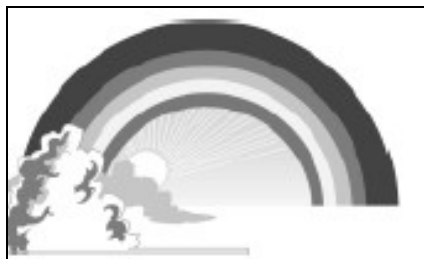


Journal on Personal and Spiritual Development



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Welcome to the 47th issue of the Journal. As the New Year opens we wonder what trials and tribulations we will be faced with this year. Life is not a smooth pathway and in the end we will not be judged by what life has dealt us but by our responses to these trials.

The object of the journal has never been to instruct but to offer topics and opinions for readers to think about and come to your own opinions based on your own life experiences. *Brian Alderson*
ΩΩΩ

I THINK THEREFORE I AM?

The statement 'I think therefore I am' was made by the philosopher Descartes in the 17th century and became a primal component of Western philosophy. The basis for this premise is that the act of thinking proves we exist. One may wonder, however, what happens when we stop thinking. Do we cease to exist during that time? Try it and see what happens. Actually it can be quite difficult to cease thinking for more than a few seconds at a time but one will note that one feels just as alive during these short thoughtless periods as when one is thinking and as one observes one's thoughts we will find that they come and go, often with a seemingly will of their own and that we are just as much alive and conscious when we are not thinking as when we think.

Hearing voices is sometimes considered as a sign of mental illness. Although I have never had this experience it is assumed that the voices would be 'heard' as if someone is talking to us except that the origin of the voice is within one's head. I suppose the only difference between these head voices and our thoughts is that we do not hear our thoughts - yet they are just as real as if someone was speaking to us. Science has yet to satisfactorily answer the question of how we think but there is no doubt that our thoughts are separate from us - they come and go. Sometimes we control

them and sometimes we don't. It is only some of the time that are our thoughts directed by us, such as when we are trying to solve a problem or absorbed in some creative activity. At other times they just seem to pop into our heads from nowhere. As an example on random thoughts, occasionally, when I get bored or tired of what I am doing, I play card games on my computer to relax. The games only require a limited amount of concentration so very little conscious thinking is directed to the games. What I have noticed at these times is that my thoughts, of their own volition, will take off in any direction with their content dealing with the strangest things. I have observed these thoughts as a bystander - quite separate from these thoughts that are passing by. What can be deduced from this is that much of our thinking is from a part of our brain that is not consciously controlled by our will.

Sometimes our thinking is guided by our emotions and we respond based on these emotions. An example of emotional response is in the case when in anger people will lash out violently or say nasty things and later, when calmed down, think up justifying causes for the anger. It is only after we have had time to reflect on our behaviour that we feel tinges of regret, and then justify our actions by rationalising them. On the surface, to us, the reasons we offer

ourselves sound logical and plausible but our friends and associates may see through them as a sophisticated way of making excuses.

While it is through our thinking as well as our inherent creative ability that we have moulded the world we live in today and have all but tamed our environment, it is through our thoughts that we have also created divisiveness, conflict, wars and great suffering throughout the world. Therefore we must ask ourselves how can we change so that we can create a world where all these negative situations no longer keep occurring? An answer, which on the surface may seem obvious, is to change the way we think, but that is easier said than done. Much of the problem arises from our misconception of who we really are and what we believe. Through our thoughts we have created our 'self image'. The second of the Ten Commandments is: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image", yet that is exactly what we have done in creating our egos. We have thought up images of who we are - beings separate from our creator and each other. We have forgotten that we were created in *His* image – not our own.

