



Freedom Inside

A National Newsletter For Prisoners
Based on the CwG Material
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Giving Up the Illusion

Freedom Inside
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So, okay, I get that I live in an illusion. I get that I am making it all up. I know that. I am conscious of it all the time.....okay, almost all the time now. The farther I go on this journey of mine, the more I am convinced that the world I see is not IT.

It is not the 'real' thing. I am convinced that anything that is temporary cannot be of God.

Anything that is finite cannot be of the Infinite.

All that I perceive is finite. All my thoughts, especially my opinions are so changeable that I cannot doubt they will change many times more before I am done with this life I am living now. All that I am in this life, all that can be used to describe the person I am now, is finite.

So how can I ever live out of the illusion when all that I am seems

“...anything that is temporary cannot be of God. Anything that is finite cannot be of the Infinite.”

steeped in it? So here I was, knowing I wanted to 'see as God sees' but not knowing how to do that when I knew all my perceptions were false.

What to do? What to do?

And then (drum roll please!) I opened my notes on A Course in Miracles, and there was my answer: "I can escape from this world by giving up attack thoughts"

How absolutely lovely! And best of all, it felt exactly like something I wanted to do, something that would work for me.

To give up all attack thoughts—absolutely all of them— from attacks against myself to attacks against politicians, wars, crime, hate, injustice, the weather, big

and little things, any and all things that seem so 'wrong' with this world.

Now, giving up all attack thoughts is taking up a lot of my focus. I need to step back and examine each and every one of my thoughts and let go of any part of them that seems to me even a little 'attacking', anything that is not totaling loving and accepting of what is.

What am I left with then? What kind of thoughts are left when I have no judgment, no criticism, no expectation, no disappointment even touching my mind?

I feel that the thoughts I am left with are the ones that bring me closer to 'seeing as God sees': loving thoughts, filled with kindness, acceptance and peace. I believe

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A Message From Neale Donald Walsch

Week of October 14, 2005

My dear friends...

A Miracle is occurring on the earth right now, and it looks like a continuous calamity.

A Miracle is occurring right in front of

our faces, and it looks like something is going on behind our backs and catching us off guard.

What is occurring is the transformation of our civilization. We are, at last, to become civilized.

Civilizations become civilized when it becomes apparent that being

uncivilized is simply no longer acceptable, desirable, or sustainable. Civilized behavior emerges spontaneously and civilized characteristics reveal themselves miraculously at times of cataclysm. Disaster calls forth the worst of us and the best of us—and, seeing both in full view, we turn in revulsion from the

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Giving Up the Illusion

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that those thoughts are the very essence of the Truth of Who We Really Are.

And the best part, for me, is that it is an incredibly simple thing to do. Not always easy, mind you, that's not the same thing at all. But simple.

All I need do is pay attention to my own thoughts, recognize when I have any that are less than totally loving and change my mind about whatever it is that I am judging. Think differently or think of something else.

One surprising thing that has helped me tremendously is to acknowledge that whenever I am not unconditionally loving, I am attacking. No if, and, or buts about it. Any thought that I have other than unconditional love attacks someone or something.

I refuse to do that. I refuse to add to the pain in the world. I refuse. I choose love.

Love.

Unconditional Love.
And all the beauty that comes with it.

*Please join me if you will,
In Love,
Janine*

The speed with which any dream may be realized is always a function of how small the miracles have to be in order not to freak out the dreamer.

The Universe

From theuniverse@tut.com

Dearest Janine:

What if all life were a dream? Would I choose a beautiful dream, or a terrible nightmare? Of course I would choose the beautiful dreams, the best I can imagine, and pursue them with all my mind and energy. Yet however much I choose the dreams, nightmares still appear from time to time.

I must again thank you for your comments which again gave me much to think about over the last week

What is **society**?

I reckon this noun means different things to so many different people, so to honor those differences, I must first vary a bit more broadly from my paperback dictionary and define Society as all those persons and institutions that influence any individual, and all persons whom that individual influences. The society in which we each live is going to be a little bit different from all others, so we each benefit differently not just in our responses to society's pressures, but also in those influences we feel.

