



My grateful thanks to my wife Jane who made this rebirth of my original website in this new format possible

David Colman - April 2012



LIFE IS AN AMAZING PLACE

WELCOME TO LIFE

Life is 'An Amazing Place'. We need to get out of the 'World' and into 'Life'. We can get so trapped in the dull, boring, daily grind ... that life just passes us by. This page, together with the pages that follow, may hopefully be the first step that becomes a journey ... the beginning of YOUR journey into that amazing place, called LIFE.

THE WORLD

The World is a place under the command of people of power, people who want to tell other people what to do and what not to do. They invariably have very specific agendas, be they political ideologies, religious beliefs, or simply greed. Most are probably driven by their own insecurity, needing affirmation of their 'own rightness' by having everybody else being just 'like them' ... similar to those driven by fear, needing to be 'secure in their own strength'.

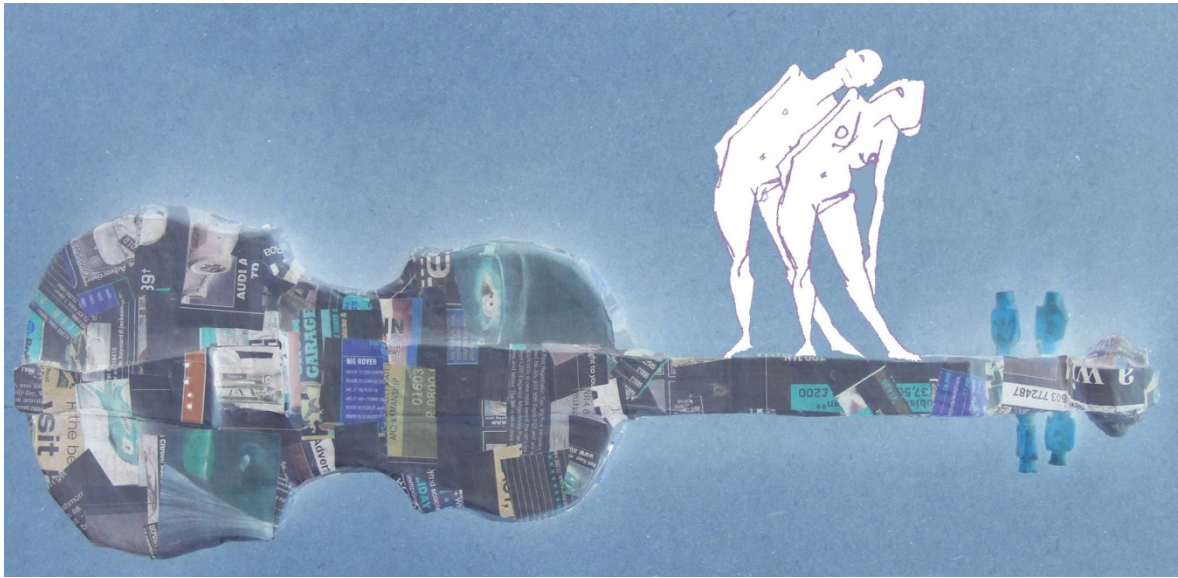
But whatever their drives or needs stem from, their actions lead to repression, conflict, exploitation and all the other things that deaden life, robbing people of its joys, of its fullness and of the 'amazingness' of LIFE itself.

LIFE

What then of life itself? The stunning beauty of the 'Creation', its awesomeness, variety and subtlety, the raw power of it is breathtaking ... *and often surreal in its reality ... as are People!*

And what of 'PEOPLE' ... whose variety, beauty, creativity ... and frequently hilariously mind blowing individuality ... so often expressed in 'way-out' lifestyles that to most of us are strangely but inexplicably yet hypnotically fascinating ... *yet so often judged by the self-righteous as 'wrong'* ... if looked upon with fondness, if looked at from a slightly different angle, looked upon with fascination and love, not with judgment, then this world and our neighbour becomes a 'different place' one in which we find ourselves in an 'AMAZING PLACE' ... populated by AMAZING PEOPLE.

My intention is to present a 'slightly different angle' on 'things'.



A GOLDEN STRING

'Veritas vos liberabit' ... 'The truth will set you free'.

So it is truth that we must seek. The truth about Existence itself, about the Creation, about Ourselves, and Our Lives. We need to have the Spirit of Truth within ourselves, for, without the hunger of that spirit, we will fail.

I give you the end of a
golden string,
only wind it into a ball:
it will lead you in at
heaven's gate,
built in Jerusalem's wall.

William Blake

Our golden string is truth - the certainty that something is factually true. It is a believing, at the deepest levels within our being, a 'knowing' that something is so. On this journey, the path we must follow is a trail of questions. It is in fact, 'a quest', a 'questing journey', *a questioning journey*.



THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

There are so many questions...Where are we?...What are we?...Why are we?...What is life for?... How should we live?...What about death?

Logic, science and reasoning are of course very valuable tools, and have great value, but they are not the right tools for this work. Just as a pickaxe and shovel are excellent for building a road, they would be useless for discovering in which direction lay the magnetic north.

So how do we answer such questions?

The answers to such questions are not to be found through worldly logical reasoning.

The answers are rather to be perceived *within*, we need to seek *within* our own being, *within* ourselves. We must examine ourselves so that we may understand who we really are, for we already have the answers to the questions, although we may not yet perceive it, for whoever knows his *true self*, has simultaneously achieved knowledge about the nature of the creating spirit, *the Spirit of Creation*, who Christians call the *Spirit of the Living God*.

We simply need the *key* that unlocks these secrets.

SENTIENT SEED OR BULB

Imagine a seed or bulb in the ground, in winter; so still, in its dark cold world.

Now imagine that, that seed or bulb is sentient.

Could it not reason somewhat along the same lines as a reasoning worldly human mind?

"What a dark hellish world this is, with one dark day following another dark day. Trapped here, wherever here is, until I rot, like this leaf and twig lying beside me".

How could the seed or bulb, by reasoning, using its knowledge gained by observation, know about SPRING?

Only by '*looking within*' could it perceive its inherent potential.

Humanity, in general, is in a position something akin to this.



THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

We are on a '*Spiritual Journey*'. But we cannot trust in '*Religion*' ... any Religion's '*understanding*', to give us our answers. Neither will we get our answers from people who claim to have the answers. We must not have the blind leading the blind. We have to find the 'Way' for ourselves. But we will get help from others, others who are also making this journey, and others who have trodden this Way before us, and whose experiences are described in books like the bible.

