

# The Inner Quality

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Exploring the Human Potential

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To those in search of the real self

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## Introduction

This book is the first of a series of three exploring the implications – personally, morally, socially, and politically – of the existence of an inner quality of goodness residing in the consciousness of all mankind. The current book describes the discovery of my inner quality and some initial, personal reflections on what this discovery might mean for us as individuals. The second book shows how we can develop a set of personal ethical and moral standards – based on our unique inner quality – to help navigate the challenging moral issues we face in our lives. The third book applies the ethics of the inner quality to fundamental social and political issues such as how mankind can best be governed.

The current book has two distinct parts. The first part describes how I discovered my inner quality and some of my thoughts on the implications of the inner quality in various aspects of life. The second part explores an expanded sense of the human potential through a series of Socratic dialogues between three friends with different world views.

## Part One: What Is the Inner Quality?

## Chapter 1: Discovery and Implications

### Discovery of the Inner Quality

The discovery of my inner quality was completely unanticipated. I was meditating on the source of my sense of goodness, trying to understand how I could be essentially amoral in my personality and yet also basically good deep within. As I followed the thread of my sense of goodness, moving deeper into consciousness, I suddenly “saw” a brilliant white-green point of light in my mind’s eye. As I examined this phenomenon, I realized that it radiated a certain quality: a blending of honor and integrity that was almost divine-like in its purity and infinite potential of expression. Most remarkable was the immediate understanding that I was looking at the character of my innermost self. This was the essence and core of my individuality as a human being. I called this point of light my “inner quality,” and I realized that honor and integrity must truly be the character of my soul.

At first, this realization was astonishing to me because I had always considered myself a realist in my professional and personal life. The idea that my inner quality was honor and integrity seemed out of character, given the moral dilemmas and compromises so common in my career as a national security specialist. Yet, the truth of my experience was undeniable. I had come face-to-face with my personal best character. And I understood that the purpose of my life was to reflect and eventually to become as much of that inner quality as I could, given opportunity and self-determination. I realized that becoming my real or true self was really a matter of knowing and expressing my inner quality. In essence, the inner quality was the character of my real self.

As I thought about this, I made a second discovery almost as amazing as the first. Coming into contact with the inner quality awakened a mental capability which I called the “higher mind.” Like the inner quality, the higher mind must exist in everyone, because I am a normal human

being. What is special about the higher mind is its ability to integrate the realism of the world with the idealism of the inner quality. This is important, because we all have to make difficult decisions in life. By broadening the horizons of reality and pushing outward the boundaries within which logic and reason can function, the higher mind expands the options available to us to achieve some objective or reach some decision. From the perspective of the higher mind, it is possible to solve or manage practical problems in ways that are consistent with the moral imperatives of the inner quality.

As I reflected on the dual discovery of the inner quality and higher mind, I began to see that the existence of these two potentialities within mankind has enormous implications across the board of human activity. Here are a few of my initial thoughts on these implications, with much further elaboration on these and other ideas in the second part of this book.

### [Free Will and the Inner Quality](#)

We all have free will as a birthright. How we use our free will within the limitations of our circumstances is critical in the course of our lives during our time on earth. The inner quality is our best character. Using our higher mind, we can perceive a standard of best behavior for ourselves based on our innermost best character. In other words, the ethical and moral standards inherent within our own inner quality provide us with a solid foundation on which to decide what to do in life. The second book in this series explains how to develop one's personal set of ethical principles and moral guidelines.

One's understanding of proper behavior evolves as one becomes more aware of the attributes of the inner quality. The more insight a person has of the potential of the inner quality, the better the choices a person can make to reflect one's true or real self. The cycle of knowing what to do,

using free will to decide to do it, and then acting upon that decision creates a personal pathway for the individual to become more and more of their true self.

Because everyone's free will is constrained in some way (think of gravity, time, the conditions of life), our best choices can only be made within the confines of our unique circumstances. It is here that our higher mind comes into play. The higher mind is able to use one's inner quality and moral standards, coupled with knowledge of the circumstances of the moment, to inform us of the best choice possible. Making the best decision possible – big or small, near or far-reaching – is our immediate responsibility and opportunity. We will always have free will, but we also have within ourselves the capability to use free will properly.

The proper use of free will can most often be assured when making decisions guided by our inner quality and higher mind. The most blatant misuse of free will most often occurs when making decisions that knowingly are not in keeping with the standards of our inner quality and higher mind.

### Moral Implications

One of the first insights that come from meditating upon the inner quality is that every person has a moral code “written” within themselves. The inner quality is the true essence of a person's character, and everyone has a moral responsibility to be the best of themselves. Circumstances often limit what we can do, but – within our minds and hearts – we can aspire to be a better person, to be our real self, to be the best that we can possibly be. From observation, I believe that most people want to be their true self although only a few actually claim they have achieved that goal.

The morality of the inner quality is a personal guide on how to act, think, and feel as we become our true self. The moral imperatives of the inner quality belong solely to the individual. The

fundamental moral imperative of the inner quality is for the person to become a better person, reflecting his or her best character.

As noted earlier, the higher mind can be used to derive a set of basic moral principles by which one should make decisions in life. These moral standards are not much different from those espoused by great spiritual teachers throughout the ages. What is different is that, unlike moral guidance provided by others, the moral imperatives of the inner quality have their origin from within oneself.

Whatever a person's station in life, all mankind are equal in terms of having an inner quality residing in their consciousness as a human birthright. Logically, if the inner quality exists in everyone, then everyone has a natural right to discover and attempt to express that inner quality. It appears that the inner quality of some people is closer to the surface of outer consciousness than it is in others. Very often, those whose inner quality is at or near the surface of consciousness have a much clearer sense of their true self than those whose inner quality is deeply buried in consciousness.

### Social Implications

The existence of the inner quality in all individuals gives them innate dignity as a person. It is this dignity of the individual that all societies and all governments, regardless of their form or institutions, should respect and protect. If society and government cannot do this simple task, then the society and government are fundamentally flawed and need to be reformed. As a basic principle of governance and culture, all governments and all societies should strive to bring out the best in all of their citizens and members. Above all, governments and societies ought not to force or manipulate the people to serve the interests of a small minority.

The existence of the inner quality – whether its origins – implies that people are individuals and that they have unique value as part of Life. Because of this unique personal value, no society, no institution, no government, no other individual has a natural right to prevent or interfere with another person’s pursuit of becoming their true self. The right to become one’s true self is not granted by another individual and cannot be taken away. It is a birthright given to human beings by God or by an evolutionary capacity bestowed by nature.

Society can benefit enormously from the contributions of individuals who have discovered and are expressing their inner quality. Artistic and intellectual creativity, technological breakthroughs and scientific insight, a key sense of social responsibility, and goodwill towards all are the natural results of individuals recognizing their inner quality and working to become their true self.

Society has a right to protect itself, and social institutions have an obligation to preserve social order. However, society and its institutions have an equally important obligation to allow their members to improve their lives. If the collective will of the people is to recognize and respect the value of the individual, then the society which pursues this path through public policy can prosper from the creative energies released by the members of that society. Conversely, if society or its institutions seek to thwart the will of the people in their natural desire to improve their personal character and the conditions of life, then the seeds of disorder are sown and social resilience can rapidly give way to conflagration.

### Political Implications

Since everyone has an inner quality and the right to discover and express that inner quality, government – like all social institutions – should serve the interests of individuals and strive to ensure that the person and the collective body of society are safe, prosperous, and free to pursue

the goal of becoming their true self. The form of government a society takes is less important than its policies. These policies should be designed to encourage people to discover their true self and to improve their character and increase their contributions to society. Above all, government should not place impediments in the path of citizens seeking to express their inner quality.

A government which supports its citizens' desire for self-improvement and creates opportunities for individuals to contribute their best efforts to society is in harmony with the inner quality, and thus is in harmony with the will of God and the higher impulses of human evolutionary development. A government which denies its citizen opportunities for self-improvement and restricts their contributions to the good of society is not in harmony with the inner quality. Such a government is in conflict with the higher nature of mankind and can be replaced when the opportunity arises.

No government, no ruling party, no leader, no political institution has the right to govern or rule without the support of the people. This is particularly true when the people – individually and collectively – are intent on becoming their true selves. It is important for government to be organized in such a way as to be responsive to the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of the people. Public policy should be designed to meet these needs; and government leaders, officials, bureaucrats, and administrators should be held accountable to society for implementing these policies.

From the perspective of the inner quality, a sense of universal goodwill should characterize relations between governments, cultures, nation-states, and peoples. Every government should be measured by how it treats its own citizens: man, woman, and child. Aggression and hegemony should not be tolerated by the global community. The use of force, unilaterally or multilaterally,

can be justified to prevent atrocities and mass violations of human rights, as well as to punish blatant acts of aggression against other peoples, societies, or cultures.

By their nature, governments are conservative in that – once established – they do not like to change and absolutely abhor rapid change. In general, the larger the political unit, the more difficult it is to bring about even a highly positive new direction in policy. To align political institutions with the principles of the inner quality will be a lengthy process, made possible only by leaders and citizens who individually discover their inner quality and begin to improve their character. Social and political institutions, as they are led and populated by such individuals, will gradually reflect the higher potential of mankind.

#### [Initial Thoughts on Theories of Governance](#)

Although the third book in this series will examine politics from the perspective of the inner quality in great detail, here seems to be an appropriate place to introduce a few of my initial thoughts on how the discovery of the inner quality might affect our views of governance and political theory.

From the beginning of political philosophy, there have been two contending perspectives on how governments should be run and politics should be conducted. One view is that politics should be the art of the practical and that those who follow its profession should be guided by the simple principle of determining what works best in the world of men. Another view is that politics should be an instrument for improving the quality of life for individuals and society, and that government should strive to serve the higher principles of mankind, even at the cost of expediency. One way to consider this debate is to examine briefly the writings of Machiavelli, one of the most influential political theorists of all times.

## The Political Duality of Machiavelli

Niccolo Machiavelli is most famous for writing *The Prince*, a short manuscript completed in 1513 as a way of introducing himself for possible employment to the Medici family, rulers of Florence. Under the previous administration, he had been a diplomat in several European courts. Falsely accused of plotting against the Medici, he was arrested and tortured before release. But his political career was ruined and he was forced into early retirement. Gifted with a powerful mind and astute observation, highly ambitious and desperately wanting to serve his city and state, Machiavelli turned to writing as an outlet for his creative energies. Much of his writing was based on imaginary conversations between himself and scholars, historians, philosophers, and statesmen of the past, as they would gather in his library to debate the great political issues of the ages.

*The Prince* is a classic argument for realism in politics, as it describes how a ruthless and cunning leader might seize the moment and unify all of Italy under his rule. The argument centered on the premise that a successful ruler must always do what is necessary because, in the political affairs of men, the final result is what counts in deciding whether the action was justified. Much as Sun Tzu's great treatise on the *Art of War* has contributed to military strategy through the ages, so *The Prince* has become recognized as a near perfect paradigm for expediency in politics.

The irony of Machiavelli's acknowledged contribution to political science is that *The Prince* was hurriedly written in search of a job, whereas Machiavelli's much larger but incomplete work – *The Discourses* – has largely been forgotten. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli argues in favor of a democratic and republican form of government, describing a political model that did not take permanent hold in Europe until the late 18th century.

In Machiavelli – as often in ourselves – we see the tension between doing whatever is necessary to achieve our personal goals and doing what is right in order to serve the interests of the people. Had Machiavelli been aware of his inner quality and in use of his higher mind, his advice to the Medici rulers might have been different. At minimum, he might have cautioned against always using expediency and self-interest as a standard, and instead argued for at least considering using good means to achieve desired results. For humanity is not always vile, lazy, and prone to anger. People also have an innate sense of nobility, honor, and integrity. A political leader, whether an autocrat or elected official, should use the higher mind to differentiate between available options, and almost always choose the tool least damaging to those for whom the leader is responsible.