To some extent we can choose those near us who can influence our thoughts and actions, but I doubt any one does this consciously. Family and friend, TV stars and heroes, comedians and philosophers, teachers and preachers, even the unknown smiling people in print ads, all give us information on how we should react to this or that.

There are also higher authorities we do not so easily choose. Ignore the politicians who make the laws, and you can go to jail. Ignore the preacher in whom you believe, and you could burn in a hell of your own imagination here on Earth. Ignore the norms and traditions of your family and community, and you can find yourself alone and ostracized.

Still, we are ultimately all free to choose who we listen to and how we live our lives, and it is from these many voices within our societies that we make our decisions and plans. It would be nice if they all had the same messages for us, but they don't.

I believe that every one chooses to pursue one beautiful dream or another, and some people will come closer than others to realizing those dreams. Some will keep working towards them, and some will just quit to sulk in their own misfortunes. Plenty of my own dreams have dissolved into horror, and after a bit of my own sulking, I have always managed to piece together new dreams from the new options available to me, and start again on the path to those

goals.

Happiness in possessions could never be my dream, even if many fine possessions were ever available to me. For any sense of peace and pleasure I must turn to people, both near and far, to interact with in the carefree manner of friends, exchanging ideas, jokes, hopes, wishes, and of course, dreams. This is still more society by which I will be influenced.

Still more, so many people I know live in fear and hate. Have these guys chosen to live in nightmares, or have they twisted so much their ideas of happiness that fears have become their dreams? I don't know, and I'm not sure I want to find out what it is that haunts these persons either. I really don't believe in some pointy-tailed devil with a pitchfork who hurls the souls of the wicked into the brimstone. But I do know there is so much evidence out there for some sort of a Satan who lurks constantly seeking to deceive and wreak havoc on our happiness and dreams. Perhaps this deceiver has his birth daily in our own minds which are fertile with misunderstandings and bad advice?

I do believe in a God Who can guide us through the clutter and deceptions confusing our lives, and lead us towards the peace and happiness of our dreams. If only we would listen to Him. No, I don't know if God is some sort of bearded old man, a Zeus-like deity flinging thunder and wrath onto his creations. That actually seems unlikely. I don't know if anyone could know for sure, I believe no one can ever fully describe God in any understandable way. But still I will cling to the traditional usage to describe our Heavenly Parent, for my own comfort and convenience. I do accept God's existence easily on both faith and personal experience.

Yes, people are all made of the same stuff, and we all share the same needs for security and happiness. It is to tend to these needs that societies have formed and maintained civilizations. (...) Everything that distinguishes us from the theoretical wild Ape Man. Civilization usually works at providing the greatest good for the greatest numbers of its people. Civilization is why we wear clothes to keep from freezing, why we look after our sick and why we live in houses and feel it is wrong to kill our neighbor to take his house.

Civilization is also why we raise armies

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cruelty of our old Small Selves and move into the full flowering of our better nature and the manifestation of our new Big Selves. Where once we could but crawl, now we are ready to fly.

This is the moment of metamorphosis, the end of the caterpillar, the emerging of the butterfly. What seems a disaster to the former reveals itself as a miracle to the latter.

What is occurring on the earth right now is the emerging of a new way to experience life. In a sense, a new life form itself. This miracle of metamorphosis is taking place over many months spanning several years—a period of time which is, in geophysical terms, a single elongated moment. From the perspective of the Universe it is the blink of an eye.

The moment began in December, 2004 with the tsunami on the Asian rim. It continued in 2005 with hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the United States and Stan in Southern Mexico and Central America. (The incredible 2005 Atlantic hurricane season continues at this writing. With more than a month still left to go in the official 2005 hurricane season, along comes Vince, the 20th named storm of the season and the first tropical cyclone in history to make landfall in Spain.) The moment has made itself manifest again with the earthquake in the Himalayan region of Kashmir, and it appears to be preparing to transcend individual locations and ignore all borders, presenting itself as the clear possibility of a worldwide bird flu pandemic that, if it jumps to humans, could be deadly to millions.

In many ways it looks as if our earth is falling apart. There are those who say that these events are evidence of the End

Times—that God is wrecking vengeance on the humanity at last for its wickedness. Yet this is not God's vengeance, but God's blessing. This is not the Tribulation, but the Transformation. Our earth is not falling apart, but falling together for the first time.