Christianity is a secret teaching.
Over which 'The Church', has been, and is, but mostly, only the blind Guardian

The bible and other such books
are places where we seek Spiritual truth.
They are not Rule Books of Religions.

Spirituality is an ongoing dialogue,
not a dead ritual.

What is given out as 'Christianity', is so often, so distorted, from what 'BEING IN CHRIST' really means, that we have no choice but to find 'THE WAY' ourselves - by the spirit of truth and life, that dwells within each and every human heart.

The WAY is not a subject to be taught in a classroom. The WAY *is* a journey.



REVELATION AND IMAGINATION

We have to embrace a '*mystery*'. Do not listen if the 'religious', or anybody else, tries to tell you that they 'understand' it. Because they do not. The best anybody has, are flashes of truth ... REVELATION. We must allow REVELATION and IMAGINATION to take us into deep truth, from and through the happenings and places on the journey of life.

REVELATION and IMAGINATION are both trodden down by 'Worldly' KNOWLEDGE and REASON.

Yet it is in fact Revelation (that sudden flash of inspirational realization) and it's twin Imagination, that lead the way, that run ahead of Reason and Knowledge in the creative process.

" Imagination is more important than knowledge "

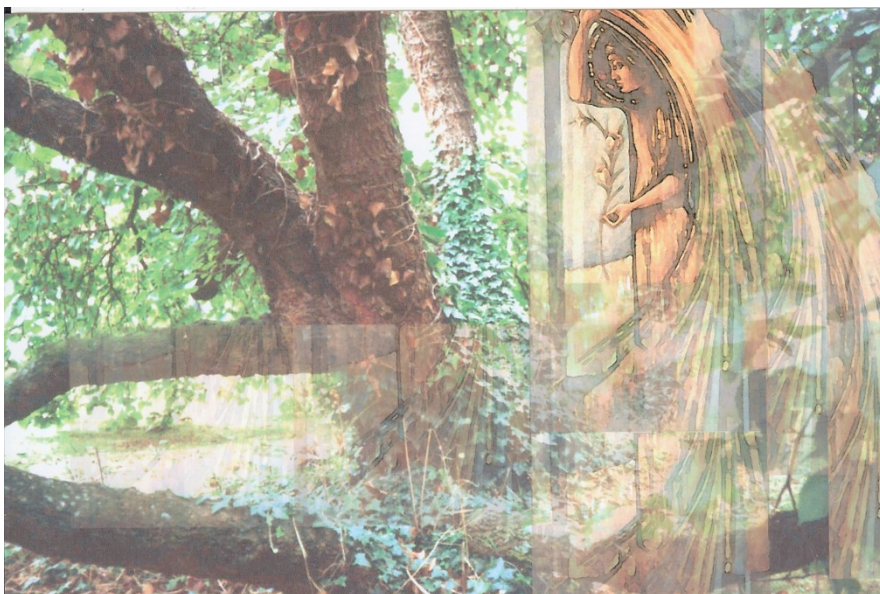
Albert Einstein

For me, Revelation is like this.

Like being struck by a shaft of sunlight while living in shadows.

Like a window opening, for a brief moment, and I look into a bright land , onto absolute truth.

Knowing that the Nazarene spoke truth.



ROOTS

We can only start from where we are. I was born in Norwich, England, in 1947. I have stayed in Norwich, now living in the western suburbs, all my life (I love Norfolk, by the way, and delight in its gentle countryside). So I was born into a time and place with the culture and spirituality of that time and place i.e. I was born into, and have lived in, a nominally Christian environment.



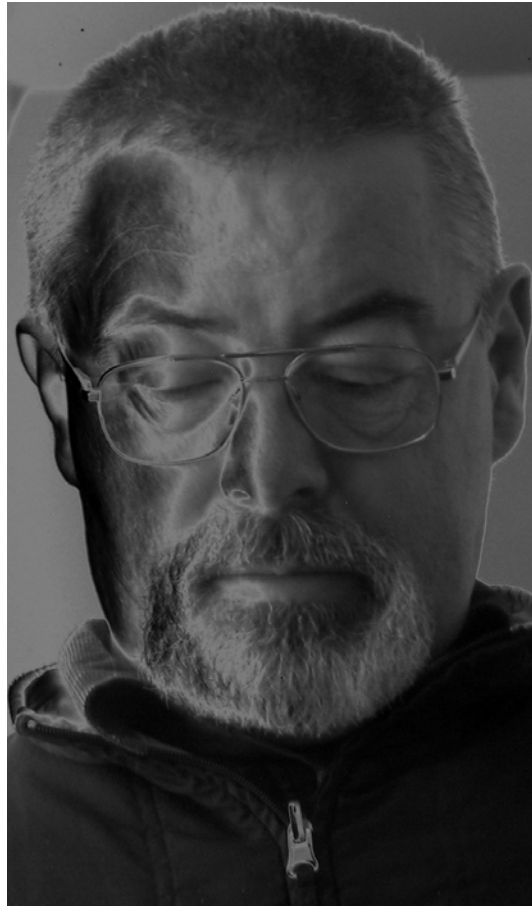
I say 'nominally Christian environment', because that's what it would be described as, by the Religious.

None of my immediate family went to church, that is apart from weddings, christenings, and funerals. Although my mum and dad did believe, in a simple way (not a bad way to believe I would say), for they taught me to pray, and got me to learn the Lord's Prayer as soon as I was able, and they demonstrated a reverence for the bible, although I can never remember them reading it. My grandmother would read me a children's version of Paul's missionary journeys to get me off to sleep, when I was staying with 'nanny and granddad', which was often as he was a farmer and I loved visiting them.

So as a child I believed, I prayed believing that God was listening and knowing that He would look after me.

Then as I entered my teenage years I started to question. I went from school into engineering, a profession based in the sciences, physics, maths ... hard logical disciplines! By the age of twenty I was an atheist ...

I didn't believe in God, and certainly not in the Christian Church, the history of which contains so many horrific episodes, that in many places, it doesn't bear looking at.



Only the spiritual hunger didn't go away. It kept pulling at me. Drawing me down many strange spiritual paths. I read extensively, studying many obscure esoteric texts and religions. I was particularly drawn to critiques of Christianity as well. I suppose seeking to justify my dislike of the hypocrisy in much of its Church's history.

Then I met Jane, and we married. In 1987 our daughter was born. Jane wanted to have her Christened. I went along with it for Jane's sake. It wasn't a big deal, as I didn't believe there was anything to all that Christian theology anyway. But I was very determined about one thing - no vicar was going to 'get his hooks into us', through this contact with a church. I therefore decided to read again the Gospel of John, just to make sure, once more, that I could deal with any arguments he might try to 'sell us'. I chose the Gospel of John because I had learned that it is the most respected of the gospels, even amongst opponents of Christianity.