We cannot reason our way out of our present predicaments because our individual reasoning is based on our beliefs which are part of our egos. We need to change our consciousness's so that they are in tune with our Creator's. A path in helping us in accomplishing this is through prayer and meditation. Prayer comes from our hearts rather than our brains and in meditation we divest ourselves of our mundane thoughts to become more in tune with the Creative Forces within us. When we become aware that we can control our thoughts and resulting attitudes we will begin to become more compassionate and when

we no longer allow negative thoughts to be directed towards others we will know we are on the right path.

From The Edgar Cayce Readings

"Man was made in the image of his Creator, with the abilities to choose for himself. Would you make yourself as one of the animals and be led about by the will of the wind? or will you stand upright and act like one of the sons of God?" 349-6

"Store up in your heart the more perfect image of what you would worship in your God. Know that all of your fellow men have that image within themselves; that in each there is that image. Seek to magnify that which is good. Forget the shortcomings of those who are weary and heavy-laden, by easing their burdens here and there. For the Lord loves those that love His erring children." 254-101

". . . so let your purposes, your desires in self, be more and more aware of the fact that the Lord is in His holy temple in yourself, if you will but let Him be the guide. For your body is the temple of your soul, the image of your God. Let Him have His way with you. Be up and doing with what you are given to do day by day. 262-67

"For thoughts are things, and the Mind is the Builder. But if you fill your mind with the cares of the world day by day, you may not in the moment give the best that is in the life of those that live the Christ-life - even as Jesus gave the new commandment, "that you love one another." 281-39

"Keep in that of constructive thought; because, to be sure, the thoughts of the body act upon the emotions as well as the assimilating forces. Poisons are accumulated or produced by anger or by resentment or

WHAT IS UNQUESTIONABLY TRUE?

When I was a boy my father and mother attended adult evening classes on the subject of logic. I used to hear them discuss the content of the course and some of the logic exercise they were assigned. I remember one exercise which was supposedly based on the following true story:

During a long church sermon one of the congregation, a man in his fifties, fell asleep and had a dream in which he was sentenced to death by beheading for the crime of blasphemy. He was taken to the place of execution where he knelt down and his head rested on the block. The executioner raised his axe and at the very moment the axe began to fall on the condemned man a church usher tapped him on the back of the head with a stick to wake him up. The traumatic feeling of the tap on his neck at that particular instant was so great that he died of shock. Why was the story questioned? (Answer below).

My father came from a very religious background and our family regularly attended church where he gave lectures. However as he grew older, my father experienced greater and greater conflict between his religious beliefs, based on the authority of the Bible, and what his logical mind caused him to question as the truth of some statements in the Bible. There was a struggle between his religious faith and reason. Around that time scientists had developed a way of estimating the age of carbon-bearing materials by a method referred to as 'carbon dating'. They used this method to estimate the age of certain fossils and claimed that some of the fossils came from mammals which lived on the earth millions of years ago. This contradicted

the belief, based on the narratives in the early part of the Bible, that the earth was only around six thousand years old. A response from certain religious authorities in my father's church to these new findings was the claim that God deliberately put the fossils on the earth 'to test our faith' in what was written in the Bible. In the end my father's intellect won out over his faith and as a consequence he abandoned the Church altogether and sort knowledge and guidance from non-Christian literature.

The phrase 'gospel truth' refers to a statement that is 'unquestionably true.' This phrase has come about because there was a general consensus of opinion amongst the Church hierarchy which became canon law that the whole of the Bible was the word of God and as such must be true and never questioned. In fact at one time even to express doubt in the validity of what was in the Bible was considered as heresy. Nowadays, in the western world where the Church has lost its power over dissenters, people are openly questioning the validity of some of the contents of the Bible. Dissension comes from scientific and scholarly sources¹ as well as the result of application of logic to some of the bible statements. The four Gospels, which deal with the founder of Christianity, have come under great scrutiny both from sources within and outside the Church. There is much questioning over whether some of the happenings as recorded in the gospels ever occurred. One of the questions being asked is: How did these supposed happenings get into the Bible and who originally recorded them?