Have you noticed? These calamities have brought the world together. America sent its condolences and offered its help when the tsunami devastated Indonesia—a largely Muslim region. Iran sent its condolences and offered its help when Katrina devastated America—a largely Judeo-Christian nation.

Many people are dying as this miracle is occurring. No one is dying in vain, and no one is leaving their physical life against their will. All have chosen at a superconscious level to use their lives to allow this miracle to unfold.

All death fuels a miracle. That miracle is called life. Death births life, and makes it possible. All death is, in this way, a gift. Without death, life cannot go on. This is true universally. It is true of a dying star in the heavens, and of a dying plant, animal, or person on the earth.

All life forms die to form new life. There is no other reason to die, and no one and nothing dies for any reason other than this. Death is therefore not the end of life, but the beginning. No one and nothing that dies fails to continue living, but merely does so in another way.

Everyone is a butterfly.

Those who go on living in another way, in the spiritual realm, experience the bliss of reunion with God—the Pure Essence of Life, the All In All that is Everything There Is. They then move forward in

glory on their evolutionary journey, encountering the wondrous joys that all of us have imagined as heaven.

In every sense, the deaths surrounding these disasters now visiting our planet are a blessing, both to those who have left the earth and to those who remain.

This sounds like blasphemy—yet all great truth begins as blasphemy, and every great miracle begins as disaster. It must, for without a disaster, a miracle would not be necessary. (Nor would it even be possible.)

Disasters set the stage for miracles, and are part of them.

See these days on our earth, therefore, not as Days of Disaster, but as Days of the Divine, expressed. For life informs life about life through the process of life itself, and we are informing ourselves about ourselves, that we might know ourselves as who we really are.

This is not a time to lose faith, but a time to find it, not a time to hope for a miracle, but a time to perform one.

And what miracle, exactly, may we perform?

The miracle of love, brought into physicality through acts of heartfelt giving, through moments of pure service, through times of fervent prayer. This is what we have to offer each other during these world-shaking catastrophes that kill thou-sands and displace hundreds of thousands and impact millions.

Many human beings are already performing these miracles every day. We send our highest thoughts to those in turmoil. We send our gifts to those in need. We meditate and

we pray and we hold the world in light. We are seeing ourselves as one family. We experience that we are truly All One.

Humanity is in the process of recreating itself anew, in the next grandest version of the greatest vision ever it had about itself. Upheaval precedes such massive re-creation. As noted, some people will give their present physical lives that humanity as a whole may continue to evolve. We hold in the highest place in the depth of our being those who have done so. We see their higher purpose, and we pledge to honor their gift with a gift of our own: the building of a newer world.

We will do this by using our present disasters as deliverances—delivering us from our own ideas of evil, for ours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, if we will but create it and use it and bestow it upon each other, thus to truly Know God in us, as us, and through us, now and always, and all ways.

The world needs you now. The world needs you if you see what is happening in our world in this way. It is time for you to move into Messengership. For not everyone will understand what is occurring and will occur. Not every caterpillar will understand the miracle before emerging from its cocoon.

You do, now. Therefore bring comfort to the bereaved, help to the afflicted, clarity to the confused, and support to those who would bring understanding to others.

Find each other and support each other and join with each other in a global movement to explain the miracle—and to live it.

Continuing Conversation about God, Illusions, Society....

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to stop other people's armies from coming over to take our houses. It isn't hard to see that most any benefit of civilization can and will be misused and abused.

While people as a whole may benefit from the strengths of civilization, not every person benefits or is improved by every act of civilization. In fact, some of these acts will bring terrible misery. Victims of war are not made happier by the awesome display of machines, men, and resources spent in knocking down their houses and killing their children. The same civilized ideals that tell us it's wrong to kill our neighbor may sometimes insist we kill some anonymous foreigner. Certainly the forces of civilization can bring huge amounts of misery to many. And not just in war. Terror can come to the people who cannot find happiness in traditions, ostracism and persecution can be just as bad as the false happiness of forced conformity. Blundering youth forever branded with disabling bad personal labels. People deceived by false promises and bad teachings. People who just can't get their own unique drumbeats out of their heads. Civilization and societies will leave many in misery while it betters the lives of most others. Perhaps we can disregard society, or civilization, but society is not going to disregard you.