Considering the political thoughts of Machiavelli in view of the application of one's inner quality leads to some interesting discussion. Here we will examine the balance between pragmatism and value in politics; the political responsibilities of individuals, government, and society; and the concept of a global community. The second part of this book will take up the issue of governance in further detail.

#### Pragmatism and Value in Politics

By its very nature, politics is the art of the possible rather than the art of the ideal. Determining what is possible, however, is highly subjective. The vision of a leader using his or her higher mind can be considerably more expansive than that of a leader with a narrower view of what is possible. Simply said, the range of pragmatic options from the perspective of the higher mind is generally much wider than from more limited perspectives.

The reason the higher mind offers a broader vision and more options is because the higher mind expands the boundaries of perceptions and understanding, so that one is able to draw upon a wider range of experience and knowledge. The higher mind improves one's insights, and the

higher mind uses these insights – in a rational and intuitive way – to explore more thoroughly the options available in given circumstances.

This results in a leader having more options to choose from, and more available options usually increases the probability of being able to make wiser decisions in complex situations. The higher mind brings greater clarity and integrates more completely the different dimensions of political choice. Perfection cannot be the goal in politics, but better decision making can always be pursued.

Personal values play a critical role in political decision making. All people have values, and values often determine the criteria by which options are weighed. An individual's values can come from many sources: family, culture, church, friends, peers, profession, and experience. But a person's highest standards ought to come from those formed within oneself; these are the foundational beliefs each person uses to guide his way through life.

The inner quality, being the best and highest character of the individual, is the surest foundation on which to build one's values. Values built on the inner quality are rock-solid in that they reflect a person's assessment of their true worth as an individual. Mistakes will always be made by people, but an individual who bases his decision on the standards of his or her inner quality will always be able to say that they did their very best in the circumstances in which they found themselves. A leader who is able to combine the standards of the inner quality with a developed higher mind is a leader far more likely to make decisions beneficial to society than a leader who either lacks such strong values or is unable to draw upon the powerful analytic capabilities of the higher mind.

### Responsibility of the Individual

While government should respect the dignity of all citizens, individuals themselves have the responsibility to discover and express their own inner quality. No other person or institution can compel an individual to become their true self, nor give to anyone the gift of an inner quality.

At the same time, individuals should respect the society and culture in which they live and which has given them life and opportunity. Loyalty to government and country are natural feelings for those who are in contact with their inner quality. Such loyalty stems from gratitude. Nonetheless, such loyalty is not automatic, because government and society can sometimes discriminate or otherwise act unjustly to citizens. In those cases, loyalty need not be felt in one's heart.

It is also the responsibility of individuals to have a certain broadmindedness, for not all peoples of the world are the same. All may have an inner quality, but the culture and institutions of societies differ enormously. No person or group, because they believe they have insight into truth, should assume that theirs is the only truth. For God and nature are extremely diverse; yet, all life is precious and useful in its own way. The challenges of living will always exist for every creature, great and small. However, for humanity, the need for overcoming such challenges should never be used to justify genocide or the enslavement of others simply because their beliefs or life experiences are different.

### Responsibility of Government

For government, there is a delicate balance between allowing individual self-expression and maintaining social order for the common good. There is no universal formula for how this balance should be maintained, so it must be decided by each culture and society based on its unique circumstances. It is critical, however, that men and women of goodwill be involved in determining the balance for their societies. Those involved should carefully consider the need for

government to allow creative self-expression for all citizens, because this can benefit society as a whole. They should also consider the need for government to protect society from individuals and institutions whose actions will harm others. All governments, whatever their form, should have as a cornerstone the intention to protect the good in society and to encourage individual contributions to the common good.

Because government exercises great power and thus can do great harm, it is essential that government accountability to the people be built into the political system. If this is not done, then corruption, abuse of power, arrogance, neglect of people's needs, and other injustices and inadequacies will occur with little remedial action possible other than for citizens to take to the streets in protest.

Ultimately, the legitimacy and authority of government must rest on the will of the people. No person, family line, social elite, political party, interest group, class, or ethnic division has a natural right to rule. If government cannot establish and maintain its legitimacy, but rather rules by coercion and fear, the people have a right to replace that government and its leaders with those of their own choosing.

The world can be a dangerous place, and there are leaders and individuals who will aggressively harm others for their personal gain. Wars cannot be avoided in a lawless international environment in which nations compete for limited resources and influence. Non-state actors such as terrorist organizations and criminal cartels openly challenge governments worldwide, and this modern affliction appears to be growing. Under these circumstances, leaders of goodwill must be prepared to use force to protect their people and to cooperate with other nations to mitigate the effects of harmful intent from major sources of illegal activity.

### Responsibility of Society

Society has a profound effect on individuals, because it is part of the environment in which we live. Our culture, family, community, institutions, and organizations all are part of society. Those who want to find and express their inner quality have it much easier if society supports these efforts. If society's institutions narrowly prescribe what individuals should be or do, and strongly resist change, the expression of the true self can be difficult or even dangerous for the person.

Society can benefit if it encourages creative self-expression. However, there is nothing that mandates society and government to support people who want to improve themselves. It is just prudent policy and self-interest to do so. Care has to be exercised by society when it seeks to improve its members, nonetheless, because there is always a tendency for some to seek to define what "improvement" means for others. Social institutions can be very restrictive and even actively repress an individual's desire to express their inner quality. Citizens must protect themselves from this social overreach if at all possible.

At times, society can be so restrictive on some of its members that they must escape from the tyranny of the majority and go their own way. This should be allowed, for not all seeds grow in the same type of soil. What is most important is that all members of society share a common sense of goodwill and a desire to see their culture improve and realize its fullest potential. It is this common sense of goodwill that makes possible the integration of the individual's inner quality and social institutions, and paves the way for international cooperation.

### Global Communities

One observation that follows from the discovery of the inner quality is that mankind is a community of individuals bound together by higher personal and collective aspiration. Whether we recognize it or not, the inner quality resides in every individual as a goal toward which we all

can strive. By our free will, we can ignore or rebel against the inner quality, but most of us desire to become our true self. The need for self-discovery, self-expression, and self-fulfillment is hard-wired into human consciousness. This is a powerful motivation among all peoples, regardless of culture, and it gives birth to a sense of personal value, the need for freedom, a belief in justice, and a universal longing for opportunity. These thoughts and feelings are not just found on the pages of political philosophy. They exist in the minds and hearts of people everywhere and at all times.

The desire to be one's true self is a basic instinct among mankind that is essential for humanity's survival and transcendence. A leader of international stature who understands and can draw upon the desire of people everywhere to realize their own potential has opportunity to improve the lives of thousands, if not millions, of their fellowmen. Leaders of good would seem to have certain goals in common. These might include:

- Protect the interests of one's own people, but seek to benefit as many others as possible.
- Cultivate a deep understanding of major global trends, using them for the common good or countervailing them if they are harmful.
- Listen carefully to the voices of the people, who almost always have their ear to the ground and know how things might affect them.
- Be kind and generous as a person, dignified in representing the interests of the people, and be determined to resist the inroads of harmful intent wherever it may appear.
- Work diligently to improve one's own character and encourage others to do so as well.

- Promote freedom and opportunity whenever possible, as these conditions are necessary for individuals to realize their full potential.

Global leadership implies a broader vision encompassing humanity as a whole. This perception is a natural attribute of the inner quality, for it is this close connection that enables all of us to become more of our true self and to play our roles in life to the best of our ability.

## Part Two: Conversations that Matter

This part of the book reflects a series of discourses between three friends – Morya, Mark, and Martin – on various philosophical issues. Morya is a businessman living in Seattle. Mark lives in the Denver area and heads up the University of Colorado’s Center for the Study of Human Potential, a non-profit research organization. Martin lives in the Washington, D.C. area and is a federal contractor working on national and homeland security issues.

In their conversations, the three friends represent different perspectives. Morya brings to the discussion a very high moral perspective: the mountain top view in which an ideal world exists as a seed in human consciousness. Mark looks at things from the perspective of someone firmly on a spiritual path and actively engaged in outreach activities. Martin is pragmatic and views the world mostly from a rational and intellectual point of view, but with a good heart and good intentions.

The Socratic method of dialogue is used here, because the discussion of the inner quality and knowledge of self can be challenging to express in the expository style of writing. Using Plato’s method of discourses can be a good way to present different points of view and show how initial perceptions can be modified in light of the reasoning and conclusions of others. The first dialogue will address the nature of man and politics, since that is one of the age-old discussions held between people for hundreds of years. The third book of this inner quality series will take the political discussion even further as it considers modern politics in view of both traditional theory and inner quality ethics.

## Chapter 2: Reflecting on Idealism in People and Government

The setting of the first of these conversations is a vacation in the Beartooth Mountains of Montana, where the three life-long friends have met to enjoy the rugged scenery, fresh air, and breathtaking vistas of the Northeast entrance into Yellowstone National Park. Their dialogue explores different political, social, psychological, and moral issues associated with the establishment of a more ideal government and how such political institutions might develop over time.

### Day One: Campground

Martin, being the younger of the three men and the one most accustomed to camping, puts a few more logs on the fire and repositions the blackened pot so the water can come to a more rapid boil. It is early evening, with the last rays of sunlight warmly illuminating the snows and glaciers on the mountaintops surrounding the valley in which they are camping. It is a peaceful time, with Venus, Mars, and Saturn appearing in the darkening sky along with a few of the brighter stars. The wind is not too strong, but strong enough to keep the mosquitoes off and to sway the tops of the tall surrounding pine trees. All in all, it is a beautiful night and the three men are mostly quiet with their own thoughts, relaxing after a satisfying meal of stew, baked potatoes, and French bread for dipping.

Martin, after settling back into his folding chair and propping his boots against one of the rocks surrounding the fire, broke the silence by saying, "This is great. I could live here forever and think of nothing except being a speck of contented dust in this vast universe. This whole experience makes me feel so peaceful and at one with everything around me." Martin, who lives and works in the Washington, D.C. area as a government contractor for a Federal security agency, is clearly shedding his day-to-day concerns with his job. The others, looking at him as he

spoke, could see the lines of tension around his eyes soften a bit as he set aside in his mind project deadlines and the worries that sometimes kept him up at night. Martin turns to Mark and asks about his research center.

### [Center for the Study of Human Potential](#)

Mark explained that his Center was a joint academic, business, and government research institution dedicated to bringing together the greatest insights into the vast potential of human beings. He says, “At first I was surprised at the very positive response the center’s mission received, especially from the scientific community. Actually, what I found out, is that a great deal of research interest is now focused on issues such as defining consciousness. Apparently, this is one of the big issues not yet resolved. It involves not only religious and philosophical inquiry, but also quantum physics and astronomy. The funny thing is: the more insights that science brings to the table, the more it seems to authenticate some of the oldest religious theories of mankind. It’s fascinating. I hope both of you can someday come and be my guests and perhaps take part in a seminar with my students.”

Mark then asks of Martin: “What kinds of things are you involved with right now?”

Martin shakes his head slightly and says: “Oh, the usual. Nothing so important. Just the continuous daily grind day of trying to do things well but often never seeing any positive results from the effort. I feel like the government is on auto-drive, with everyone running around like crazy, but very little of substance being accomplished. With all the technology we have, we work faster and produce more analysis, but in the end nothing much is done to improve the system. In fact, the more we produce in terms of studies and recommendations, the slower policymakers seem to be in reaching their decisions, which are usually off-target anyway. There probably is

too much information, and the overload on policy-makers and analysts seems to be gluing up the business of good governance.” He falls silent with a resigned sigh.

Mark comments, “I know what you are talking about. I have too many reports on my desk to help me reach a decision, so I tend to rely mostly on my intuition to find the right course of action.”

Martin chuckles and says, “I believe in intuition, too, but without the data and the facts, your intuition becomes nothing more than a guess at best!”