Although I was familiar with it, this time it was different, I didn't even get through the prologue ... *before it made sense, it 'opened to me'.* I was suddenly understanding deep truths, from words that had been dead and meaningless to me previously. At that moment everything changed, my 'grid of understanding' was suddenly turned upside down ... And my whole life took on a new direction in that summer of 1987.

REALIGNMENT

To move out of the World and into Life requires a realignment to be set to work within us. A dynamic, a process, needs to be started within us. For me it was that re-reading of the Gospel of John. My hope, with these pages, is that for you, the reading of my words will be your first step. We need to be brought into harmony with the creating, creative spirit of life. Here *listening is fundamental.*

If you allow a needle to rest for a while in a magnetic field, it will itself become magnetized.

If you then mount it on a cork and float it on water, it will always point north.

It's like that with us.

We are directionless until we are spiritually aligned with the Spirit of the Living Creator.

We, like the needle, need to be given direction.

We need to expose ourselves to the spirit of the creation, to dwell in the awareness of that spirit's presence. For it is simply by being in that presence that we are changed.

However unlike a compass '*our spiritual north*' isn't static. It can be likened to a balloon that is blowing free in the wind. And the pull it exerts on us, likened to a child's attraction to that balloon, the child running, eager to catch hold of the string.

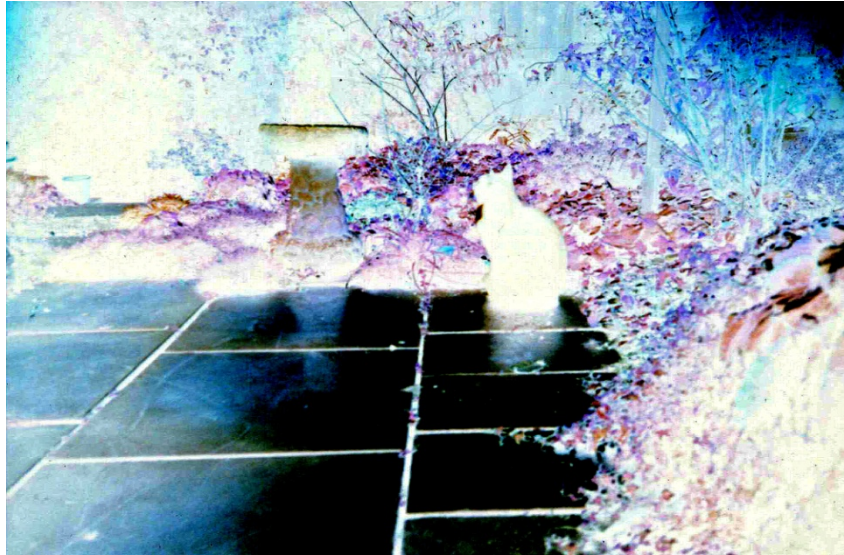


Do not be surprised when I say:
You must be born from above.
The wind blows where it pleases;
you can hear it's sound,
but you cannot tell where it comes from
or where it is going.
So it is with everyone
who is born of the Spirit.

Gospel of John

WAITING WITH EXPECTATION

Waiting and '*Listening*' with Expectation is central to Receiving. For, if you ask (expectation), you *will* receive; and if you knock (waiting), the door will be opened to you.



Our cat Rascal - 'Waiting with Expectation' for a bird to come to the bird-bath to bathe.

Not much hope of that you might say.

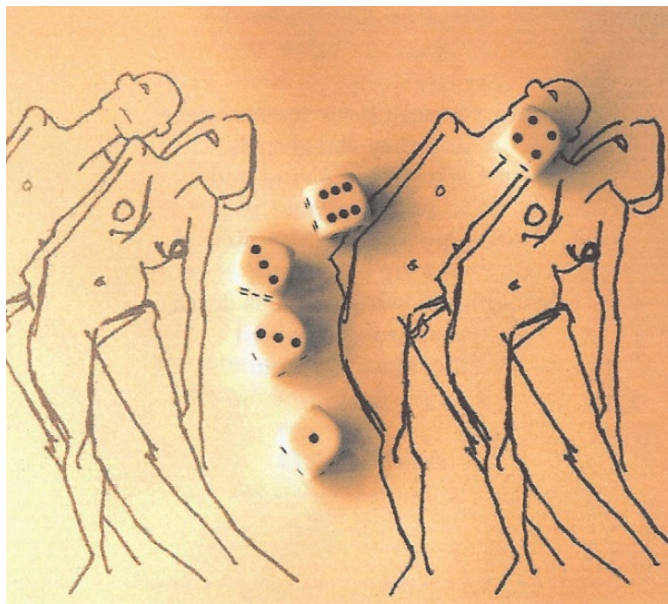
And that is exactly how you are going to feel, about what you are doing, when you set out on this path yourself.

But have patience, you will be rewarded.

As I said on the previous page, *we need to be re-aligned* with reality, to see things as they really are, and not as worldly thinking would have us believe they are. Worldly thinking, has a presumption about it, for it believes profoundly in the human intellect, in the ability of the human brain to 'understand everything' with reason and logic ... given time that is. It is terrified by the concept that perhaps existence, as far as human logic and reason are concerned is impenetrable, and can only make sense and be perceived by sentient beings, through revelation.

It is but presumption,
Reason and Logic's assumption,
that one day, all
understanding must fall
into their arrogant embrace.

Is it not rather so,
that those two can never 'know'.
For if we live in a paradox
they are doomed by that paradox?
For it's the one thing they are unable to face



Does God play dice?
No?
So what of choice?

Could we not,
be created free?
This person you,
this person me?

Or is it true,
as Einstein thought,
that life is wrought
in the prison
of determinism?

*Patience is rewarded
Expectation is the key*

The expectation is for revelations, realizations of deep truth. It is a very 'hard work' ... you will often ask yourself ... "what on earth am I doing?". But the rewards when they come are such that once you have tasted this *Living Water* nothing will keep you from the well.

TRUE WISDOM

True Wisdom is knowing that we are all children



To the young life is exhilarating and exciting



The next instalment is something to be looked forward to



You always seem to have a companion



Even when you are alone there is always someone to talk to



When life is hard you know that you are not alone



The Creation is magical

SEX

The 'Christian Church' has been, over the centuries, and still is today, both fascinated and confused by sex. The following is my contribution to the debate!

Life is ...

sexually transmitted.