¹ SEE: Can the New Testament be Trusted? – G.A.Wells; The Pagan Christ – Tom Harpur

Because reporters, as we know them today, did not exist in biblical times one wonders how the stories and dialogues surrounding Jesus, which appear in the four gospels, were originally obtained and preserved. The earliest surviving complete copies of the gospels date to the 4th century while estimates of when the original documents were written varies greatly but the general consensus is that they were written between the years 70 and 110 AD. On the historicity of Jesus Wikipedia states: "According to traditional Christian Church teaching, the Gospels of John and Matthew were written by eyewitnesses" however there are no claims within these gospels that the authors *were* eye witnesses. In fact there are some events described in the gospels in which it appears there were *no* eye witnesses.

Let us look at a few of the gospel stories applying logic and a little reason. Keeping in mind that the gospels were written *at least* 70 year after the birth of Jesus, which means that it is highly unlikely that there would be any living witness to the events prior to and surrounding the birth of Jesus, so we must ask the question: Who first came up with these nativity stories? The reported individual incidents by themselves were comparatively insignificant (at least to bystanders at the time) and happened to people who were unimportant so their activities would not have been newsworthy, which begs the question: Who recorded them? Rather than these stories fulfilling Old Testament prophecies, could it have been the other way round in that they were made up some time after the death of Jesus to be in line with these earlier prophecies? There are no accounts in the gospels of Jesus' early childhood except for the event when the boy Jesus became lost

and was found in a temple debating with priests. Again one wonders who recorded the conversation between mother and child when Mary and Joseph found Jesus and how did the person who reported the event know that "... *they* (Mary and Joseph) *did not understand what he was saying to them.*" (Luke 2:50). Then we come to the temptations of Jesus when he fasted for forty days and was tempted by the devil. Who reported this event when it appears that he was alone in the wilderness during this period?

Another important event supposedly occurring not long before the death of Jesus was described in Luke 22:39-46 "*Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."* An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Then he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow."

Again one must ask: Who heard the prayers of Jesus, witnessed the sweat falling off him and saw the angel? According to the gospel his disciples were asleep at the time.

Then there was the conversations between Jesus and Pontius Pilate when they were supposedly alone together. Jesus certainly did not relate this event as he was put to death not long afterwards and would Pilate bother to record what was said?

There are many more events and dialogues in the gospels like the above when it appears there were no eye witnesses to what was said or happened so it would be reasonable to question how they came to be written and later transcribed into the gospel text. We may very well conclude that many of the events in the gospels never happened. So where does that knowledge lead us? Firstly it is a warning that we should not take what is written in the Bible literally and historically factual for by doing so has led to conflict, divisiveness, persecution, misunderstanding and even wars. We only need to look at the history of Christianity over the two millennium to confirm this. This does not mean that the Bible no longer has any value. On the contrary, by seeking the spiritual truths behind the written words we will be lead towards those truths hidden inside each of us which will open our eyes to who we really are and the relationship each one of us has to God and each other.

From the Edgar Cayce Readings

(Q) What present printed version of the Bible gives the nearest to the true meaning of both the new and old Testaments?

(A) *The nearest true version for the*

entity is that you apply of whatever version you read, in your life. It isn't that you learn from anyone. You only may have the direction. The learning, the teaching is within self. For where has He promised to meet you? Within the temple! Where is that temple? Within! 2072-14

There have been many versions of that which was purposed to have been written, and has been changed from all of those versions - but remember that the whole gospel of Jesus Christ is: "Thou shall love the Lord your God with all your mind, thy heart and your body; and your neighbour as yourself." Do this and you shall have eternal life. The rest of the book is trying to describe that. It is the same in any language, in any version. 262-60

Read them (Scriptures) not as history, read them not as axioms or as dogmas, but as your own being. For in the study of these you will find that you draw upon that force from which the writers of same gained their strength, their patience... 1173-8 BDA ΩΩΩ

ANSWER: The logic which questioned the validity of the story was based on the premise that if the man died from shock when he did, no one could possibly know what he was dreaming!