Unless one chooses to live in a cave way up in the mountains, wearing leaves and subsisting on bugs and weeds, civilization will somehow have an impact on your life. Just see what happens when you get caught killing a deer way back in the woods without a proper license.

The anthem of Texas is titled The Eyes of Texas. Indeed, "The eyes of Texas are upon you, all the live long day". They mean it too! "They see you when you are sleeping, at night or early in the morn." Sort of brings to

mind George Orwell's Bid Brother, don't it? "You can not get away". I'm sure the 19th century lyricist had other thoughts in mind, but he hit squarely on the truth that we belong to our society, whether we like it or not. "Do not think you can escape them..."

Whatever dreams and happiness we choose to pursue, we must do so within the structures of our civilization and society. But let's not forget that society does not just influence us, we as individuals can and do influence those around us. Indeed in some ways we can have an effect on our larger society. As you have said, we can "take control of our thoughts and choose the ones that serve us best." In acting through love and not fear, we can make the beginnings of positive influences on people all around us. This may well be just as tough a row to hoe as in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Luke 6:27-49). Difficult, but certainly worth pursuing, I must admit that I'm vulnerable to acting in fear, hate, and treachery, maybe more so than others. Maybe we all are.

It is this effort to choose the dream over the nightmare, to live in love and happiness instead of hate and fear that keeps me seeking God's council. In many ways this search has helped me see. Society has never abandoned me, and neither has God. I'm still a long way from perfection in most things, but I do enjoy more peace and less frustration than I once did. I still have dreams to pursue. No doubt there are nightmares still lurking out there waiting to draw me in. May God's guidance find me.

Again, I've rambled on so much. I must thank you for your questions and comments which have given me so much to work out in my mind. I've benefited well in the process, and I hope you have too.

Peace and love be with you.

EJC
Texas

Dear EJC,

Thank you for continuing this conversation. It certainly is thought provoking, isn't it?

I believe we need people around us in order to truly experience our Selves. We need to connect to others in order to experience Love. So we live in groups.

Yes, there are rules that need to be followed if we want to live in society without problems. But I cannot think of one law or rule (including traffic lights, speed limits, hunting licenses) that I would not choose to do out of love of myself, my neighbor, and my environment. Think about it. If you choose to bring only love, care, safety, fairness etc to all your relationships, including your relationship with mother Earth, then which law could you ever break?

I believe we are made to live in love. It is when we don't, when we live in fear that we start needing to be controlled, to be ruled, to have laws, to defend ourselves, our homes and our families.

I still believe that what you see as civilization is but the result of our fearful thoughts and not an entity separate from and independent of us.

What is the 'strength of civilization' if it is not a reaction to fear? Is that really strength then or fear of weakness?

Something to think about

Love,
Janine

The Answer to a Prayer

A man was driving around the parking lot of a mall, looking for a parking spot. He was in a hurry and was getting frustrated because the lot was full. Getting desperate, he decided to pray. «Please, Lord, I beg You, find me a place to park my car ». The next lane he turned into, a car was leaving a spot close to the entrance of the mall.

The relieved man happily parked his car and remembering his prayer said to God,
« Never mind, God, I've found one. »

A poem from Rye, England
Submitted by J.B., Maryland

Early in my incarceration, in a state of great despair and near hopelessness, I looked upon the wall of my first prison cell and found the following hand-written message. I committed it to memory and during the past 14 years, I have shared it with many people in the hope that it might encourage them the way it has always encouraged me. It read:

“The following poem was found mounted in a dusty frame, in a dark corner of St. Mary’s Church in Rye, England. The author is unknown.

Upon the wreckage of thy yesterday,
Design the structure of tomorrow.
Lay strong cornerstones of purpose—and prepare,
Great blocks of wisdom—cut from past despair.
Shape mighty pillars of resolve—to set,
Deep in the tear-wet mortar of regret.
Work on with patience, though thy toil be slow,
Yet day by day, thy edifice shall grow.
Believe in God—in thine own self believe,
And all thou hast desired, thou shalt achieve.”