So what of sex ...

what some think sin?

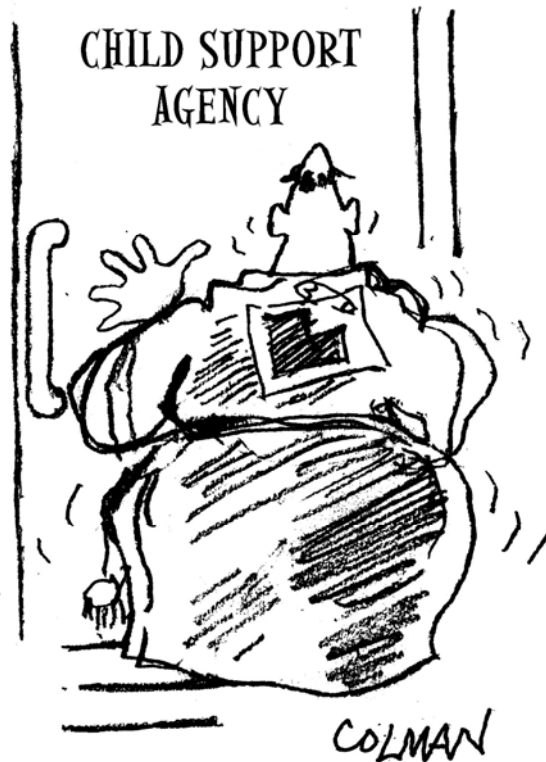
Has not our Rex ...

*hard wired it in,
to every fibre pore and cell of creation?*

So how can hell be its relation ...???



" No, the guy with the shotgun isn't my boyfriend - I thought he was yours. "



The Christian Church when it's not actually condemning sexual practices or relationships of one kind or another, mostly behaves like an ostrich with its head thrust deeply into the sand; seeming passionately to wish that sex didn't exist. But of course it does, and what is more, it not only exists, but it is the process by which life is created and continues.

Now what we are about, and the 'Christian Church' should be about, is the *Spiritual Journey*.

A journey into the heart of the Living, Creating, Creative Spirit of Life, the heart of all that is, has been and will be.

Our focus has to be singular, 'a seeking out for ourselves of this Spirit, and an assisting of others on the journey'.

Any 'Religion' that spends its time debating and making up rules about 'what people should do, or should not do', regarding the way they lead their lives, whether in matters sexual, or any other; *has lost its way*. Because a 'Religions' only reason for being is to *help* people on their Spiritual Journeys, not hinder them.

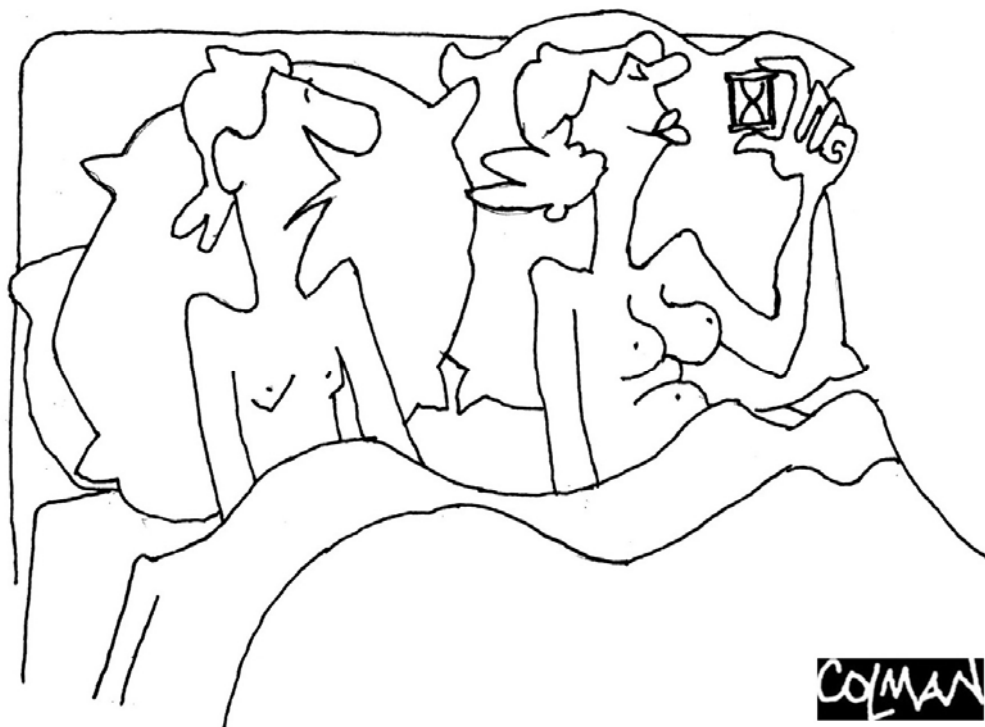
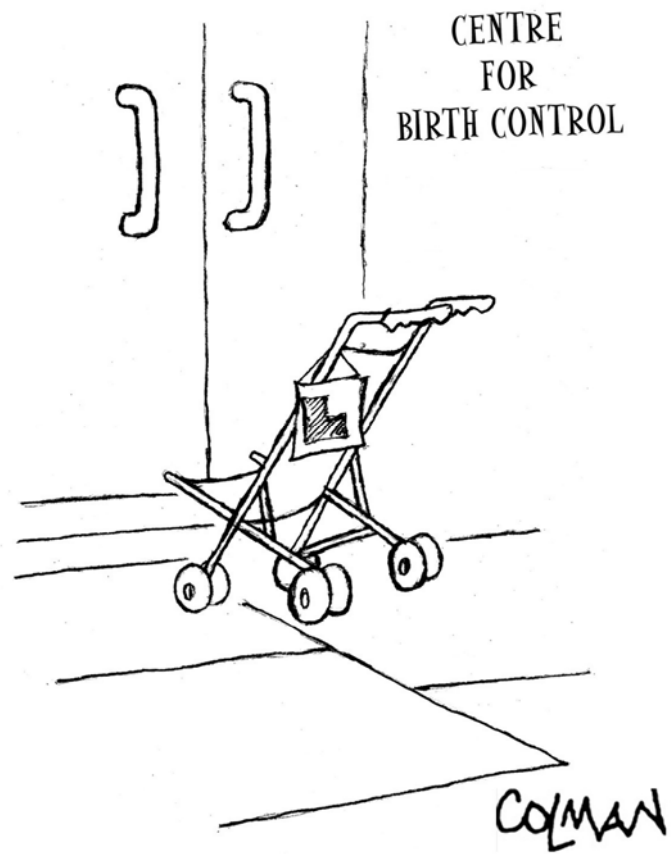
Any 'Religion' that says to someone. "You are 'unclean' and we reject you, and tell you that you are 'unworthy' of making this journey", are so lost that I fear for them. We are all unworthy, that is why we must make this journey.