### Nature of Man

Morya, who has a philosophical side and whose career in Seattle has been opaque even to his friends, speaks up. “What we are talking about here is knowledge – not of the facts and circumstances of a particular case or situation – but rather knowledge of man himself and his capabilities to make decisions. Man is the key; not systems of information sharing or the latest tools of analysis.”

Silence follows for a moment as the two other men pondered the meaning of this. A loud snap of a branch in the nearby woods catches everyone’s attention. Martin stands up, walks over to his Toyota Tundra pickup and takes out a can of bear spray and brings out his revolver. Walking back to the fire, he reminds his friends of the sign warning of the presence of grizzly bears as they passed the entrance to the camping area several miles back. He places the canister and holster on a nearby stump and sits back down.

After a moment or two of rearranging the coals around the pot, Martin asks Morya: “What do you mean that man is more important in decision making than the data on which the decision has to be based?”

Morya answers with a slight smile: “Oh, I am not criticizing the data. What I mean is that man has within himself the ability to analyze facts and see alternative solutions far better than any computer or spreadsheet. Only man can understand the complete set of circumstances surrounding the decision to be made: political, economic, social, technological, psychological, spiritual, and so on.”

Martin thinks about this and says, “That may be true for some people – a small minority – but most of us are not so knowledgeable about the larger picture. We only see and understand the immediate environment in which we live. That is the environment in which we make decisions anyway, not the whole scope of reality.”

Mark chimes in: “You’re both talking about the same thing. Everyone makes the best decisions they can with the knowledge they have; some make better decisions than others; some have a broader understanding of reality than others.”

Martin comments, “That’s right. But those of us who deal with politics and society on a day-in and day-out basis have to function in a reality defined by a certain consensus within society. For example, in a time of limited federal budgets, who gets what portion of the pie has little to do with spirituality and a whole lot to do with who has the better lobbyists or larger voting bloc in Congress.”

Taking the pot off the fire and pouring water into three cups with tea bags, Martin passes Morya and Mark their cups and returns to his chair. Looking up at the now star-filled sky, he says:

“Still, I can see some truth in what Morya is saying.” Gesturing at the stars, he continues, “We are such a small part of cosmos. Our decisions are about as important as those of a single ant on

the prairie. Life stretches endlessly from horizon to horizon, while we just observe what we see immediately around us.”

Morya says, “Man is not limited to the time and space his physical body occupies. His consciousness, his awareness, his understanding of self and reality, are not fixed but rather capable of endless expansion in whatever direction or dimension the individual may choose. Man has the capability to expand his horizons, but relatively few people know how to use that capability.”

Mark observes, “That is why meditation and spiritual contemplation is important. The goal is to become more expansive in one’s understanding. This is one of the first lessons we teach students at our institute and, yet, it is one of the most difficult lessons for new graduate students to grasp because they have been trained to become subject matter experts. Breaking knowledge down into increasingly smaller pieces in analysis is the academic fashion of the day; however, the broader view is necessary if all the various disciplines are to be integrated. Spiritual experiences especially seem to be uncommon nowadays.”

After pushing another log into place, Martin says, “I believe what both of you are saying is true, but – from a practical point of view – we still have the dilemma of how to raise the consciousness not only of a few but also of the many. If society is to improve the way you are implying, then some way must be found to improve the understanding and wisdom of both the few and the many. Are you suggesting a weekly meditation hour for the masses?”

Mark ignores Martin’s last question and says, “You will always have the few precede the many in understanding anything. The few have a responsibility to teach the many. That is why we have had religious, scientific, and other kinds of leaders throughout history. One individual gains a

great insight; he or she shares it with a few; and the few gradually share it with more and more people until it gradually becomes universally accepted. This is an ongoing process. In the Amazon jungle and some other remote areas, people do not yet have electricity and some believe their ancestors are re-embodied in their animals. Yet, even among these folks, there will emerge leaders who will gradually help them modernize.”

Morya observes: “Yes, there are primitives among us, some in the most advanced of societies. However, sometimes people in a primitive environment, without the complexities of technology, have keen insight into their relationships with other parts of life. For example, many American Indians understood that man is part of nature and that its parts are all interconnected. They often found their role or place in the environment through a deep understanding of the character of the animals around them: one type of person soaring like an eagle; another as strong as a bear; another as cunning as a fox or as crafty as a crow. As society has become more complicated, people have often lost touch with the truths in nature around them. They have lost not only their sense of oneness with all of life but also their essential character as an individual.”

Martin adds, “You know, I once saw a Yaqui Indian do a deer dance and, before my eyes, I swear that he took on the character of a deer! But what does being able to identify oneself with an animal have to do with making proper decisions?”

Mark interjects: “I can answer that. As an individual becomes more aware of his true self – his inner quality, his core character, his Christ Self...whatever you want to call it – the individual develops a moral compass and standard which he can use to make better choices. In that way, while his choice may not be absolutely perfect, it definitely is the very best choice he can make at a given moment. And that kind of decision-making tool is much improved over standards of money or self-gratification or personal power.”

Martin comments, “Well, that sounds a little like a sermon to me, but I get the point. A person can greatly improve his decision-making ability by better understanding the highest quality within himself. One person may have great wisdom, another a sense of harmony and beauty, another a profound feeling of responsibility towards others. The individual making a decision based on his or her personal best character is far more likely to make a good decision – good in the sense of everyone involved – than a person making a decision solely on the basis of what is good for himself.”

The men relax a bit and sip their tea. Martin stirs the fire with a stick, sending sparks spiraling upward several feet over their heads.

Morya, watching the sparks, says: “You see how those sparks are being propelled by the heat of the fire to rise toward the stars? That can be seen as an analogy of how people may be energized to move toward some higher goal. That is one of the most important roles of leaders, political and otherwise: to energize the people toward loftier objectives.”

Martin observes, “And what is truly sad is that often those who can inspire others, use their gift to convince others to do their bidding, rather than inspiring them to improve themselves! In my view, no sin is greater than a leader who abuses his power to advance his own interests at the expense of those for whom he is responsible. Yet that is and has been the norm for as long as history exists. There are exceptions. But these seem few and far between – or maybe they just didn’t make it into the history books. I don’t know.”

Morya comments, “It is true that some leaders – often unheralded – can inspire their followers to improve themselves. However, the highest form of inspiration – save perhaps from direct inspiration by God or the Holy Spirit – comes from within, as an individual recognizes his divine

potential and seeks to express that potential through his everyday activities. This kind of inspiration is not dependent on a leader and resides solely within the individual himself.”

Mark says, “That is a very good point, Morya. But for the individual to find that self-inspiration – for him or her to discover the fact that they are indeed a son or daughter of God – is not easy for either the person or for their teacher, if they are fortunate enough to have a good one.”

Morya continues, “The goal always is for the individual to discover his or her true self.” He waves his hand to the stars above. “Here above us are literally hundreds of thousands of stars and millions of planets, many of which probably harbor life. We may not recognize that distant life as being part of ourselves, and that life may not recognize us. But the force of life that pulsates in each of us compels us universally to strive for survival and transcendence. Life is part of the fabric of the cosmos. God can be thought of as the Creator of that fabric. He can be thought of as the fabric itself.”

Martin thinks about this and comments, “I do believe in God, although I do not know if God is a person, an energy, or something else entirely. Sometimes I feel I am part of God and part of God is within me. Usually, when I think of God, I feel the pulsating energy of life all around and the flow of that force moving toward something I can’t see. I think that flow is the Tao, as the Chinese would call. Whether the Tao is God or the Tao is a creation of God, I don’t know. I also believe, because I have experienced it, in a spiritual side of things. Moreover, I have found that consciousness is far more than its physical container and seems not restricted to time and space.”

Morya observes, “It is good that you have had those experiences and hold those beliefs. Even God is said to be discovering more of Himself every day. In fact, it seems to me that God grows as we grow, and we grow as God grows. It is a marvelous interplay of spirit and matter,

consciousness and life, which continues for as long as this universe exists. After that, who knows? But I personally believe that spirit continues even after all form has completed its purpose.”

Mark, looking at the stars and then the fire, says, “That is a beautiful concept, very well said.”

After a pause, Martin, ever the analyst, says: “Let me try to summarize this. God, or Nature, or Life – whatever you want to call it – has placed within each of us a unique quality of itself. It is that unique quality, which we can call the inner quality, which is our true character as individuals. If we can somehow discover that inner quality, then we can begin to know God or Nature or Life through the lens of that quality. The realization that we are potentially limitless in the expression of our inner quality gives us great hope and strength, for it places self-awareness in our own hands. Knowing who we are enables us to become what we are, or at least gives us a vision of ourselves towards which to strive. An individual who is on this path of self-discovery makes better decisions for himself – and for others if he or she is in a position of leadership – because he is more awake to the realities of selfhood. Every man, woman, and child on the planet have this potential insight into their true selves, and the society whose members share this knowledge will itself become richer, stronger, and more creative.”

Martin pauses, and then adds with a smile: “At least until the barbarians show up at the gates.”

Mark quickly points out, “Don’t forget, there have been many instances in which the saints have saved their communities by using spiritual force to turn back the hordes of darkness.”

“I don’t know if those stories are true or not,” observes Martin, “but I do know that there are no saints who can turn back the scourge of illicit drugs, cancer, terrorism, or random acts of

violence against the innocent. That is why, while we keep our holy books close to our hearts, we are constantly vigilant and make sure our powder is dry.”

Morya laughs and says, “It is true that the saints will not always save us. Goodness has never been completely protected from evil in this plane of existence. But part of the reason for that is that man himself, while a son or daughter of God in potential, contains within his consciousness seeds of the misuse of free will. Even though an individual may be aware of his inner quality and want to express that quality, there usually is much for the individual to do in terms of self-cleansing.”

Mark nods, but Martin interjects half-jokingly, “This is indeed depressing news, Morya. It is difficult enough to have a proper understanding of yourself. Why do we have to battle our thoughts and feelings to become a better person? It should happen more naturally. It should be a pleasant experience all around!”

Morya chuckles. “Yes, it should. But it isn’t. Why is that?”

Martin, stubbornly refusing to concede the point, counters, “I don’t know. Why?”

Morya just smiles and shakes his head.

Mark, looking first at Martin and then at Morya, says, “I think I can answer that.”

### Good and Evil

Martin got up and refilled everyone’s cup as Mark looked at the fire for a long moment. Morya gazed at the Milky Way – a linen across the sky – the forest alive with the sounds of insects and the occasional snaps and pops of branches breaking or falling from trees in the wind.

Occasionally, a large moth would flutter for a moment near the fire and then, having approached too closely, quickly fly away. It was a peaceful moment. Mark begins to speak.

“The origin of evil is one of the greatest mysteries confronting man throughout history. There have always been acts of decency and kindness, and there have always been acts of cruelty and hatred. I like to think that, sometime in the distant past, mankind was all good – the Garden of Eden setting in a moral sense, in which man was innocent as a child and naturally good, without the taint of corruption. The reasons mankind became corrupt are his selfishness and his arrogance. He became selfish and created a distinction between himself and others, especially between himself and God. He became arrogant in his power to create, and came to view himself as not needing God. When these two steps were taken in his consciousness, mankind opened itself up to what we call evil. Evil is an energy veil between man and his Creator. Without oneness between man and God, man does not act according to his highest calling, but rather acts selfishly and harm results to others. That, to me, is the origin of evil. Evil arose because man lost his purity and, most importantly, his sense of oneness with God.”

The two other men are quiet, taking this explanation in. Morya finally speaks, “It is true that without vision, the people perishes. And without God to guide him, man is lost in a maze of his own creation. Without becoming reunited with God, man can never find his way out of this maze.”

Martin thinks about this and, as is his custom, tries to bring the conversation down to the realities around him. “I can understand all of that, and it may be true. However, I am not aware of any documented evidence of there being a time when mankind did not have to struggle to survive. A Garden of Eden never existed in this world, at least to my knowledge. And if such a Garden did not exist, and if man has constantly been concerned about his own survival, then how could there be an initial state of innocence in which all men identified themselves as being one with God, a time in which all men were good with no evil amongst them?”

