. I hope you will choose to join me. It will only be for a single year, though – 2005. Like this volume spanned about 10 years, the next volume will contain only a single year. Guess I wrote quite a bit – volume wise – in 2005.

I must admit I had a great time writing in that year. I began the year writing a bit of a story that I called **ALL’S WELL WITH THE WORLD**. I can’t wait to read that one again – and while reading it, passing it along in this series. Also, I am mindful of a series of essays I wrote about life – including my favorite person, Jesus.

In 2004, I stumbled upon another of those gospels that were banned in the 4th Century – this time one called the **Gospel of Mary (Magdalene)**. Again, the likes of a

Constantine would not like it because it does not appeal to the powerful; but how appealing it is to us non-power ones. Sorry, Constantine! You should have never banned this one because by banning it, you only became even more entrenched in power and became so much less free. Of course, the **Gospel of Mary** may really lack any true authenticity. Maybe Mary did not really write it and maybe it is all nonsense; but **spiritual-logically**, it seems really right to me – at least one verse of it does.

The **Gospel of Mary** is really brief. It contains only 6 verses and 5 of those deal with “visions” that Mary had of Jesus after “Jesus left” them. I am not much of one for what someone sees in a vision. I am much more interested in what one may have said in life. Only one verse of the **Gospel of Mary** deals with what Jesus supposedly offered in life. So it is only one verse of that one in which I am interested.

In that gospel, Jesus offers that we should *look for the child of humanity within us*. Given that phrase, **child of humanity**, I named that series of essays I wrote in 2005 by that name – **child of humanity**. If you choose to join me, you can look forward to something I called (and call, of course) my **CHILD OF HUMANITY** series.

See you then!

Gently,

Francis William Bessler,

Powerless & Free!

May 16th, 2011

OUT IN THE OPEN

Volume 3 of 8

(Featuring works written from 1995-2004)



THE END