So, instead of loving
What you think is peace,
Love others
And love God above all.
And, instead of hating the people
You think are warmongers,
Hate the appetite and the disorder
In your own soul,
Which are the causes of war.
If you love peace, then hate injustice
Hate tyranny, hate greed—
But hate these things in yourself,
Not in another.”

Thomas Merton

The Poetry Corner

Finally Free

*All of my life I've searched and I've sought,
 I've prayed, hoped, dreamed, and fought.
 I've poured out my soul and given my all,
 Looking for something to stand for, proud and tall.
 Something to believe in, something real and true,
 Someone I could laugh with, and even cry with, too.
 Down many roads of experience my search has led me;
 My eyes have seen much, my scars run deep.
 I've seen days full of sunshine, nights with stormy clouds.
 I've seen times filled with loneliness, when a friend couldn't be found.
 I've licked the silver spoon and drank from the golden cup
 I've seen the good side of bad and the down side of up.
 I've seen a rich man beg and a good man sin.
 I've seen a tough guy cry and a losing man win.
 I've seen a criminal go straight and an honest man lie.
 I've seen a dying man beg to live and a living man wish to die.
 I've felt the touch of a butterfly and beheld the beauty of a rainbow.
 I've felt the sting of hate and been caressed by love's living glow.
 I've stuck my hand into the fire and stuck out my tongue in the rain.
 I've opened my heart to others and been stabbed in the back again and again.
 I've seen life given and I've seen life taken away.
 I've dreamed of tomorrow and wished for another yesterday.
 I've done things I'm proud of, yet my regrets are more than a few.
 I've leant a hand, yet I've broken a man or two.
 I've walked in the fire of affliction and played in the cold, cold snow.
 I've felt the wings of Angels and been licked by the tongues of hell's fires.
 I've known the joy of contentment and hungered with the deepest of desires.
 I've lived a life, yet with no life to live.
 I've been a dead man walking, what more is there to give?
 I've laughed with my Dad, I've cried with my Mother,
 I've missed my only Son and dearly love my only Brother.
 I've danced with the devil and owed the wages of sin.
 I've been touched by the tears of Jesus, and through him, born again.
 All my life I've searched and I've sought,
 I've prayed, hoped, dreamed and fought.
 I've poured out my soul and given my all
 Looking for something to stand for, proud and tall.
 Someone I could laugh with and even cry with, too.
 Something to believe in, something real and true.
 The search is now ended, yet life has just begun;
 Thank you, Jesus, for your blood,
 Thank you, God, for your son....*

If you have a poem you would like to submit, please send it in. You might just see it in our next

The Poetry Corner

The power of Our Words

Dear Janine,
(...)

I enjoyed reading the articles that had to do with perspective. One thing I do know is that we have to be willing to challenge our beliefs by keeping an open mind to all possibilities. Because I believe all the ideas wouldn't exist if there wasn't a possibility for them to come true. Here is something I wrote called Parables of the Soul

There once was a dream that became reality, but only to the dreamer. A new step into something that was always a reality for the eyes of the knowing soul. Entering the supernatural.

Have you ever wondered why as a child you found an interest in castles and the thought of a prince charming? Why as children do we find those things interesting? They seem impossible but yet we can picture them and even travel to

fantasy lands within our minds. I think because God put those desires there, because those things exist, all our dreams, all our hopes are not just small issues.

I am living proof of how the desires of your heart can come to pass. I've always desired spiritual gifts. I never denied the possibility but I never entertained the possibility either until I had no other choice but to seek God. I was willing to reason with the voice within, willing to accept the possibility of a supernatural experience. I desired a lifelong, or even eternal experience and that's what I've been given, because I was willing to accept it. If we could all only make a conscious choice.

Great is the spoken word because it is an act of faith.

Those places in our minds where we can picture things so clearly, how do we

know that they're not just realms, waiting to be created? God is creative and so are we. The power of the mind.

Your prayer warrior,
YR
Washington

Dear YR,

Finding and living our dream is what we are here to do. Finding and living our passion. Finding it and putting it in the service of our fellow humans.

You light the world with your words. The power of your words is great indeed.