OUR MASTERMIND

Have we ever asked ourselves the question: Who runs my body? The simple answer which may pop into our heads is: "Of course I do." Then who is the 'I' that does the work? Think of all the work that is going on in every part of our bodies from head to toe, 24/7. Hearts pumping blood throughout the network of arteries and capillaries, lungs forcing air in and out – replacing carbon dioxide with fresh oxygen filled air, stomachs and intestines processing foods for conversion into energy and materials for body growth,

maintenance and repair. Then there are the organs of eliminations that get rid our bodies accumulated toxic wastes and of course there are our brains, our inbuilt computers, which is the storehouse of all our memories.

Even most of our physical activities are automated so that, once we have learnt to control our movements, all that is required is a simple order from our brains to set a whole host of physical movements into operation. When I am in bed and decide to turn over all I need is

that simple thought – request – 'turn over' and my auto-systems click in and my body turns over. When I decide to go for a walk I make the conscious effort to move and then my body does the walking for me. There is not a single thought given on how the muscles of my feet, legs and arms are going to move to take each step one at a time. Have you ever watched an accomplished artist play the piano? The fingers and hands move so rapidly that there is no possibility of any conscious thought being given to which note to play next, let alone how hard and for how long to press the piano keys. A reasonably fast tennis serve will travel at over 125mph or 50 metres per second so again it would seem impossible to gauge the speed of the ball, the trajectory and calculate how to respond with the

placement and direction of the bat then move the body, arm and hands to hit the ball in a fraction of a second.

On reflection we will realise that we have no or little conscious control of any of our body organs or of the tasks that our bodies perform. So there must be a source outside our consciousness that is the mastermind behind all these internal activities. It appears that our bodies have an intelligence of their own, and what is that intelligence? It is *life itself!* And what is life? “*God manifested in the material plane. For it is still in Him that we live and move and have our being. Thus life as a material manifestation is the expression of that universal force or energy we call God.*”

3590-1 BDA ΩΩΩ

INSPIRATION

Before starting to write this article I looked up the word 'inspiration' in the dictionary and noted that the origin of the word 'inspire' comes from the Latin word *inspirāre* meaning to breathe upon or into. This same Latin word is the origin of the word 'spirit' and thinking of this we are reminded that it is only through our breathing that we live. To inspire is to breathe in the breath of life and to expire can mean either to breathe out or to die – when the spirit leaves the body. In the Bible text Genesis 2:7 it is said that God “formed a man from the dust of the ground and *breathed* into his nostrils the *breath of life*, and the man became a living being.” We could interpret this as meaning God's spirit was breathed into man and as a result God and man were united.

Research into the source of the inspiration of modern day spiritual writers reveals that they varied and some writers were psychically gifted. Edgar

Cayce is an example of a psychic who displayed his remarkable gift when he was hypnotised and in an altered state of consciousness. Paul Solomon is another example of a psychic with a gift outstandingly similar to that of Cayce. These two claimed that in their higher state of consciousness under hypnosis they were in touch with what Cayce called the 'akashic' records and Paul Solomon called 'the source.' Other authors of inspired works include:

- ✧ Eckhart Tolle – Author of the best seller 'The Power of Now' who received his inspiration from wide reading including 'A Course of Miracles' which had a great influence on his philosophies.
- ✧ Neale Donald Walsch - Author of 'Conversation With God' series claimed he had discourses with God inside his head.
- ✧ Helen Schucman – Narrator of 'The Course in Miracles' material said

her inspiration came first as “highly symbolic dreams and descriptions of strange images that were coming to me.” Later she described a voice in her head which “made no sound, but seemed to be giving me a kind of rapid, inner dictation which I took down in a shorthand notebook.” The writing was never automatic. It could be interrupted at any time and later picked up again.