" Big yes.....but does it vibrate?"



" Just our luck Doreen "



" Well I don't think the egg timer is funny "

THE DANCE OF LIFE

We all, 'Dance to the Music of the Spirit of Life'. So Dance then, wherever you may be ...

" Invoked or not - God is present "

Carl Jung

Dance then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.



OTHER VOICES

" As a Christian of the Orthodox Church, I wish particularly to underline this need for *living experience*. *For the Orthodox* loyalty to Tradition means not primarily the acceptance of formulae or customs from past generations, but rather the ever-new, personal and direct experience of the Holy Spirit *in the present*, here and now. "

Bishop Kallistos Ware

" The Church gives us not a system, but a key; not a plan of God's City, but the means of entering it. Perhaps someone will lose his way because he has no plan. But all that he will see, he will see without a mediator, he will see it directly, it will be real for him; while he who has studied only the plan risks remaining outside and not really finding anything. "

Fr George Florovsky

" There is a difference between what the East means by mystical and what the West means. I think the East would call normal many things that the West might think mystical. If you are in the 'desert' and God knocks on your door and speaks to you, that doesn't sound mystical to me; it sounds quite normal. He said He would speak to us! "

Catherine Docherty





" To be a Christian is to be a traveller. Our situation say the Greek Fathers, is like that of the Israelite people in the desert of Sinai: we live in tents, not houses, for spiritually we are always on the move. We are on a journey through the inward space of the heart, a journey not measured by the hours of our watch or the days of the calendar, for it is a journey out of time into eternity. "

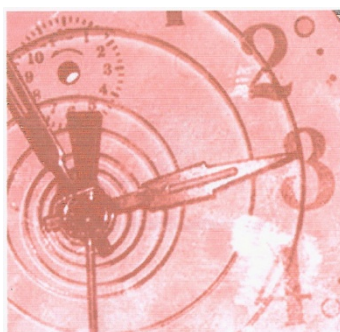
Bishop Kallistos Ware

This second quotation of Bishop Kallistos Ware that I have given, *is so important*. For getting a grasp on the reality of eternity, is I believe, fundamental to the spiritual journey itself. For ETERNITY is the reality ... birth, life and death in this world are brief transitory experiences ... it is how we face the fact of eternal life that is important.

As we live we pack our bags.
Do we take riches or do we take rags,
do we build well,
or do we build hell?

For eternity is here
for all,
no funnin',
it's here.

Clock's runnin'



ETERNAL SPIRIT

" Life, is only for Love.
Time, is only that we may find God."

St. Bernard

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver;
Source of all that is and that shall be.
Father and Mother of us all.
Loving God, in whom is heaven.
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe !
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world !
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings !
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on
earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
From trials to great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.
Amen.

New Zealand Book of Common Prayer



We are children of the Living God,
the creator of all life.

We are living,
breathing,
eating, drinking,
loving, sexual,
creative beings.

And God says
He has made us
in His likeness.

It is in Him
that we live and move and exist,
He is the foundation of our being,
of what we are.

NOT
what we feel
we ought to be.



I know that love
is the foundation of creation

I know that at the last
only love matters

Because of love
I am a follower of the Way

Love gathers
All else scatters

Find the Way.

FIRST STEPS

On this, and the following pages, I hope to point to some 'possible' first steps on 'The Way'.

May your journey be blessed by the Living God.



What happened to me, on that August morning in 1987, as I started to re-read the gospel of John,

I am still unable to 'explain'.

I can only describe it.

And only know that the course of my life changed then, forever.

As I explained on the page entitled 'Roots', I was only reading it again, to revise my arguments and prepare myself the better to be able to deal with the minister of the local church who was coming to discuss with us the infant baptism of our three month old baby daughter, whom I was gently pushing forward and back, forward and back, in her pram, in an attempt to get her off to sleep.

I was determined that no vicar was going to have any chance of talking us into his church on any kind of regular basis, through this 'social tradition' of christening, that my wife Jane, had her heart set on for our daughter.

It wasn't because I just had better things to do on a Sunday, which of course I thought I had. It was because I had a contempt and an intense dislike of silly people who still believed in the nonsense of the Christian myth. People who 'worshipped' the long dead man called Jesus on whom Paul and others of first century Palestine had built the Jewish sect of Nazarenes, and who thus had created what had become the Christian Church.



So I began to read.

But before I was through the prologue, things were suddenly different,
suddenly changing.

It was truly a case of "Oh my God!"

I had shivers running up and down my spine.

And there was a long tunnel seemingly running back in time, running back
over my right shoulder.

And at the end of that tunnel stood Jesus.

In that instant I knew that I had always known Him, and always loved Him as
He loved me.

From that moment my journey began. The Gospel of John opened to me. Words and phrases that had previously been meaningless and dead took on meaning and life, revealing deep truths and secret teachings. I suddenly had an appetite and zeal for more. That appetite and zeal has stayed with me and burns as fiercely now as then. It has been an exciting journey and remains an exciting adventure, this place called LIFE.

For most people spiritual revelation and transformation is a much gentler and more gradual process. The outcome is however the same. You become a 'new creation'.

The first thing to understand is that you seek 'revelation', a 'revealing of deep truths', a 'perceiving' of reality, an understanding of how things are, not how they are seen by the world. You can't 'dig truth out' with logic and reason. It is something that is 'given to you'. As Bertrand Russell, one of the greatest mathematicians of the twentieth century, commented: 'Mathematics and logic have nothing to do with reality'.



A good first-step would be to read through the Gospel of John,
read slowly, not 'trying' to understand,
but rather 'savouring the words',
something akin to sucking a sweet,

don't rush it,
possibly spread it over a week or two

LISTENING

The Listening is a listening with the 'ears of the heart'.

Note

As I have described on the page entitled 'Roots' and more fully on the page entitled 'First Steps', my spiritual walk took off on that summer morning in the August of 1987, when I met so dramatically with *Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God*. I am therefore a Christian, so the spiritual exercises that I am now in the process of describing are Christian, they are very traditional within the strand of Christianity known as the Mystical Tradition. They are not the only strand, there are other rich strands, equally valid.