With much gratitude

Janine

Defining our Journey Towards Love

As it seems, the more we bump our heads the more we tend to understand life's path towards the future and why sometimes some roads lead to certain destinations. Confusion and uncertainty will undoubtedly challenge us the most. But without a doubt, one of the most complex and painful lessons that we will encounter along the winding road that defines our personal voyage across life's vast shore is the discovery of love and its purpose in our lives.

Love can be a sobering and exciting discovery for those of us who dare to feel and embrace the flow of energy stirring within our being which intermittently rouses the soul. It is a unique experience for those who are courageous enough to share it forward. Paradoxically, this 'thing', this energy, this life force we refer to as love can also be a prologue to the most intense pain, sadness, and frustration ever to steal its way into our minds, for not all the time the love that stirs within us will be met with the same wholeness, intensity, and warmth that captivated us in the beginning.

In the world where spite and smite abounds, love can be likened to the thin glass-like encasement of a bulb that is easily shattered if handled carelessly. And putting the pieces back together can readily become a test of strength and courage, a lesson in discipline and patience, and a revelation of the depth

of confidence one has in oneself and one's ability to live rather than choose to resign to merely existing. There are those who selflessly risk experiencing such dismal expressions of shattered senses and twisted souls because the joy in loving and the reward that living in love is capable of bringing into our lives far surpasses all other beauty and expectation of grandeur the world has to offer.

[...]

Very few find the courage to steer the course; even fewer have dared to complete the trip. The ones who have, though, are the flame in the torch that gives life its brightness, its splendor, and its honor. Where the bad times revealed though a disheartened and broken heart sometimes seem to last forever, and the good are but a glimpse of what life holds for its stars, the love that flows within all of us is the force that compels life to constantly aspire to reach its grandest stature. The more we dare to love, the brighter our lives will be, thus leaving pleasing world for all to claim.

Dare to be a star and allow your life to shine....

BD

Pennsylvania

Dear BD,

Thank you for your letter. I agree that being as loving as we can be is as being a bright light in the world, a torch, a star. Those are wonderful

images that I share with you.

There is a point where I do not agree with you, though. It is when you say that love can hurt, that a heart can be shattered when the love it gives is not returned as beautifully.

I do not believe love hurts. Whenever we are hurt in a romantic relation - ship or any kind of interpersonal relationship, we are hurt by fear and not by love.

Love, when given beautifully, unconditionally, wholly, will always leave the other completely free to be and do whatever he or she chooses. There are no limits to it, no expectations, no demands, no dependence.

Love is neither needy nor weak. It lights our world from the inside out. It is our light, our torch, our star. Whenever we love, we are at our strongest, most invulnerable. Nothing can hurt us. Nothing can change us.

Unless, of course, we change our minds about who we are and decide to allow fear to take hold of us.

Let's not.

Janine

Buddhism and the God-idea

QUESTION: Do Buddhists believe in a god?

ANSWER: No, we do not. There are several reasons for this. The Buddha, like modern sociologists and psychologists, believed that religious ideas and especially the god idea have their origins in fear. The Buddha says: Gripped by fear men go to sacred mountains, sacred groves, sacred trees and shrines.

Primitive man found himself in a dangerous and hostile world, the fear of wild animals, of not being able to find enough food, of injury or disease, and of natural phenomena like thunder, lightning and volcanoes as constantly with him. Finding no security, he created the idea of gods in order to give him comfort in good times, courage in times of danger and consolation when things went wrong. To this day, you will notice that people become more religious at times of crises, you will hear them say that the belief in a god or gods gives them the strength they need to deal with life. You will hear them explain that they believe in a particular god because they prayed in time of need and their prayer was answered. All this seems to support the Buddha's teaching that the god-idea is a response to fear and frustration. The Buddha taught us to try to understand our fears, to lessen our desires and to calmly and courageously accept the things we cannot change. He replaced fear, not with irrational belief but with rational understanding.