Mark quickly responds, “Are you implying that man has both good and evil within himself, from the beginning of humanity? If that is true, then what good is morality, what good is belief in God, what good are ideals, what good is hope in a better and kinder world of tomorrow?”

Morya says, “The ancients tell us that the origins of evil exist beyond our planet, and if that is the case, then we may never know that origin, but only take on faith explanations that are offered by those wiser than ourselves. And, Martin, in regards to your comment, ideals have been pursued by mankind forever on earth. Whether the Garden of Eden existed in reality is not as important as the ideal of oneness with God that it represents.”

Animated, Mark adds, “Look, I am not completely sure myself where evil comes from. But I can tell you from my firsthand experience as a counselor and a teacher, that there is evil in this world and there is good in this world. The two are quite different and usually are at odds with one another in both society and within the individual. What you are saying, Martin, appears to me to be equating good and evil as characteristics found naturally within man. I can’t accept that.”

Martin replies carefully: “I am not saying that good and evil are equal, like two parts of a whole. I am saying that, from all recorded history and archeological evidence that we have found, and from all my observations of people whom I have known, that individuals seem to have both good and evil inside of themselves. Some are better, some are more evil, and some are blended in their motivations and actions. By contrast with this observation, I have never known anyone to be completely good or completely evil.”

Morya responds, “I agree that no man is perfect. However, every man can improve. There is no limit as to the extent of that improvement. An evil man can become a good man; and vice versa for that matter. The key question is: what factors determine whether a man shall become good or

evil? What motivations exist for a man to improve himself, to become a better person, to eradicate the evil inside and to replace it with good?”

Martin says, “I am having a little difficulty with the terms good and evil. God, I pretty much understand. But evil is something I do not see very often. Rather than evil, perhaps I mean to say that good and bad exist in us all. Bad in this sense is not-good; but not-good does not equate to evil in my mind. Evil is something totally different, a destructive force deliberately seeking to crush and destroy that which is good in life and nature. That level of anti-good is qualitatively different from not being good on all occasions.”

Mark and Morya acknowledge that nuance, and Martin continues: “In regards to motivations, I can best address that question by looking within myself. I have sinned many times in my life, and even justified my selfish and harmful behavior with the rationale that it seemed ‘natural’ and therefore must be OK. But, at a certain point in my life, all the harm I had done to others seemed to return to me like the crest of a wave – a big wave, I confess. I began to experience a certain degree of suffering but – and this is the strange part – usually for things I had not done. In other words, I had sinned and deserved to pay recompense, but the conditions that precipitated the ‘payment’ of my debt were things I was innocent of! I was ‘punished,’ so to speak, for things I did not actually do; while in the past I got away with things I actually did. That experience of so-called ‘delayed justice’ convinced me more than anything that, somehow, through some unknown process, there actually is such a thing as moral justice. We can lie, cheat, steal, and even kill and get away with it for the moment. But, eventually, the bad things we do come back to us for balancing.”

Both Mark and Morya exclaim: “Karma!”

Martin continues, “Karma, cosmic justice, balancing of life’s debts – whatever you want to call it. I can testify that something in the cosmos ensures all debts are paid and all rewards are given. Anyway, that is but half the story. When I was experiencing this pain and beginning to see how it related to my ill begotten thoughts, feelings, and actions in the past, I began to question my earlier assumption that ‘if it is natural, then it is OK.’ In the midst of this process of self-examination, I could feel my strength and resilience fading, and I began to wonder whether life was worth living at all. One day, as I was laying on my bed feeling miserable, I decided to follow to the source the stream of my consciousness, in particular the source of goodness that somehow – through it all – still seemed to exist. As I became more concentrated on this source of goodness within my consciousness, I suddenly ‘saw’ of point of light and moved my attention toward that light. As I got closer, I sensed that it had a particular color (kind of a light green) and that it radiated a certain quality. Actually, honor and integrity. Some intuitive understanding came into my mind and I instantly understood that this point of life, this quality of honor and integrity, was the essence of myself. I called this essence my ‘inner quality’.”

He continues, “This was a remarkable discovery and it opened up for me an entirely new way of looking at things. Having glimpsed my inner or true self, I tried to hang on to that quality in my outer self-awareness. When I made a deliberate connection between this inner quality and my outer consciousness, I was surprised to find that this inner quality provided me with a moral standard by which to make decisions. It gave me a clear criteria with which to evaluate choices. As I looked at other people, I saw that they, too, had an inner quality – different from mine, but nonetheless deep within their consciousness. Some were more aware of it than others, but I saw its existence. The experience I had with my inner quality and the perception that others also had such inner qualities rearranged my perceptions of what government should be and how society

should be governed. Whereas before I thought about governance primarily in Machiavellian terms, now I began to think about governance in terms of ensuring that citizens have an opportunity to discover and express their inner qualities. A government that succeeds in doing this would empower everyone in society to do their best and enable their culture to achieve maximum greatness.”

Mark interjects: “That is a wonderful experience, and similar to one I had years ago when I was resigned to living in a chicken coop!”

Martin, continuing, “But that is not all – and here is where we return to the question of good, bad, and evil. I understood that, for myself at least, what was ‘good’ was the expression of my inner quality and what was ‘bad’ were thoughts, feelings, and actions that ran counter to my inner quality. Evil, it seemed to me, was a deliberate decision, in full knowledge of one’s inner quality, to rebel against it and to undermine its expression of goodness in the world. My free will enables me to express my inner quality, to know of its existence but not strive for its expression, or to act deliberately against it. I always have a choice. Even though I perceived the inner quality as somehow being connected to God and therefore a seed of infinite potential goodness within myself, I could reject that potential and even work against it, if I wished.”

Morya nods and comments, “Man always has free will to determine what he will do.”

Martin continues: “Based on this experience and logic, I decided to accept the fact that God’s seed was within me. I subsequently began to understand that, while I probably will never know God in His – or Her or Its – entirety, I can know a portion of God through the lens of my own inner quality. What are the limits on the expression of integrity and honor? There are none!

Anyway, once I decided to try to always express my inner quality, I began to see things quite

differently. And one of the things I noticed was that it was not always easy to express my inner quality. I would know what to do, but did not always want to do it. Over a period of time, as I struggled with this issue of self-determination, I gained the confidence and strength necessary to at least mostly do the right thing, based on my inner quality. But even today, my friends – even though you may not believe me – I still have temptations that are not praiseworthy.”

Morya and Mark chuckle, well aware of Martin’s less-than-perfect character, while Martin goes on. “What I am trying to say is this: if we can experience our inner quality and if we decide to try to become that inner quality in our outer awareness of self, then we can have an individual standard of knowing what is right and wrong for ourselves. This standard may or may not be the same as the one accepted by our society or culture. But, the moral code we have written inside of ourselves is, for us, as precious and as authoritative as the Ten Commandments. If every individual became aware of his or her own inner quality and acted according to its standards, then the goodness in man and in society would increase dramatically and that which we call evil would diminish greatly.”

Mark observes, “That is a great insight, Martin, and it points to the fact that the solution to man’s moral dilemmas lies within himself.”

Morya comments, “The key always is the individual, who must learn for himself what is right and what is wrong and then – most importantly – to do what is right and avoid doing what is wrong. God gave man free will and He will not force man to make the right decisions in this dimension of time and space that we call home. This world is mankind’s responsibility and each of us have to make our own choices. The purpose of this schoolroom we call earth is for individual souls to learn to make the right choices.”

He thinks for a moment and then continues, “One way to consider mankind’s psychology is from the perspective of balance. Often people do things that have harmful or negative consequences, not because they want to cause these things, but because their actions, thoughts, and feelings are reflecting some imbalance in themselves. This imbalance can be caused by many factors, but often it is because the individual – in this or in past lifetimes – has had an unpleasant experience harmful to themselves. They become sensitized to that kind of pain and subconsciously avoid it when they can. Sometimes, in this avoidance, they try to preempt an incident they think might cause the pain by either responding prematurely or by creating circumstances that are intended to reduce the probability of an incident occurring. Look around you in your daily lives. You can see this kind of behavior all of the time. Some people try to avoid emotional pain by being aloof or detached from the emotional needs of others. Other people constantly seek to manipulate others so as to protect themselves. Some are overly aggressive so as to demonstrate they are not to be trifled with. It goes on and on. What I am trying to say is that, yes, there is evil intention in the world. However, much of what we see as being ‘evil’ or ‘bad’ or ‘destructive’ or ‘negative’ is actually a reflection of mankind’s psychological burdens. Getting to the root of these disturbances in our psychology and ‘fixing’ the problem is not easy to do. That is why many of the great teachers of mankind, such as the Buddha, have often been seen through the eyes of psychology, because they were trying to help people work through their mental and emotional imbalances. The tool they used in this process, however, have varied with the individual teacher and student.”

Martin hesitates and then asks, “Forgive me for bringing this up, but is it possible for a person pursuing an evil path to find his or her true self, if – as we have said – that true self is inherently good?”

Morya answers, “I don’t mind the question at all, Martin, and it is a good one. A person can pursue an evil path and, like Saul on the road to Damascus, suddenly become aware of his mistakes and turn quickly onto a path of goodness. This often happens through the intervention of some saint or master who is particularly close to the misguided person in embodiment. But we cannot equate the path of goodness, say as demonstrated by our Lord Jesus, to the path of evil pursued by someone. There is a qualitative difference between these two paths which ought to be discernible to any child of the light.”

“Well,” Martin says after a long pause, “this was an interesting discussion. The hour is late. Why don’t we call it a night and try out some of the nearby trails tomorrow? I’ll take care of these dishes. You guys can just retire to your tents when you wish.”

As Martin washed the dishes and the fire gradually died down, Mark and Morya sat watching the stars and the glowing embers for a bit, yawned, and then slowly got up to prepare for their evening’s rest.

After a while of relaxing by the remnants of the fire, Martin got up, folded the chairs, put them under a tarp and then went inside his tent. He remained awake for about a half-hour, watching the final flickers from the coals and wondering why words were so easy to say and deeds so hard to do. He checked to make sure his bear spray and revolver were within easy reach, then closed his eyes and fell to sleep with the sounds of the night forest all around.

## Day Two: Chief Joseph Highway

### [Does the End Justify the Means?](#)

The next day, the friends enjoyed a full day of driving and hiking in the Chief Joseph Highway area. Martin collected rocks as was his favorite pastime; Mark took pictures of the scenic vistas;

and Morya wandered off alone to find a comfortable rock on which to sit and enjoy the wondrous views that spread everywhere before them. Towards late afternoon, they returned to the camp site and went about self-appointed chores to get ready for the evening. In about an hour, dinner was ready: steak, sweet potatoes, green beans, and corn. It was a delicious meal and the men ate with few words but lots of appreciative nods. When finished, Martin gathered up the dishes and washed them while the water was boiling for their evening tea. The stars and brighter planets began to appear and each of the men put on a light jacket or sweatshirt and sat a bit closer to the fire as a cool breeze came down from the mountains. With the cups were filled, Martin put a couple of more logs on the fire, and the three men settled into their camp chairs, falling silent with their own thoughts.

After a while, Martin says, “I would like to ask your opinion about something that has puzzled me for years.”

Mark and Morya nod, anticipating one of Martin’s characteristically convoluted questions.

Sipping his tea and wrinkling his forehead, Martin continues, “You know that I work as a security analyst in Washington, nothing too secret but nonetheless sensitive. One of the things that I have noticed, both in my present job and others, is the tendency of almost all decision makers to set aside their personal moral beliefs when making hard choices requiring some morally questionable response to an incident – usually foreign but sometimes domestic. The question I have is this: is it morally appropriate for a national leader to make amoral decisions when acting on behalf of the nation he represents?”

Mark smiles and says, “Ah, the old ends verses means argument. It seems to me that Machiavelli addressed this in *The Prince* and, from what I recall, he clearly believed that a political leader

was not obligated to act according to any moral standard other than his own interests. That, to me, is a false rationale for a leader's behavior.”