Each one of us is given different spiritual gifts, *and taken down individual spiritual paths*. As Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthian church, some are given the gift of teaching, some the gift of healing, to some the gift of wisdom, to another the gift of serving and yet to another the gift of tongues. But the greatest gift of all is LOVE (Read 1 Corinthians chapters 12 and 13).

As I have just said, I have been given my path and my spiritual gifts. Others have been given their spiritual gifts and their own individual paths to walk, and although different from mine, each is equally valid. My prayer for you is that you too will discover *your* gifts and *your* way. Your *re-birth*.



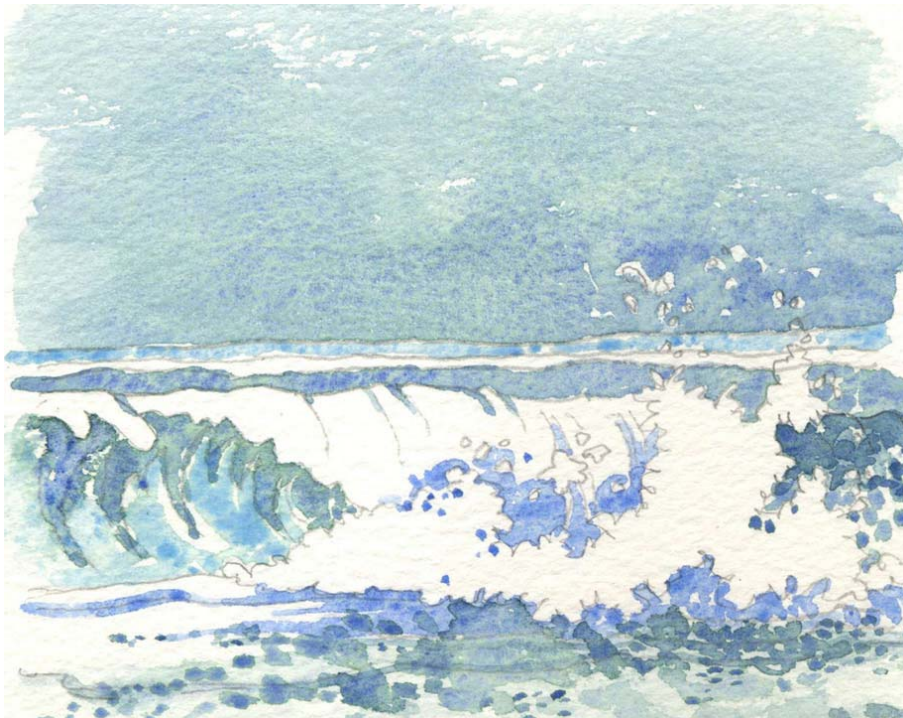
LISTEN,

as the hermit in his cave.
For beyond the rhythm of the wave,
beyond the stillness of the sand,
there lies an eternal light filled land.
It is the land of the promise,
the kingdom of the promise.
To enter you have but to LISTEN;
LISTEN for the Living God;

LISTEN:
LISTEN, and a door will open.

LISTEN;
see in,
be in,

BE.



Listen, listen, listen. Be always listening for *revelations* of the Spirit. 'Sudden' or 'slowly-dawning' *realizations* of 'how things really are', and not how they have previously seemed to be! ' They can come through any daily activity, walking the dog, cooking breakfast, listening to words spoken in conversation with a friend, watching TV, reading a book, whether it be a novel or a bible ...



SPIRITUAL READING

This follows on naturally from the last page. As the Gospel of John is ideally suited to this exercise.

(As with most of these exercises, the best place to do them is sitting in the most comfortable chair you have, where you can relax and be most at ease with God.)

This exercise is simplicity itself. You begin to read, read slowly, not examining the text with your head at all, not 'trying to understand' what you are reading. Approach it as you would a leisurely stroll in the country; when you come to a word or a phrase that seems interesting, that seems to strike a chord in you; stop, and rest for a while, delighting in the feelings it gives you; then, when you are ready, read on again, as you would stroll on after stopping to enjoy a view or a flower, if you were indeed taking a stroll in the country.

Do this for as long as feels right for you; reading the words, stopping, then moving on again until you feel your 'walk' is over for that session. That's all there is to it.

Later you will find thoughts 'coming to you' as you go about your daily life. Things will occur to you, realizations will come, this is what it's about.

THE HEART OF PRAYER

The 'Heart of Prayer' is our destination.

It is the 'place' where we dwell in the Creator's presence. It is the place of revelation by the Spirit of truth. It is a place of a peace beyond the 'world's knowing', a place of healing and transformation.

On this page we look at the Jesus Prayer, a way of prayer much loved by the Eastern Orthodox Church, as well as by many of us from other traditions. It is a way of prayer that can greatly aid us in reaching that 'stillness' that lies at the 'heart of prayer'.

THE JESUS PRAYER



A picture of a young swan trying to take off, is a good picture to use here to illustrate the way this method of prayer can aid us on our way into that stillness of contemplative prayer. For we are very much like this young swan trying to get airborne, when we, so often 'struggle' into prayer.

(I am greatly indebted to the late Robert Llewelyn, who was, in his final years, Chaplain of the Julian Shrine in Norwich, for this illustrative comparison, he chose an old fat pheasant rather than a swan, but the point is the same.)

The point being that, by the practice of this 'mantric prayer', (of which this is but one example), the mind can be anchored in a heartbeat-like rhythm of words that prevents it from running off like a 'disobedient dog off the lead' while at the same time giving the mind the focus that is necessary for moving into the presence of the Eternal Living Spirit.

The full form of the prayer is:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

I would recommend that you try using it thus:

Sit in a comfortable chair, relax, breathe in and out in a rhythmical, natural and relaxed way, and start to say the prayer in syllable form as you breathe (naturally but relaxed) in and out.

Lord - Je - sus - Christ - Son - of - the - Liv - ing - God - have - mer - cy - on
- me - a - sin - ner

Then keep repeating it for the length of time that seems good to you

(WARNING - if you are a beginner limit this prayer to no more than ten minutes a day), I set an electronic timer to let me know when to stop. If you take to this prayer, then, with experience, increase the time you spend in it as you judge suitable for you.

Now back to the swan: Remember that all prayer exists for the sole purpose of bringing us into the presence of, and alignment with, the breathing of the eternal living Spirit of the Living God. And that these prayer exercises focus on entering that state of stillness and peace that we experience when we are in that presence. As the young swan 'goes into take off and thus flight mode' he has to work hard with wings and legs in an ungainly splashing through the water in his attempt to break free of its clinging grip. He travels only a short distance at first perhaps, sinking down again onto the surface, then away he goes again, getting a little further this time, a little closer to take off, a little closer to flight. Then again he tries, a little further this time; he keeps repeating this, again and again, until at last he breaks free of the clinging grip of the water, and is flying. This will be our experience with prayer. With the Jesus Prayer you will find that the words will ebb and flow seeming at times to fade into the background, seeming to be saying themselves in your heart as you begin to 'take flight' into that stillness that is described as 'having the head in the heart'.