The second reason the Buddha did not believe in a god is because there does not seem to be any evidence to support this idea. There are numerous religions, all claiming that they alone have god's words preserved in their holy book, that they alone understand god's nature, that their god exists and that the gods of other religions do not. Some claim that god is masculine, some that she is feminine and others that it is neutral. They are all satisfied that there is ample evidence to prove the existence of their god but they laugh in disbelief at the evidence other religions use to prove the existence of another god. It is not surprising that with so many different religions spending so many centuries trying to prove the existence of their

gods that still no real, concrete, substantial or irrefutable evidence has been found. Buddhists suspend judgement until such evidence is forthcoming.

The third reason the Buddha did not believe in a god is that the belief is not necessary. Some claim that the belief in a god is necessary in order to explain the origin of the universe. But this is not so. Science has very convincingly explained how the universe came into being without having to introduce the god-idea. Some claim that belief in god is necessary to have a happy, meaningful life. Again we can see that this is not so. There are millions of atheists and free-thinkers, not to mention many Buddhists, who live useful, happy and meaningful lives without belief in a god. Some claim that belief in god's power is necessary because humans, being weak, do not have the strength to help themselves. Once again, the evidence indicates the opposite. One often hears of people who have overcome great disabilities and handicaps, enormous odds and difficulties through their own inner resources, through their own efforts and without belief in a god. Some claim that god is necessary in order to give man salvation. But this argument only holds good if you accept the theological concept of salvation and Buddhists do not accept such a concept. Based on his own experience, the Buddha saw that each human being had the capacity to purify the mind, develop infinite love and compassion and perfect understanding. He shifted attention from the heavens to the heart and encouraged us to find solutions to our problems through self-understanding.

QUESTION: But if there are no gods how did the universe get here?

ANSWER: All religions have myths and stories which attempt to answer this question. In ancient times, when man simply did not know, such myths were adequate, but in the 20th century, in the age of physics, astronomy and geology, such myths have been superseded by scientific fact. Science has explained the origin of the universe without recourse to the god-idea.

QUESTION: What does the Buddha say about the origin of the universe?

ANSWER: It is interesting that the Buddha's explanation of the origin of the universe corresponds very closely to the scientific view. In the Aganna Sutta, the Buddha describes the universe being destroyed and then re-evolving into its present form over a period of countless millions of years. The first life formed on the surface of the water and again, over countless millions of years, evolved from simple into complex organisms. All these processes are without beginning or end, and are set in motion by natural causes.

QUESTION: You say there is no evidence for the existence of a god. But what about miracles?

ANSWER: There are many who believe that miracles are proof of gods existence. We hear wild claims that a healing has taken place but we never get an independent testimony from a medical office or a surgeon. We hear second-hand reports that someone was miraculously saved from disaster but we never get an eye-witness account of what is supposed to have happened. We hear rumours that prayer straightened a diseased body or strengthened a withered limb, but we never see X-rays or get comments from doctors or nurses. Wild claims, second-hand reports and rumours are no substitute for solid evidence and solid evidence of miracles is very rare. However, sometimes unexplained things do happen, unexpected events do occur. But our inability to explain such things does not prove the existence of gods. It only proves that our knowledge is as yet incomplete. Before the development of modern medicine, when people didn't know what caused sickness people believed that god or the gods sent diseases as a punishment. Now we know what causes such things and when we get sick, we take medicine. In time when our knowledge of the world is more complete, we will be able to understand what causes unexplained phenomena, just as understand what causes disease.

QUESTION: But so many people believe in some form of god, it must be true.

ANSWER: Not so. There was a time when everyone believed that the world was flat, but they were all wrong. The number of people who believe in an

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Buddhism and the God-idea

(continued from page 8)

idea is no measure of the truth or falsehood of that idea. The only way we can tell whether an idea is true or not is by looking at the facts and examining the evidence.

QUESTION: So if Buddhists don't believe in gods, what do you believe in?

ANSWER: We don't believe in a god because we believe in man. We believe that each human being is precious and important, that all have the potential to develop into a Buddha – a perfected human being. We believe that human beings can outgrow ignorance and irrationality and see things as they really are. We believe that hatred, anger, spite and jealousy can be replaced by love, patience, generosity and kindness. We believe that all this is within the grasp of each person if they make the effort, guided and supported by fellow Buddhists and inspired by the example of the Buddha. As the Buddha says: No one saves us but ourselves,
No one can and no one may.
We ourselves must walk the path,
But Buddhas clearly show the way.

from

<http://www.buddhanet.net/10-ggga.htm>

Thank you so much, D.E. of Florida, for sending this beautiful text. I've often thought Bhuddism such a beautiful way of thinking and admired the Buddhists' peaceful way of life. This text is a wonderful introduction to this thought system. I was grateful for this opportunity to read about it again, thank you, D.E.