Morya comments, “And yet, the question is a good one because sometimes an amoral leader is not acting as an individual but rather acting on behalf of society. Morality appropriate for an individual in daily life can – on occasion – be different from morality appropriate to a national leader in a time of emergency for the society he has duty to protect.”

Mark asks, “How can this be? Society is comprised of individuals, so the morality of the group should reflect the morality of its members.”

Martin interjects, “I have studied Machiavelli a little, perhaps because I have been puzzled by the observation I mentioned earlier. Machiavelli was a complicated person. He did write *The Prince*, but he also wrote one of the first treatises on democracy. He clearly favored a republican form of government over a dictatorship, yet he is remembered more for the authoritarian arguments in *The Prince* than for his arguments for a republic. Machiavelli's ideals were ignored; his amoral guides for ruthless governance were embraced.”

Mark says, “This proves that you ought to be careful what you say and write. Still, we cannot deny that Machiavelli argued in favor of the end justifying the means in politics. And his arguments have been used by generations of tyrants to pursue their own interests at the cost of others. This exploitation cannot be justified or rationalized on any basis.”

Morya cautions, “We need to be careful in making judgments here. Do you recall, Martin, what exactly Machiavelli said about the end justifying the means?”

Martin thinks for a moment and then says: “Actually, he never said the end justifies the means.

What he said was that the results achieved by the Prince need to be considered before judging the

correctness of his actions. The statement, ‘the end justifies the means,’ can be used as a blanket excuse to do evil to achieve good – a political version of the Bible’s description of those who said ‘let us do evil that good may come.’ Interestingly enough, Machiavelli was a very religious person, but he hated the corruption of the Catholic Church in his day. And even though he preferred a republican form of government, he did believe that in the chaos of Italy at the time – which was then occupied by foreign mercenaries and divided into warring city states – that a strong, forceful, even ruthless leader was needed to unite the country. He wanted leaders to be guided by high moral standards, but he knew from experience and the study of history that such leaders would be taken advantage of and their good works ruined. So, it seems to me that Machiavelli was trying to use ruthless, pragmatic means to achieve a peaceful, prosperous, and secure country in the future. The question is: was he morally wrong to advise using these means to achieve those ends?”

Mark thinks a moment and comments, “Listening to your explanation, I am reminded of the story of Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, when the Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna that he must fight and defeat in battle his friends and relatives because that is his duty. Krishna told him, however, that he must fight without lust for war and without attachment to the fruits of his actions. This is the core of karma yoga, the path of action. Machiavelli advised the Prince to use his desire for power and his ability to instill fear in others to suppress all opposition to his rule. The two princes are both urged to action, but the higher way of Krishna is to do one’s duty with no selfish attachments, whereas the lesser way of Machiavelli is to act with any necessary means to attain one’s ambitions at the expense of others.”

Morya says, “Both of you have made good points. Knowing when to act and when not to act is critical for someone seeking to improve their character. Motivations are also crucial here. Let me

illustrate this with a story about karma and how it unfolds in human life. The story may or may not be true, but is illuminating nonetheless.”

He pauses, sips his tea thoughtfully, and then begins his tale: “Once there was a king who married the most beautiful woman whom he had ever seen. He loved his queen with all of his heart and was true to her, for he was a king of honor seeking to bring good to the world. At some point, a young knight came into the kingdom, and the king found him to be brave and true, and became fast friends with him. As the king and queen and knight spent more time together, the queen and knight found themselves – without intention – falling into love. Theirs was a love made in heaven because they were kindred souls, and no amount of anguish or tears at the approaching betrayal could prevent them consummating their union. In time, the king found out and was heartbroken. The knight was forced to leave the kingdom and the queen was forced to withdraw to a convent to spend her life in solitude and contemplation. Love had drawn the king and queen and the knight into a strong relationship, and betrayal had caused their separation and even the collapse of the kingdom.”

Mark smiling, said softly, “You are speaking of the story of King Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot. A beautiful story we all know and love to hear over and over again.”

Morya replied, “Yes, that is one version of the story, but there are countless more. It is an archetypal pattern of love between three well-meaning people who nonetheless harm each other because their passions and duties collide. But there is more to the story, and here begins the unfolding of karma.”

He looks far off into the dark forest and continues, “These three souls, bound to each other by a deep and abiding love, intermingled lifetime after lifetime through the cycles of reincarnation. At

one point, the soul who was the king found enlightenment and became a saint, but nonetheless remained tied to his friends still in the grips of earthly karma. It so happened that, over time, the knight and the queen were reborn and met each other in mid-life. Their love was immediate and so strong that they married and several wonderful children as the fruit of their union.

“Then, unexpectedly, a fourth player in this drama appears. The fourth individual had actually been a knight at the time of the initial kingdom, a close and respected friend of the king, the queen, and the favored knight, but he who followed a different path and did not get drawn into the breakup of the kingdom. When he met the married couple centuries later, they all became close friends and trusted companions. At a certain point, the friend was visited in a dream by a spiritual master who told him that he was intended to be the father of the wife’s next child. The friend was greatly disturbed by this dream because, although he was convinced it was authentic, he could not bear the thought of betraying his married friend by fathering a child with his beloved wife. He dared not tell anyone of the dream, because he knew of his friend’s deep love for his wife and feared that, if he told the wife, she would see the dream was true and would submit to its destiny.

“The young man was in a moral dilemma. Paralyzed with uncertainty, he remained silent and, then, he decided to take matters into his own hands. He chose to ignore the spiritual instruction and entered into an affair with another woman so that he would be unworthy of fathering his best friend’s wife new child. This act so disturbed the wife that she distanced herself from the young man and their friendship gradually eroded. In the meantime, the husband became ill and passed, and the child spoken of by the spiritual master never was conceived.

“As fate would have it, yet a fifth individual entered the picture, who did have an affair with the widow and eventually married her. This had the long-term effect of destroying much of what the

previous husband and the wife had worked for years to build. Eventually, the new couple came to despise each other and they separated without any children being born.”

Morya stopped for a moment and looked at each of them: “The question I have for you is whether – assuming he had a true spiritual experience – the younger knight should have fathered the child with his friend’s wife? Or was he right in rejecting that role and instead countering it by having another affair? In both cases, the elder knight and his wife would have paid the karmic price for their earlier betrayal of the king. But, on the one hand, the betrayal would have been at the hands of one they loved, whereas on the other (and what actually occurred), the betrayal came at the hands of one not within that intimate circle of friends.”

Martin shakes his head and says: “That is an amazing story, although I am not sure I understand how all the karma is related. Still, it reminds me of a similar story I once read about Jesus’ betrayal by Judas. According to this account, Jesus actually asked Judas to betray him, because he wanted someone he loved to do the betrayal rather than a stranger. In this case, Judas did what his friend wanted, but hanged himself afterwards because of the pain it caused. These things get over my head quickly, because they twist the responsibilities of morality and duty. I don’t know what is right and wrong under these circumstances. I feel like Arjuna at the beginning of the battle!”

Mark adds, “And Morya’s story is actually similar to the ethical dilemma spoken of by the philosopher Kierkegaard, when he analyzed the story of Abraham being asked by God to sacrifice his son Isaac. Kierkegaard could not resolve this dilemma, and ended up concluding that the best ethical choices of mankind are sometimes overridden by God’s will, for which we have no explanation. In the end, no matter how good we think we are, no matter how logical our moral systems, we still must listen to God’s direction and do what He asks.”

Mark continues, “I still feel the key is nonattachment to the fruit of the action, as the Buddha taught. If we act as our duty dictates, and are unattached to the fruit or karma that may come from us doing our duty, then our conscience can be clear and we will not be paralyzed into doing nothing or doing something rash.”

Morya says: “All of these things have in common one thing. It is the need for an individual to make the best decision he or she can at a given moment.”

Martin, more than a little confused, asks, “Can you elaborate a bit on that?”

Morya explains: “All of life’s dilemmas – whether they be faced by presidents or laymen, whether they be of large or small consequence, whether they involve strategic calculations or the passions of love – must be addressed in the heart and mind of a single individual. Mankind is not ‘wired’ for collective consciousness; they are individually ‘wired’ for self-determination. Every person has a right, and in many instances an obligation, to make up his or her own mind about the appropriateness of a set of actions. We can return to our discussion of yesterday: the key is the individual and how he or she makes decisions. The better the decision-making process, the better the decision, and the more in harmony the person is with his role in life.”

Mark says, “I can see your point, Morya. If Machiavelli’s prince is able to make good decisions; if Arjuna can decide what is the right course of action; if our love-crossed friends can see a better choice, then maybe – just maybe – they and those around them will benefit more than they would otherwise.”

Morya nods. Martin interjects: “I can concede that point, but how can man improve his decision-making abilities? I know we talked a bit about this yesterday, but already it is a bit fuzzy to me.”

Mark continues, “Let me address this, based on my understanding of what Morya was explaining. Every person, by virtue of the fact that he is both spiritual and material, has virtually unlimited opportunity to expand his self-awareness and his understanding of the world around him. This knowledge base, if you will, is not simply more books on the shelf, but also is an unfolding process expanding one’s understanding. This higher level of analysis comes from what some would call the Christ Mind. You, Martin, might refer to it as the higher mind. It is a level of consciousness above the normal operative level we usually live in. It is part of our consciousness, an underutilized level of mind capability, which we can – with practice – learn to use. And as we become aware of how to use the higher mind, we can apply that level of analysis to the dilemmas that we all face from time to time. The result: better decisions. Maybe not always perfect – as when God gives us specific direction – but better decisions in the context of our normal life on earth.”

Martin smiles and says, “That’s a very good explanation, Mark, but it neglects to answer the moral side of the question. We might well have a higher mind, but having such a power of mental analysis does not necessarily mean that it can answer the types of dilemmas illustrated in our stories. The means versus ends issue is not simply a matter of best choice A or B; it is at its heart an issue of the moral correctness of using amoral means to achieve beneficial ends.”

Morya comments, “That is true, Martin. What Mark perhaps did not have time to say is that the higher mind is aware of both the spiritual and the material sides of man. The higher mind is aware of what you call the ‘inner quality of man,’ and which others have referred to as the ‘I AM Presence’ and many other names. The higher mind is able to factor in the individual’s inner quality, along with the circumstances surrounding the issue to be decided, and determine with fair accuracy the best course of action in a given situation. That is all that is required of man: to

make the best choice he can with the knowledge and with the instruments he has at his disposal. Having made his best choice, he needs to act upon it. And he needs to act upon it in such a way that he is unattached to the karmic reaction, that is, he is unattached to the fruit of the action. His decision is not made for purely selfish reasons. Act and then let it go. Man needs to let it go because the almost infinite cycles of action and reaction that are put into motion by his actions are beyond his power to control or even to understand. He has to trust the universe to do its job, and the universe has to trust him to do his best. This is one of the most important principles of psychological freedom, and it is a teaching common in almost all ancient mysteries.”

Mark comments, “It’s like a rock thrown into a pond: ripple after ripple after ripple, until it is almost impossible to predict where the next wave will go or come from. It’s a marvelous description of the karmic ripples going on in the world of men.”

Martin says, “OK, let me bring this back to our friend Machiavelli. You are saying, Morya, that rather than advising the prince to use all means possible to achieve his ends, that Machiavelli should have instructed the prince to develop his higher mind and to cultivate his inner quality and best character, so as to be better able to determine the most appropriate action at any given time. Is that correct?”

Morya, thinking a bit about Martin’s abbreviation of the discussion, slowly nods and say, “Yes, that would have been better advice for Machiavelli to give the prince. Maybe it would have helped him get the job!”

Martin adds, “I doubt it, if my recollection of the Medici is correct.”

All three laughed, knowing that much more could be said but agreeing that now was time to call it a day.