Again repetitive prayer of this kind has been likened to the flight of an eagle. The mighty bird ascends upwards by the repetitive beating of her wings, slowly she ascends, wing beat following wing beat, until she reaches a thermal, and wings spread, glides effortlessly and gracefully in the rarefied atmosphere. Then when she finds that she is losing height, her wings start their rhythmical work again, until she once more is gliding. So with this type of prayer, as I have said the words will ebb and flow, sometimes seeming to be gone and you are simply gliding, being held. The words, like the wing beats, are simply the means of getting you there.

BE AWARE

Some Christians today complain that such prayers smack too much of 'Eastern Religions' and are meaningless chants. I would point out that Christianity is itself an 'Eastern Religion'. And that the Lord's Prayer is a 'repetitive prayer'. The point is, that prayer, any form of prayer, is meaningless if it is only a wagging of the tongue so to speak. The mind needs to be focused on the words said, and to mean them.

THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING

The '*Cloud of Unknowing*' is a spiritual classic devoted to teaching the practice of contemplative prayer, written undoubtedly by an English priest, identity unknown, who lived during the latter half of the fourteenth century. *The Cloud* was written to a young disciple who had, it seems, appealed to the author for training in prayer. And thus through him, it is addressed to a larger public.

The nature of contemplative prayer is to bring us, as directly as possible, to that place of stillness where 'we ourselves' are 'quieted' and in a state in which the Eternal Spirit can work within the deepest recesses of our being. Bringing us into knowledge of our *true selves*, of who we really are. And with that knowledge a perception of the nature of the Eternal Spirit, our Creator and the Father and Mother of us all, called by Christians, the Spirit of the Living God. In whose image we are all created.

The following Poem by St John of the Cross, describes the experience to near perfection.

'Verses written after an ecstasy of high exaltation'

*"I entered in, I know not where,
And I remained, though knowing naught,
Transcending knowledge with my thought.*

*Of when I entered I know naught,
But when I saw that I was there
(Though where it was I did not care)
Strange things I learned, with greatness fraught.
Yet what I heard I'll not declare.
But there I stayed, though knowing naught,
Transcending knowledge with my thought.*

*Of peace and piety interwound
This perfect science had been wrought,
Within the solitude profound
A straight and narrow path it taught,
Such secret wisdom there I found
That there I stammered, saying naught,
But topped all knowledge with my thought.*

*So borne aloft, so drunken-reeling
So rapt was I, so swept away,
Within the scope of sense or feeling
My sense or feeling could not stay.
And in my soul I felt, revealing,
A sense that, though its sense was naught,
Transcended knowledge with my thought.*

*The man who truly there has come
Of his own self must shed the guise;
Of all he knew before the sum
Seems far beneath that wondrous prize:
And in this lore he grows so wise
That he remains, though knowing naught,
Transcending knowledge with his thought.*

*The farther that I climbed the height
The less I seemed to understand
The cloud so tenebrous and grand
That there illuminates the night.
For he who understands that sight
Remains for aye, though knowing naught,
Transcending knowledge with his thought.*

*This wisdom without understanding
Is of so absolute a force
No wise man of whatever standing
Can ever stand against its course,
Unless they tap its wondrous source,
To know so much, though knowing naught,
They pass all knowledge with their thought.*

*This summit all so steeply towers
And is of excellence so high
No human faculties or powers
Can ever to the top come nigh.
Whoever with its steep could vie,
Though knowing nothing, would transcend
All thought, forever, without end.*

*If you would ask, what is its essence -
This summit of all sense and knowing:
It comes from the Divinest Presence -
The sudden sense of Him outflowing,
In His great clemency bestowing
The gift that leaves men knowing naught,
Yet passing knowledge with their thought."*

(As I have related on previous pages - I am a Christian. I can only relate to the Eternal Spirit through Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. For me it can be no other WAY. Others may seek the Eternal Spirit through some other 'theology'. The important thing I believe, is that YOU DO seek the source.)



Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know

Be still

BE

This may sound one of the simplest things to do.

But is in practice, one the hardest of works to carry through.

It requires a sacrifice of the most valuable commodity we have - time.

And a persistence, that at times, will seem like madness.

Yet it is the most valuable work we can do in this life, in respect of ourselves, in respect of all those with whom we share this journey of life, and with respect to the whole of creation.

It can, at times, transport us into 'ecstatic experience', or give us no 'experiences' at all. But it WILL transform us, we will become 'like light' to those around us - although we may well not see the changes being wrought in us, ourselves.



Does a caterpillar know that it has become a butterfly? I suspect not.

NOW TO THE PRACTICE OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

You need to set aside a regular daily slot, of one hour duration if possible.

As to where; somewhere with as few distractions as possible. In a busy household that may mean your bedroom, or in summer, a quiet spot in your garden.



You will find the position that best suits you. For me, as I have said it is sitting comfortably. For some it could mean laying prostrate, face down; for another, the use possibly of a prayer stool. It really is a question of 'what feels right for you'.

You do need to set some kind of timer, to be free of 'THE CLOCK'.

Settle into a relaxed state, let tensions fall away; remember, you have lots of time - no rush.

It may help to close your eyes. Try to listen to the silence 'behind' any sounds that you may hear.

You will be assailed by 'thoughts', thoughts that will buzz like flies in your head ... 'look past them' ... don't 'lock on to them' ... don't 'look at them' ...



The author of *The Cloud* allows you one word to 'anchor to', if necessary; and the best word is LOVE. Your mind needs to be locked onto this one word LOVE, concentrate on it with a steadfastness that allows no other thoughts to 'grab your attention'.

The use of the word LOVE, is, like the Jesus Prayer, but a means to an end.

Your real objective is to have a desire in your heart for the source of your being, the creator of all, the 'unknowable' Living God.

The essence of what you are about is the silence of the heart and mind before God.

It is simple, you simply desire God. This is prayer in its purest form.

You Who sleep in my breast are not met with words, but in thee emergence of life within life and of wisdom within wisdom. With You there is no longer any dialogue, any contest, any opposition. You are found in communion! Thou in me and I in Thee, Thou in them and they in me: dispossession within dispossession, dispassion within dispassion, emptiness within emptiness, freedom within freedom. I am alone. Thou art alone. The Father and I are One.