There is one thing though, I've just read a book that I highly recommend if you like this sort of thing it is called The Case for a Creator written by Lee Strobel. In this book, Strobel reports interviews he did with reknowned scientists in different areas, such as cosmology, astronomy, physics, biochemistry, biology and more, where each makes a case for a Creator, an Intelligent Design of the universe. It is a very interesting read.

If any of you out there would like to express your own views from a differing religious perspective (Hindu, Christian, Muslim or any other) please feel free to write. I just love comparing notes, re-thinking my beliefs, choosing again who I really am.

*With much love,
Janine*

The Origin of My Fear

Dear Freedom Inside,

What if at least some of our dreams are not dreams at all but glimpses of an alternate reality? According to CwG I am living in a dream...mine!

I have found that my actions are very difficult to control if I do not first address the beliefs that are the driving force behind my actions. I am the one in charge of my perceptions, even though they have been nurtured by the many influences in my life. My values may well be mine, and an increasingly smaller number of them are also the values of those whose paths I've crossed over the years, hand-me-downs if you will. But why did I accept the beliefs of others as my own?

I've had some remembrances of my earliest days on the earth in this lifetime I would now like to share with this honorable group. When I was born I knew that I had to remain in this form for a time in order to experience a particular aspect of my self (remember *THE LITTLE SOUL AND THE SUN?*). I also had to lower my vibrations in order to take and remain in this form. The knowledge that I had to remain in this form (live) as expressed by the lower vibration needed in order to accomplish the task was interpreted by the EGO (as it started to form at the age of 10 months) as fear of death (It was at this time that I started to forget who I really am.). Any pain I felt was attributed to the onset of death, especially pain in the stomach caused by hunger. And the pain of the perceived threats was on occasion intense, sometimes about pain and sometimes about attention, always about communication.

The only ones that could relieve that pain were my caregivers upon whom I was dependent for all my physical needs. I therefore came to believe that if I was to live I had to remain popular with all other people. I have spent quite a few years doing what I believed was necessary in order to remain in the good graces of others. I was being and believing what others wanted me to be and believe out of fear of death. I did whatever I could to make others happy, which I now know to be literally impossible. All of my other fears sprang from the fear of death.

I was breast fed as an infant, so I also came to believe that a woman's breasts were really important to my survival. And I witnessed my mother breast feeding my sibling thus reinforcing the illusion. In general, fear of not surviving has driven me to everything that I've

done over the years and led to all of my other fears, even as I started to look for a way out of the insanity back in the late 1980's, and found my way to the CwG material en route to the truth I am now experiencing.

What a ride! I find it truly amazing how the simple intentions of the soul can be misunderstood and made more complicated by my ego and the ego of others. This, I believe, is typical for all but born Masters. And I wouldn't trade away any of the pain that I've experienced. I have been blessed with abundance, and if I had it to do over (and I will!) I wouldn't hesitate for a moment. I conclude that all of the perceived threats were actually opportunities to examine and perhaps revise my beliefs about God and about life, and to create a different ME. We are truly God incarnate!

We are a society of frightened children in adult bodies. It has become apparent that we may want to revise our response to children if we want to experience a different earth, one of highly evolved beings; of love and peace. There are going to be those who resist and want to stay in the illusion, but they will only have themselves to argue with. Everyone else can but observe and witness. It we are a product of society then fear of death is the producer.

Does anything matter at all? Only if we say so! What if there were nothing to forgive, ever? Ya gotta love it!

Love and Huggs to all...

JT

Maryland

Dear JT,

Thank you again for sharing your beautiful self with us.

Fear is indeed a product of our minds, our ego. And it is very creative, as all our thoughts are.

Some choose to live in fear, to live a nightmare because they do not know they have a choice.

What a light you are in the world, JT! How well you show that fear is not the only choice.

Thank you,

Janine



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