- ▲ Jane Roberts – Author of 'Seth Material' was a psychic and spirit medium and her inspiration came through the medium Seth who dictated to her.

Although the inspiration for these and many other great spiritual works came from a variety of sources, if we believe that God is within us then we may conclude that they all originated from the same source although in different forms. What makes the people that produced these inspirational texts special was their ability to attune to the source and be able to interpret them so that they could be communicated to people like us.

In the Christian world inspiration has been considered as a gift of the Holy spirit. To a Christian the greatest inspired works is the Holy Bible and it is believed that the Bible's inspired writers were guided by the divine to write what they did. Anyone who has read the Bible must admit that one cannot help but be emotionally moved when reading certain portions of it. As pointed out in the book “Christ in You”, chapter 10, “Books, words, letters are all valueless in themselves. What you call inspiration is the true secret of their value. The spirit by its potency, its subtle vitality, can take any word from any language, on the plane of the sense, and use it to convey meanings, to suggest thought,

and often to pierce through a wall of sense impossible to the work of itself. Thus the word is only the vehicle or outer shell, hiding wither a pearl of great price or a two edged sword.”

Thus it is not the words as such that give the words such power but the spirit channelled through the writer. It is very difficult to convey in words matters of the spirit because by their very nature they are difficult to explain in our language. So when one is in the right state of consciousness when reading these words one feels the spirit behind the words.

'Christ in You' continues: “*Inspiration, then, is the one spirit using for its channel many books and many methods; it is ever seeking avenues to pour out the abundant wealth and wisdom of God. Inspiration is possible to all men. That you can from the spiritual plane use sense, or empty words, so that they become vehicles of spiritual power, is a great and glorious truth. This, too is genius, for God has spoken, and the ordinary language of time and sense is made eternal and spiritual.*

“*Written words are not the only means of communication, for the spirit comes into our outer man with great illumination, and to explain this you have no words. I pray that this may be your experience in all its fullness. It is the first and highest expression of God. The illumined soul moves through all life, radiating light, the unconscious manifestation of divinity, a deep, inward peace, a real knowledge of men and all things, light which cannot be hid, for it is conveyed in every gesture, in every spoken word. Thus we understand the inspired or illumed soul. The real value, then, of the Bible is in the spiritual or inspired writer, who has opened your understanding to the things of God.” -*

Christ in You.

“The result of genuine devotion is inspiration, a word which, properly understood is the opposite of fatigue. To be fatigued is to be dis-spirited, but to be inspired is to be in the spirit. To be

egocentric is to be dispirited. But to be self-centered in the right sense is to be inspired, or in the Soul. The truly inspired are enlightened, and cannot abide in darkness.” - ACIM Text BDA
ΩΩΩ

FROM HERE AND THERE

Any person can fight the battle for just one day. It is only when we add the burdens of those two awful eternities, yesterday and tomorrow, that we tremble. It is not the experiences of today that drive people to distraction; it is the remorse or bitterness for something that happened yesterday and the dread of what tomorrow may bring. Let us therefore live but one day at a time – today! - *John C. Maxwell - 'Attitude 101'*

But when all the young men refuse to kill for the sake of peace, and when all the women forbid their men to kill for the sake of peace, and when you realize that no peace will come through killing, and that the end does not justify the means, and when you grow full and light with thoughts of peace, there will be an end to war. But as long as any men go to war for the sake of peace, there will be war. And, as long as any woman teaches her sons to go to war because of love of the peace, there will be war. *From the Seth readings*

There was a time in Western society when 'God' was an essential part of everyday vocabulary. The word was on everybody's lips ... But in the West and among educated people throughout the world, this kind of God-talk has virtually ceased ... People once knew, or thought they knew, what they meant when they spoke of God, and then spoke of him often. Now the name of God seems to have been retired from our everyday discourse. Even a believer, if he is asked 'What do you mean when you speak of