## Day Three: Lamar Valley

### What Does Freedom Mean?

The next morning they arose early, ate cereal and bananas, and drove out to Lamar Valley to watch the wildlife. They were fortunate to find a good place to park on one of the few turn-offs on the highway, and spent most of the day looking at and photographing the bison and occasional wolf and bear visible near the tree line across the valley. A few elk were also spotted on their side of the river, high on the bordering hills. Later, they drove further into the Park and walked a few miles on the one of the trails near the Yellowstone falls. When they returned to camp, it was getting late, so they hurriedly prepared a light dinner. By the time the dishes were washed and put away, and the water ready for their nightly tea, it was getting dark enough to use the lantern. As they settled down beside the fire, the men relaxed and took a few moments to gather their thoughts and put the day into perspective.

Martin comments, “Wasn’t that a great day? It is such a privilege nowadays to be able to see buffalo and other wild creatures in their natural environment. Every time I see them in nature, I am sickened by how we slaughtered them in earlier years. I always wonder why we did that, why we just couldn’t leave nature and its creatures alone and coexist with them?”

Mark and Morya nod their agreement in silence.

After a few moments, Martin says, “Morya, I have been wanting to ask you for some time how you define freedom?”

Morya, smiling, replies, “To me freedom is obeying the will of God in all things.”

Martin ponders this seeming paradox and then asks Mark the same question.

Mark says, “For me, freedom would be sitting at the feet of the masters and listening to them speak, not worrying about the trials and tribulations of fleshly embodiment.”

Morya says, “And for you, Martin, what is your definition of freedom?”

Martin responds, “Freedom to me is the ability to do and say and be whatever I want. I do not like to be restrained or controlled by others.” He pauses and then adds, “And I suppose, from a political point of view, freedom is the ability to choose one’s leaders and have a voice on public policy. Also, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Much like our Bill of Rights.”

Morya then raises a question: “And what of the bison we saw today. What do you think freedom means to them?”

Surprised by the question, Martin thinks and then says, “For a bison, even though I doubt they think about it, freedom probably is the ability to move where they want when they want, to eat, sleep, roll in the dirt, procreate, and just be themselves as they feel themselves to be.”

Picking up the theme, Mark then asks, “That’s a pretty good description, Martin. What about a pine tree? What is its sense of freedom?”

Martin laughs, “Well, for sure I never thought about that, but I imagine a pine tree’s sense of freedom would be to take root and find enough nourishment to grow tall and old and majestic, with the strength to endure hot summers and harsh winters and the occasional fire that might sweep through the valley.”

Morya comments, “Consider what we all have just said. There are many kinds of freedom and what it means to one may not be its most important attribute to another. Freedom is a quality of

God, and it exists in infinite dimensions and takes infinite shapes, depending upon who is expressing or experiencing the freedom.”

Mark asks, “Morya, you said that following the will of God was how you defined freedom. Could you explain that for us? How can following the will of God be freedom?”

Morya nods and drinks his tea. “Remember when Gautama told his disciples to ‘Go Be.’ He was telling them to not just memorize what he said, but to be their true selves. Becoming one’s true self is to experience true freedom. Freedom is found in one’s consciousness; it is the conscious awareness of unfolding the inner self – the inner quality, as you would call it, Martin. Freedom is closely connected with one’s self-awareness. For me, loving and following the will of God is what I am in essence. Therefore, when I obey God and follow His will, I am free.”

Mark thinks about this for a moment, and then comments: “Freedom is not merely something granted by the framers of constitutions or the leaders of government. Freedom is a condition of life that is inherent in life itself. It cannot be created or destroyed by man. Freedom exists, like love or beauty exists. It is there to be experienced and enjoyed by all.”

Martin says, “But not everyone is an artist and not everyone falls in love. If beauty or love does not exist for some, how can you say it is a universal condition?”

Mark laughs and replies, “I have a good analogy. Suppose we held at my institute a conference on the sun. Scholars were invited from Nome, Alaska, from St. Louis, Missouri, from the Amazon in Brazil, from the Isla de los Estados at the tip of Argentina. Each was asked to describe the characteristics of the sun. Each would give a different explanation, depending upon how they saw the sun at their locations. Yet what they were describing was always the sun; it

was just experienced differently. Freedom is like the sun; it exists whether we observe it or not or whether different people experience it in a different way.”

Martin says, “I suppose that is the same way with conceptions of God. Some people conceptualize God as a humanlike figure; some as a symbol or a word; some as an abstraction; some as a force; some as a spirit. The truth is, none of us know what God really is in totality. We can only experience God as we are able to perceive Him.”

Morya comments, “That’s a good explanation, Martin. Think about this: If you have experienced your inner quality as honor and integrity, then it is through the lens of honor and integrity that you best understand God. It is also through that lens that you can best understand freedom. And, for that matter, best understand yourself.”

Martin says, “Yes, I guess that is right. To me, when I think about it, true freedom is the ability to express honor and integrity in my life as I want to express it.”

Mark adds, “And here is an interesting consideration: Your inner quality – some call it the God quality or the ‘I AM Presence’ – is the aspect of God that the Creator gave you as your essential individuality. God’s will is to have you become and express His quality of honor and integrity. That is what you are – a seed of God honor and integrity – and becoming that quality, for you, is freedom.”

Morya nods his agreement and then says, “These are all good insights. Now let me complete the circle, Martin. If God intends you to express honor and integrity, and these qualities are parts of His own consciousness, then as you yourself want to become and experience honor and integrity, do you not also want to do God’s will?”

Martin, after pausing to think through the logic, replies: “Yes, I can see that. I want to be my true self, whose character is honor and integrity. God wants me to express that character, because honor and integrity are parts of Himself given to me. If I act with honor and integrity, then I am doing what God wants me to do. And if I do what God wants me to do, then I am doing God’s will. At the level of the inner quality, therefore, my free will and God’s will become one. To me, at that point in consciousness, freedom is to follow God’s will.”

Mark exclaims, “Exactly! That is why Morya loves God’s will so much. God’s will is good, and to do what God wills is to do what mankind in his highest consciousness wants to do for himself. The Buddha and all the great saints of the ages have in common an overwhelming desire for man to know himself and to be himself, because the true self of man is an expression of an aspect of God. To become one’s true self is to become a son or daughter of God, as our Lord Jesus taught us to become.”

Martin says, “That is a beautiful concept. And I will tell you a secret. For years, since I discovered my true self, I have kept saying this simple mantra: ‘I am a son of God. I love God. The will of God is good. I serve the will of God with honor and integrity, purity and perfection.’ It is simple, but it reminds me of what is important in life and helps me to focus on the best steps forward in whatever activity I am engaged in. And now, from this conversation, I can add a simple motto for myself: ‘Take what God has given you and do something good with it’.”

Morya laughs and claps his hands. “Excellent!”

The three men quietly drank their tea, staring at the fire and looking upward at the stars, now and then covered by clouds racing across the sky.

Martin breaks the silence. “Those clouds are moving pretty fast. I wonder if a front is coming in. Have either of you heard anything about the weather the next couple of days?”

Mark says, “No, when I get up into the mountains, I sort of lose contact with everything except what we are doing at the moment.”

Martin answers his own question. “I heard before we arrived that a weather system from the Northwest would be coming through in about a week. Maybe this is the leading edge.

Regardless, we still have a couple of days of good weather here in the valley. But I bet there will be snow on top of the Beartooth Pass in a day or so.”

Morya comments, “It is still summer.”

Martin replies, “Yes, but it can snow up here any time. Maybe we will drive up the Pass tomorrow and see what the top of the world looks like.”

Morya and Mark nod their agreement.

Martin then returns to the subject of freedom. “I was thinking [the other men groan]....No, it’s not that bad. I was thinking that while we agree that freedom is doing God’s will, since it is God’s will that we become our true selves, then how can freedom best be institutionalized in government? Most people do not have an understanding of their true self, yet most people want to have as much personal freedom as possible. If a person has freedom to do what he wants, but – since he is not reflecting his inner quality – he wants to do something not appropriate or even harmful to others, how does government balance the freedom to become one’s true self with the restrictions it must place on misbehavior from people who might harm society? There ought to be a difference between freedom to do good and freedom to do evil. And defining that

difference, operationalizing it in a system of justice, has to be one of the key roles of government.”

Mark says, “I recall in reading some of the ancient mystery books that there were Golden Ages in the past in which an enlightened leader instructed his people on what was the proper use of free will.”

Martin comments, “I have never read in any contemporary academic history book that such Golden Ages existed, so I think that these are myths rather than true historical accounts.”

Mark replies, “I think they did exist in ancient civilizations before the current historical record. How else can you explain the persistence of the idea of an ideal form of government since recorded history began? Think of the Greeks!”

Martin says, “I think an ideal form of government is a product of the same mental process men use to come up with the ideal family or ideal society or ideal beauty or ideal anything. Mankind has the ability – how it developed, I do not know – to conceive of ideals. And these ideals often become the goals toward which men strive. And that striving – constantly seeking to arrive at a better tomorrow – is one of the primary means by which humanity evolves. I believe that the ability to conceive of an ideal in order to transcend our present limitations is one of the key tools we have for survival as a species. We may not be the strongest of God’s creatures, but we certainly have a powerful imagination!”

Morya comments, “Imagination is indeed a powerful tool, which can be used for good or for ill, as most tools can so be used. Imagination, if properly used, can be thought of as a visualization of the ideal. Ideals exist. God, after all, in our own minds is an ideal, since we do not know the totality of God. Our conceptualization of God’s will becomes, for example, a point of reference

for our moral codes. The best things in life – love, hope, creativity, mercy, honor, beauty, healing – are all ideals towards which we strive.

“However, ideals are not simply ideas. Ideals are aspirations on which men pin their hopes and focus their goals. Ideals are the common meeting ground between man and the gods. Freedom is such an ideal, and people for thousands of years have tried to define what freedom actually means – for themselves and humanity as a whole. Certain governments have enshrined the ideal of freedom as one of their foundations; but not all governments have done so. The fact that one government identifies itself with freedom and another government identifies itself with protecting people’s livelihood does not mean that freedom exists only for the citizens of the first government. Governments and societies, like individuals, tend to emphasize certain ideals more than others. And, in the classification of ideals, it is sometimes difficult to say that one ideal is better than another ideal. They are just different. Ideals in this sense are similar to the inner quality. The highest ideals and the inner qualities of mankind are all parts of God’s consciousness. Each ideal and each inner quality has its own role to play in the evolution of humanity.”

Morya pauses, then says: “It is getting late and I’m tired. I suggest we take up this discussion again tomorrow, and I will explain why I think a commonwealth of goodwill is the ideal form of government toward which we can strive at this point in history.”

#### Day Four: Red Lodge

##### [A Commonwealth of Goodwill](#)

Martin got up early the next morning and cooked up scrambled eggs, bacon, French toast, and coffee. The other men got up in time to eat it hot. After a leisurely breakfast (they were in no hurry to get to the top of Beartooth Pass because they wanted the sun to melt any ice that had

accumulated on the road), the three men sat by the fire in the morning chill and enjoyed their coffee as the day awoke around them. The mountains were beautiful, their rugged peaks as varied as could be imagined. An hour passed with light conversation, and then everyone packed into the truck for a trip up the Beartooth Highway.

As Martin expected, it was cold and cloudy near the top, with patches of slowly melting ice. The drifting snow in places towered over 15 feet beside the road. Amazingly enough, when they got to the top of the pass, the sky was clear as crystal. They stopped and walked around for some time, taking pictures of the clouds blanketing the green valley far below. Martin collected some interesting black crystals and put them into his Army map bag. They then drove down the other side of the pass to Red Lodge in order to restock their supplies. After that, they crossed over to Highway 72/120 to get onto the Chief Joseph Highway in Wyoming. Their campsite was near Willow Park across the border in Montana. It was a long way around, but they had plenty of time to enjoy the sights and stretch their legs. When they got back to the camp, it was nearing 5:30 pm and the men set about gathering firewood. Mark cooked fresh trout purchased in Red Lodge, flavored with lemons and olive oil. He sliced some potatoes and cooked them with onions, and topped everything off with a tossed salad made from local produce. As they ate, Morya concluded that – by far – Mark’s cooking was better than Martin’s. A little joking here and there while the dishes were washed and put away, and the men settled down into their chairs for what Martin and Mark had been anticipating all day – Morya’s discourse of his ideal form of government.