Thomas Merton

The difficult bit is to still and quieten your SELF. Many of the writers and their books listed on page 44 can greatly assist you in this task as they share their own experiences, struggles and ways to overcome this most difficult of obstacles. In the end it will be the Spirit who will deal with this problem for you.

This form of reflective prayer (as with the other prayer techniques that I have described in these words) has its face turned towards the East, finding there, inspiration and also information on modes and techniques of contemplative prayer that have been tested and proved through centuries of use - by the Desert Fathers, by the Eastern Orthodox Church, by the Roman Church, and by all to whom the Spirit has given this gift.

There are two basic needs in the human heart that this type of prayer serves. First the need to discover *our true selves* and through that discovery to perceive the nature of the Eternal Spirit, who we, who are '*in Christ Jesus*' call the Living God. Second it brings us into a love relationship with, not only those around us, but with the whole of humanity and the creation - it makes us part of the community of all living beings, giving us a love, concern and compassion, not only for our own species, but for the whole creation.



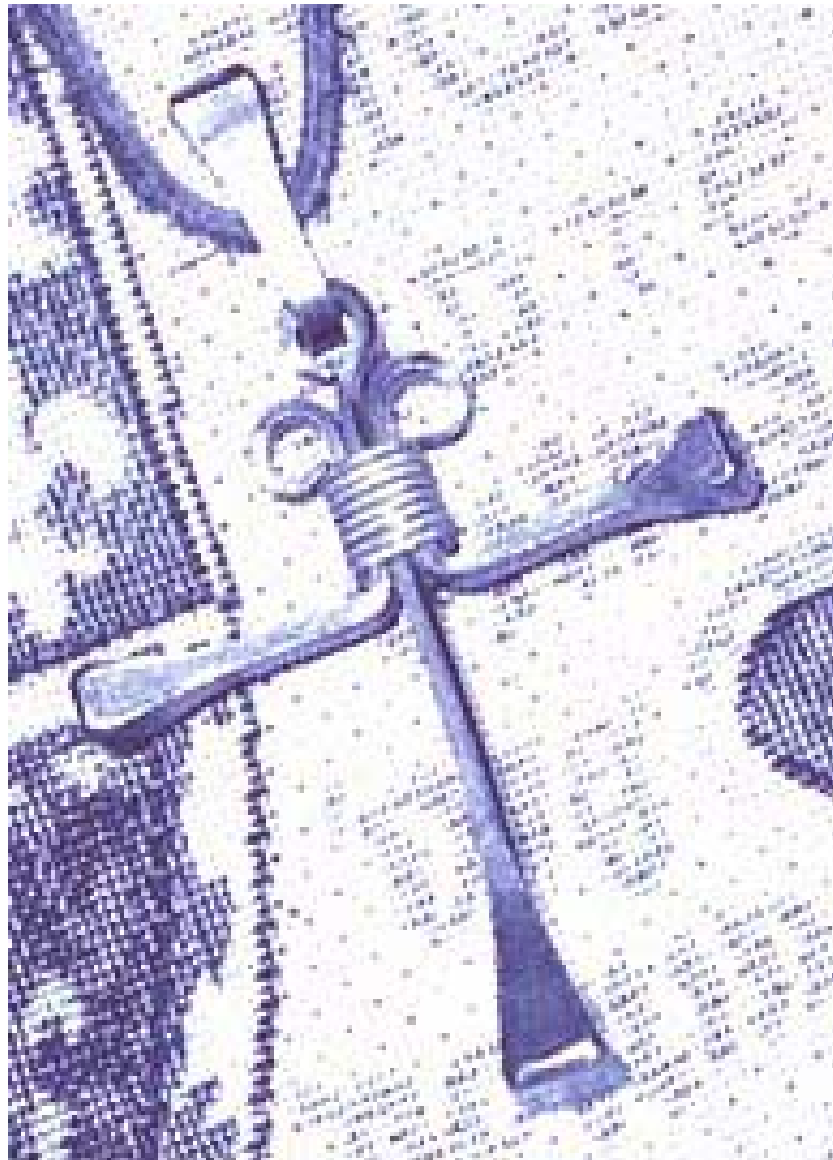
Together,
sister tree
and brother frog,
we bend the knee
to The Living God.

We all need to experience the refreshing and revitalizing experience of this kind of connectivity with the source of our being, at regular intervals. For without it we just drift along on the prevailing current of the day empty and bored, however busy we are, however 'meaningful' we think our lives are. Without this experience our ability to grow in love and understanding will not be realized and we will not experience life in all its fullness and richness.

PEOPLE & BOOKS

People and Books really could just be entitled PEOPLE, for books are just a means of entering into other people's lives and experiences, and allowing them into our lives and experience. One of the ways of being 'in community' with others.

This list is not laid out in the way of most lists of this type. It is intended to enable you to *meet people*, rather than give you a very specific list of *things to buy*. It is intended that you may *find your own way*. I am not a teacher. What I have tried to do on these pages is to share my journey with you, and try to give you some taste for the buried treasure that is there waiting - *for you to dig up*.



Now I give you the exception to my, self imposed 'rule' above.

There is, I believe, one book that you do need to obtain and read.

It is :-

'GOD OF SURPRISES' written by Gerard W. Hughes

The following is a list of other people, some of who may help you on your journey or who may not 'speak to you' at all. Our uniqueness, our individuality, is the Creators gift, a gift to each of us personally, and through our living, a gift to us collectively. Be guided by 'what you feel', by the Spirit within you.

I do list several book titles that have been important to me. They may not be important to you.

AUTHORS

Thomas Merton	Any of his books
Robert Llewelyn	Any of his books
Bishop Kallistos Ware	Any of his books (for the Jesus Prayer: - 'Power of the Name')
Joyce Huggett	('Listening to God' :- a good one to get you started)
James Borst	'Coming to God in the Stillness'
Kathleen O'Sullivan	'Light out of Darkness'

BOOKS

Poems of St. John of the Cross

Translation by Roy Campbell ... Publisher ... The Harvill Press Ltd

'The Way of a Pilgrim' Translated by R. M. French ... Publisher ... Triangle

'The Cloud of Unknowing *and Other Works*'

Translated by Clifton Wolters ... Publisher Penguin

'The Joy of Spiritual Fitness' Written by Ray Simpson (Illustrated by me)

Publisher ... Zondervan

You will find yourself led from book to book, from author to author.
Follow your unique path, but don't just read about Spiritual Exercise, DO IT.

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