God?' may find himself stumbling over an answer. - *John Macquarrie - 'In Search of Diety'*

I distrust those people who know so well what God wants them to do because I notice it always coincides with their own desires. - *Susan B. Anthony*

In Buddhism when it comes to validating the truth of a claim Buddhism accords greatest authority to experience, with reason second and scriptures last. Christianity and some other religions have the reverse order. - *Anonymous*

Much of our search for God is about self discovery, after all it is said that God is within us so discovering one leads to discovering the other. - *BDA*

In the eyes of the ego, self-esteem and humility are contradictory. In truth they are one and the same. - *Eckhart Tolle*

It is a mistake to feel that the practise of a religion or a spiritual path gives us a moral superiority over other people. If we feel any superiority we are missing the whole point of spirituality. Spirituality is about a feeling of oneness not of proving that one path is better than others. This can be one of the most insidious types of ego. This is because when we wrap up the ego in a sense of moral superiority, we can easily trick ourselves into thinking we are reducing the ego, when actually we are strengthening it. - *Sri Chinmoy ΩΩΩ*

PART II**SEVENTH LESSON -****Dwell Deep**

You are spirit, soul and body. The spirit, the innermost, is clothed upon by the soul. The body is the vehicle for manifestation. Your wholeness depends upon the one consciousness, and the active co-operation of soul and body. Knowing only God brings into operation hidden laws, at present unknown to you. You develop spiritual powers which have hitherto lain dormant, and your whole being begins to live, Hearing, seeing, touch and the power to communicate belong to the soul; they are transmitted to a denser body for a divine purpose. The soul has great responsibilities, and everything depends upon her obedience to the Lord and Master, and to her transfer of spiritual desire to the body. More than this, by true living you send forth spiritual vibrations, currents of blessing and healing, and all are helped by your radiant and pure environment.

Every spiritual desire, expressed through the outer body, goes on and obeys a higher law; it is never lost. Never mind if you do not see results. I tell you the result of every noble thought expressed has far reaching effects, and

you will know one day that the faintest longing desire has been satisfied.

When you meditate or pray, it is the soul and not the body that opens to the spirit; mind-wandering or lack of earnestness means that the brain is not co-operating with the soul. See to it that you are definite; and think, speak, act from the innermost of yourself. Your soul is your real identity. It is You.

The soul thinks, breathes, acts from the spirit, and should make perfect the outer body. Wherever this is not so, the soul has failed in its obedience to spirit. If this disobedience takes place, you will find that the passing out of the flesh does not mean that the soul will then function freely; for disuse of the spiritual medium means coma, arrested growth, sleep. Awake! Thou that sleepest, Christ dwells within.

When you have ceased to need the body you will give back the atoms, purifies and transmuted by the divine life. Do not repress life, but express it. There is nothing either in or out of the flesh that can hinder the disciple who is one with the will of God. **ΩΩΩ**

LAUGHTER- THE BEST MEDICINE

A leader in a Christian Science church was talking to a member of his congregation: "And how is your husband today?" "I'm afraid he's very ill." "No, no," corrected the leader, "You really shouldn't say that - you should say that *he's under the impression that he's very*

ill." The woman nods in agreement, "Yes, I'll remember next time." A few weeks later the leader saw the woman again. "And how is your husband at the moment?" "Well", she replied, "*he's under the impression that he's dead!*" - Anonymous **ΩΩΩ**



OUR CLOSING THOUGHT

“What is it all about then? ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your mind, your body, and your neighbour as yourself.’ The rest of all the theories that may be concocted by man are nothing, if these are just lived. Love your neighbour as yourself in the associations day by day, preferring as

did the Christ who died on the cross rather than preferring the world be his without a struggle. Know, then, that as He had His cross, so have you. May you take it with a smile. You can, if you will let Him bear it with you. Do it!” 3976-29 ΩΩΩ

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