As they drank their tea and enjoyed the quiet solitude of nature, Martin finally broke the silence and asked Morya to tell them about his concept of a commonwealth.

Morya looked for a while at the flickering fire, and then asked, “Does anyone see any stars tonight?” Mark and Martin look up and shook their heads. Morya continues, “As you know, just because you can’t see the stars, doesn’t mean they don’t exist. And if you can see them, that doesn’t mean that you can easily reach them, or even understand them.” Since Morya sometimes talked in a quizzical manner, his friends let him proceed at his own pace.

Morya explains, “An ideal government is something like the stars. Some people can conceive of what an ideal government looks like; others cannot. But no one can easily attain an ideal government – if only because mankind itself is imperfect and the souls of individuals are still evolving. Admittedly, my ideal government is not something that can be easily achieved today, but I believe it encapsulates the potential of mankind on earth at this time. An ideal government must reflect the highest aspirations of the people; it is a goal toward which people can aspire.”

He pauses, stretches his legs a bit, and then goes on. “As I envision it, an ideal government in the modern world has to look beyond its own borders. In fact, with all nations dependent upon one another for trade, communications, technology, food, a clean environment, etc. – it is necessary in today’s world for national governments to cooperate with one another to the greatest extent possible. Despite their continued outbreak, mostly in Third World countries, wars are increasingly recognized as being an outdated means to solve disagreements between nations. Dialogue and finding mutual benefit are becoming more of the norm. That being said, there are relatively few effective forums for resolving international issues on a global scale. My ideal government is a commonwealth of goodwill nations, with an international forum specifically established to hear disagreements between states and to suggest – not mandate – resolutions that would be fair to all and supportive of world peace.”

He takes a few sips of tea and continues, as Martin adds a new log to the crackling fire.

“I use commonwealth in the sense of a community of nations bound together to serve the common good. I am not speaking of a one-world government to which each nation is subservient, but rather a free association of nation-states working together for the benefit of the global community. An international forum to operationalize or make practical the activities of the commonwealth is an important first step. More on this forum later.

“The underlying assumption of this ideal community of nations is that all men are brothers and that we all sink or swim together on this planetary home. Each nation in this commonwealth would retain its sovereignty and be able to pursue its own policies. However, each participating national government would pledge to cooperate with the others wherever necessary and possible. The types of issues addressed by this commonwealth would generally be global issues too great for a single nation or even a single bloc of nations to resolve or manage on their own. These issues might include, for example, pollution of the ocean, environmental issues such as climate change, global response to catastrophic events involving multiple regions of the world, developing and maintaining international space stations, harmful activities of rogue and dangerous states, and so on.

“The ideal on which this commonwealth would be based is universal goodwill. This goodwill is in turn based on the recognition that – whatever one’s cultural differences – we are all God’s children in this continuum of time and space and that what unites us is far greater and far more important than what divides us. This sense of universality also stems from the fact that we are also the children of Nature, having evolved on this planet as a species with exceptional capacity to help or harm our environment and each other.

“For lack of a better name, I am calling this ideal government a commonwealth of nations of goodwill. It is not a government in the sense that its institutions oversee the lives of the world’s

peoples. It is a formally established global organization, with institutions created as necessary, for the world's nations to work together cooperatively on the most pressing problems of the day.

“The commonwealth differs from the United Nations in that it would not be dominated by a few major countries, nor would it be fractured along the lines of various ideological and social-economic blocs. It would be comprised of nations sharing a sense of global goodwill. As I mentioned, the most important organization of this commonwealth of goodwill nations would be an international forum, whose members would be selected by these nations themselves under the common criteria of their very best representatives who have a global outlook. The power of the forum would not be based on political factors. Rather, its power would be based on the universal recognition of the independence and quality and goodwill of the national representatives. Being the best their individual nations could select, the discussions and solutions generated by the representatives would be the very best that mankind can derive. Hence, their suggestions to the global community would have credibility because of the integrity of their authors.

“Being sovereign states, national governments could accept or reject or modify recommendations presented by the commonwealth's forum. A rogue nation could elect to go its own way and seek to harm other countries, but it would face the collective weight of world opinion and the possibility of sanctions from the other members of the commonwealth.

“This, then, in short, is what I envision as an ideal government toward which mankind today should strive.”

Mark was the first to reply. “I agree with what you said, Morya. A commonwealth of goodwill is an excellent ideal toward which to strive. Mankind as a whole has great incentive to move in this

direction because of the increased interdependencies of all nations – a trend that appears to be growing stronger year by year.”

Martin, carefully composing his thoughts, says, “I think the ideal is fine. But I am troubled by the challenge of finding individuals within each nation that are both trusted by their governments and sufficiently global-minded to serve as representatives in the commonwealth’s forum. Nation-states, and most particularly leaders of nations and heads of governmental institutions, very often have an ‘us or them’ attitude. A large percentage of the leaders we have today would expect their representatives to the commonwealth’s forum to have not only universal goodwill but also a healthy predisposition to be loyal to ‘national’ interests. If this were the case, then the forum’s representatives would not always reflect universal goodwill but rather frequently engage in bickering over issues. This is what we now see in the United Nations. How are you going to get from the UN model of today to the place where the representatives of individual states are indeed true global citizens of goodwill?”

Morya, brightens and says, “Yes, that is the question. Under what conditions could such an ideal government be possible?”

The three men remain silent for a few minutes reflecting upon Morya’s question. Mark then speaks up: “I think that is a discussion that would take some time. May I suggest that for the remainder of this fine evening, we enjoy the fire and light conversation and then tomorrow take up Morya’s question in earnest? I myself need a little time to formulate my answers.”

Everyone thought this a good idea. Martin adds another log to the fire, refills the cups, and then relaxes in his chair, his eyes resting on the fire, but his mind turning over Morya’s intriguing question. One by one, they drift off to their tents for the evening. Morya was the last to call it a

night, sitting silently before the dying embers of the fire, his own mind considering the various options to make his ideal a reality.

### Day Five: Yellowstone National Park

#### Conditions for an Ideal Government

The trip through Yellowstone Park the next morning was pleasant, and the men saw a large momma black bear with two cubs running up a small hill next to the road. The traffic was heavy at times. People tend to stop in the Park when they see an animal or other interesting sight, never mind the narrowness of the road or other vehicles. But that's part of the Yellowstone experience and no one seemed to mind. Old Faithful was faithful still, never ceasing to amaze its audience. The fact that the entire basin was a caldera in the process of bulging under magma pressure didn't seem to concern his friends, although Martin noted how the dead tree line was growing wider around some of the "hot spots" in the Park. Yellowstone is, geologically speaking, a very active area and the subject of intense government and academic investigation because of its classification as a super-volcano. Martin, in fact, had considered this as one possible catastrophic scenario in his disaster planning work with government. But on this sunny day, the beauty of the scenery and comfortable temperature contributed to high spirits among the three men, who preferred to set aside for the moment what might happen in the future.

They returned to camp about 6 that evening, a little later than they had anticipated, but not bad considering the traffic. They set about their respective chores, and Morya surprised them by saying he would cook dinner that night. No one had ever heard of Morya cooking before, so Mark and Martin tacitly agreed not to be surprised if the meal was a disaster.

But, true to form, Morya prepared a delicious camp feast of grilled salmon, baked potatoes, fresh corn, and hot buns. Martin and Mark stuffed themselves and wondered aloud why Morya hadn't

told them of this talent earlier. Martin did the dishes, while Mark busied himself with collecting a bit of firewood for the evening's campfire. About 8 or so, all was done, and the three men fell comfortably into their chairs with a cup of steaming Darjeeling tea.

After about five minutes, Martin, the most impatient of the three, asks, "Well, Morya, that was a great meal and one that most agreeably sets the stage for our next discussion. You were going to tell us the conditions under which your ideal commonwealth would be possible?"

Morya stretches and stifles a yawn, then says, "I am enjoying the fire after the exertion of keeping you two properly feed. Why don't you start the conversation?"

Always rising to an intellectual challenge, Martin replies, "OK. I'll begin. I have noted before that no ideal government has ever existed because people themselves have never been ideal. Without ideal people, an ideal government is impossible. And yesterday I commented on the near impossibility of finding objective, qualified, and sufficiently influential people to serve on the leadership council or whatever governing body would exist in this community of goodwill. This is not to say that I don't like the idea; I think it is great. But, like most ideals, it is unlikely to be realized anytime soon."

Morya just stares at the fire as if he weren't listening, so Mark speaks up. "I think such a commonwealth is possible, because of two current conditions. First, there is a precedent for such a global body in the United Nations and in the many regional organizations found around the world. And second, there is growing recognition world that many of the problems we face as humanity – climate change, environment, economic interdependency, and so on – cannot be solved by individual countries acting on their own. These two factors, I believe, make it possible

– I would go so far as to say probable – that the vision Morya has shared with us will eventually become a reality...maybe in two generations, perhaps less.”

Morya nods in apparent agreement.

Martin says in reply: “I agree that your two existing conditions are correct and that they are conducive to such a commonwealth. However, you miss the most important point – the character of man himself. If you cannot change the character of man, then you will never be able to have an effective commonwealth of goodwill to address the global problems you speak of.”

Morya sighs and sips his tea, while Mark takes up the gauntlet. “But you forget that mankind adjusts pretty well to its environment. Mankind progressed from identifying mostly with his tribe, to his city, to his region, to his nation. And now, increasing numbers of people identify themselves as global citizens. As you shift your sense of self-identify, you tend to broaden your definition of what is in your interest. If this is true, then why can’t the current trends of people seeing themselves as residents of a global community eventually alter their opinion of so-called national interests being of greater importance than global interests? If a sufficient number of people have a broader sense of self-identity, then Morya’s commonwealth would indeed be possible.”

A twinkle forms in Morya’s eye, but he remains silent behind his cup.

Martin comments, “Again, what you say is true, but it took thousands, maybe tens of thousands, of years before a portion – and not all – of humanity began to view national interests as being of greater importance – sometimes, and I emphasize sometimes – than the interests of their family or local community. In many parts of the world, there is not even a sense of nation yet today, a fact that plays out in the many conflicts we have throughout the developing world. Are you

suggesting that we wait for another one or two thousand years before a sufficient number of so-called global citizens emerge to make a commonwealth possible?”

Morya laughs but only settles more comfortably into his chair. Mark leaps to his own defense: “Your timetables have a flaw in that the movement of self-identity from the smaller social unit to the larger social unit has accelerated tremendously in recent generations because of advances in technology, communications, knowledge of other cultures, and a host of other reasons. We are talking about an evolution, not of a thousand years, but maybe 10 or 20 years. That certainly would earn a place for Morya’s commonwealth of goodwill among some of the more practical visions of an ideal future government.”

Martin acts surprised and says, “Mark, I have seldom heard you to be so rational or so practical in your arguments. You usually speak in terms of helping people find their true self, but today you have not mentioned this at all, rather pointing to technology and interdependencies as the social and political drivers toward this ideal commonwealth. But to me, interestingly enough, it is precisely the question of how to change the character of man that makes or breaks the practicality of achieving the commonwealth.”

Martin turns to Morya and asks half-jokingly, “Morya, have you rested enough to be engaged with this conversation?”

Morya looks at Martin, and says with a smile, “Yes, I was just letting you two do the preliminaries.” Mark and Martin shake their heads, acknowledging that this indeed was what Morya had been doing. “So please, Morya,” says Mark, “tell us more about your concept of an ideal form of government.”

Morya begins, “Actually, both of you are right in your identification of the conditions necessary for a commonwealth of goodwill. The interdependencies of the world are altering individuals’ perceptions of their social units. The most essential condition, however, is proper consciousness. Consciousness is the sum total of man’s awareness at sub-conscious, super-conscious, and self-awareness levels. Where man’s consciousness is, his political institutions will follow, since politics is the art of the practical, and the practical is what mankind currently is aware of and thinking. If men lower their consciousness, then the institutions of politics will themselves become less refined. If men elevate their consciousness, then the institutions of politics will become more refined. If men raise their consciousness to the level of universal goodwill, then the commonwealth of which I spoke will naturally become a reality.”

Mark nods in agreement and adds, “The key, then, is raising men’s consciousness to the level of goodwill for all. Actually, all three of us are working toward this goal in our own ways, but it seems that success is measured one person at a time rather than one nation at a time. The process of refining the consciousness of all of mankind is like the building of glaciers – it takes a long, long time.”

Morya nods, takes a sip of tea, and continues: “It does take some time. But examine each of yourselves. Were you born with a sense of goodwill to all? Or were you born with a need to survive?”

Martin answers, “I don’t know about Mark, but I can remember even being jealous of my mother nursing my younger sister. In retrospect, that seems pretty selfish to me. So, I suppose, survival is the inborn trait while a sense of goodwill needs to be learned.”

Mark rolls his eyes but didn't comment, so Morya continues, "Actually, every child is born with an instinct to survive. That is part of nature's way to ensure the survival of the species. But, as a child matures and becomes more confident in his ability to survive, his consciousness expands to include others – his family, his friends, and his neighborhood. Gradually, as the child becomes a man or a woman, he or she broadens their awareness to include communities, nations, the world, or even all of life. The point is: there is no barrier or logical end for the expansion of consciousness. Consciousness can grow or it can shrink; it can be narrow or it can be broad; it can be focused or it can be diffused. It can be most anything. But most importantly, consciousness is a tool which can be controlled by its possessor: the individual human being.

"So the challenge is, first, educating individuals to know of their capability to control their consciousness; second, to train them in how to gain that control; third, to show them the benefits of expanding their self-awareness; and fourth, to give them an opportunity to expand their consciousness in the real world."

Morya pauses for a moment. "This is not rocket science. It is logical and doable. But who are the educators? Some people educate themselves. Some people need a little help to pass beyond some inner barrier to free their minds to the reality of their true self."

Martin comments, "This process is so time consuming. How do we get from here to there?"

Mark laughs, "You have no patience!"

Martin says, "Well, what you say about me is true, but I am not the only impatient person on this planet. We have been around for – what – more than 30,000 years as socially consciousness human beings and we have never yet created an ideal government. That's over 1,000 generations. Why should we be optimistic that we can do it now?"

Mark says, more seriously, “We have to start somewhere; every tree begins as a tiny seed.”

Thinking for a moment, he adds: “Actually, if we speak of seeds, the technology, the education, the awareness of interdependency, the recognition of the global challenges we face as a species – all are convincing more and more people to expand their sense of self-awareness to include larger and larger social groupings. There are probably many thousands, maybe millions, of people who today consider themselves to be citizens of the earth, not simply citizens of their nation or local community. The seeds are there; the growth environment is favorable; an ideal government of the sort mentioned by Morya is possible – and within a shorter time frame than the thousands of years you speak of, Martin.”

Martin finally concedes the point. “I confess, Mark, your argument is sound and you are right about the growing number of people who consider themselves citizens of the earth. The environmental movement and concerns about climate change are major drivers for this expansion of consciousness. But even if the conditions are right, the politics of government will likely slow the realization of a global community of goodwill. People in power do not like to let go of that power. And the development of a global community of goodwill, led by a forum comprised of subject matter experts, is not likely to emerge quickly in the face of international competition. Look at the experience of the League of Nations and the UN today.”

He pauses and continues, “OK, setting aside the political challenges, I agree that personal consciousness is the key to a commonwealth of goodwill, and I agree that more and more people are reaching a level of understanding of global connectivity which might make such a commonwealth acceptable and supported. What other conditions, Morya, do you see as necessary for this ideal to become a reality?”

Morya, looking into his cup, says, “Let’s talk more about this tomorrow. I want to take a short walk before retiring and enjoy the stars.”

Martin asks, “Be careful out there. Do you want the bear spray?”

Morya chuckles as he gets up. “No, not now. I’ll be gone for just a few moments. See you in a bit,” He walks down the road leading out of the camp site.

Martin looks at Mark and asks, “Should one of us go with him?”

Mark shakes his head. “He’ll be fine. Let’s put away everything for the evening.”

About a half-hour later, Morya returns, says goodnight, and retires to his tent. Shortly thereafter, Mark and Martin do the same, each looking forward to a good night’s sleep before moving their things to the Rock Creek Resort just south of Red Lodge, Montana, for the remainder of their vacation.

#### Day Six: Move to Rock Creek Resort and Visit to Cooke City

Prior to leaving for the vacation, Martin had booked a condo at the Rock Creek Resort to give everyone a respite from a week of camping. After checking in and getting their refrigerator stocked up with groceries from nearby Red Lodge, Martin suggested they drive down to Cooke City and explore the old mine tailings off the Lulu Pass Trail. Not having anything better to do, they all piled into Martin’s pickup and took off, bringing lots of water and snacks.

They found the Lulu trail passable in most places, with a few drifts of snow covering the dirt road at higher elevations. Martin got out at every opportunity to hammer away at rocks and shift through the tailings – looking for gold, he said. The others just stood around the truck for the most part, sometimes taking a stroll to look at abandoned buildings or to gain a more perfect

photograph of the surrounding mountains. After a few hours, they drove into Cooke City for an early dinner and then returned to the Resort just as the sun disappeared behind the mountains.

There was a chill in the air when they arrived, so Martin quickly got a fire going in the fireplace, set a pot of water to boil on the stove, and placed some cookies and fruit on the table. With a cup of hot tea in their hands and a warm fire at their feet, the men comfortably settled into their chairs and listened to the sounds of the creek flowing rapidly over boulders just below their porch. In the distance, there were flashes of lightning around the summits of some of the mountains, and an occasional drop of light rain from nearby thunderstorms fell on the porch.

#### Momentums in Human Behavior

All were quiet for some time, and then Morya spoke up. “Martin, you are surprisingly silent for one so anxious to continue the conversation of last night. May I ask, what is on your mind to make you so thoughtful?”

Martin pours a bit more hot water into his cup, and then into Mark’s as he stretches it forward.

“Well,” Martin begins, “I have been thinking about a dream I had last night that might bear upon our discussion of the conditions that must exist before an ideal commonwealth can be formed. I know the dream reveals more about me than about any other thing, but still it vividly displays a condition that will be difficult to overcome – at least for most people. I’m not a good interpreter of dreams, so maybe you guys can help out.” Martin starts to recount his dream, as the others listen attentively.

“I was with a beautiful woman whom I loved and who loved me. There came into the dream a flying orca, a killer whale, absolutely magnificent in its strength and power. The woman loved the orca, and I liked – even loved – it very much, having great respect for its size and presence. Yet, even as I admired the orca, I knew in my heart that I would have to slay the orca because, if

I did not, it would take the beautiful woman and probably destroy me. But I was torn in this, because I liked the orca even though it posed a potential threat to me and my loved one. The orca was friendly toward both of us. We all seemed to love each other. But the orca seemed an intrusion into our lives, and I sensed that eventually it would do us harm. The dream ended before I could decide what to do, even though I already knew what I ought to do.”

Mark says, “Now, that is an interesting dream. Obviously the woman is your soul, you are you, and the orca is what is called the ‘dweller on the threshold’ in the mystical teachings. Because the killer whale can fly, its power comes from the mind. You need to gain control of your mind so that its power can be used for good, to free you and your soul to complete the mission God has given you.”

Martin responds, “I am not sure I understand what you mean by the dweller on the threshold.”

Mark gestures toward Morya, who answers: “The dweller on the threshold is that part of an individual’s self-awareness that stands in the way of one becoming his or her true self. It can be thought of as the accumulated momentum of one’s life – past and present – which detours or presents an obstacle to the individual from becoming integrated spiritually and materially. All of the lust, all of the selfish ambitions and activities causing harm to others, all of the negative thoughts and feelings and memories that one holds on to and refuses to let go of – all of these comprise the dweller. The dweller exists in our consciousness, because – as illustrated in your dream – we somehow like and admire these parts of ourselves. Almost all of mankind hold on to a set of negative characteristics, which – in a moment of anger, thoughtlessness, laziness, revenge, or whatever – come to the surface of consciousness and is accepted by the person as being what he wants to do or to become.

“This accumulation of negative momentums is called in the esoteric teachings the dweller on the threshold. It really is the sum total of an individual’s bad side – which the person himself has accepted and identified with at various times. It must be slain – metaphorically speaking – before the individual can become his true self. By ‘slaying the dweller’ I mean giving up and transmuting all of that negativity in one’s consciousness. By ‘transmuting’ I mean changing the moral polarity of the energy comprising the dweller from negativity into a positive or beneficial energy. This is symbolized in the ancient teachings as changing base metal into gold. Being willing and able to go through this process is necessary for the soul to return to grace when standing before God.”

Martin asks, “That truly is an esoteric explanation. Do you mean to say that, even though a person has experience with his or her inner quality, that they can never become their true self unless they somehow ‘slay’ the dweller?”

Mark says, “Yes,” and Morya nods.

Martin asks a further question: “You use the term ‘slay’ the dweller, but is it possible to ‘control’ or ‘tame’ the dweller? The reason I ask that is because, as a human being, I feel I need to have the power and emotions embodied in that orca in order to survive and prosper in this world. If we cannot defend ourselves, then the best of humanity will be but prey to those who would exploit us. Surely, that cannot be the will of God, or even the intention of the so-called ancient teachings.”

Morya replies, “Slaying the dweller is eliminating from one’s consciousness the ill effects of misbehaving while in embodiment as a human being. Misbehaving is the misuse of God’s energy to create negative rather than positive things on earth. God does not want His children to be

victimized by evil doers. God wants His children to properly use their minds, emotions, physical body, and spirituality to address the challenges of life. There is a proper time and method to protect oneself and assert one's opinions. Imagine God's energy as a waterfall pouring through your consciousness. You – the person in embodiment – can take this energy and use it as you will. For instance, you can use the energy in an expression of love or an expression of hate. The purpose of 'slaying the dweller' is to take that accumulation of negative energy residing in one's consciousness and refining it into a positive energy to use for good. Does that clarify this a bit?"

Martin nods and then says, "Yes, that is clearer. However, the existence of the dweller is what concerns me about the establishment of an ideal government such as the commonwealth of goodwill. If people themselves have to be perfect in order for an ideal government to become a reality, then how on earth can all seven billion of us overcome our accumulated negative (even evil in some instances) momentums? It is enormously difficult even for good-minded people to perfect themselves. And, from what I have read, there few saints among us struggled mightily to become a saint. This world is not comprised mostly of saints, but of sinners, some of whom are truly evil but most of whom are only partially bad. And, what bothers me the most and what was reflected in my dream – if Mark's interpretation is correct – is that someone like myself (who is not perfect but who believes in God and tries each day to do good things) still embraces certain negative aspects of my character. I did not want to slay the orca, but instead wanted to embrace it and invite it into my world with my true love so we could all enjoy life together. This, I believe, is the deeply held attitude of most of mankind. We want to be good, we hope to become our true selves, but deep within our consciousness we cling to and admire some of the negative things we have done and have become. How is it possible, then, for a commonwealth of goodwill to be formed on this earth, if its citizens are not and possibly cannot be perfected?"

Mark shakes his head at this profound expression of doubt, but Morya nods and says, “Yes, you are right. The problem is within man himself. But I ask you, Martin, if the problem is within you, is the solution there as well?”

Martin thinks for a moment, then says quietly, “I don’t want to be perfect. And I don’t want to be a saint.” He gets up, puts his cup down, and goes to his bedroom. Mark and Morya sit silently for a while by the fire and then retire to their own rooms, allowing the fire to gradually die out on its own.

### Day Seven: Grand Tetons

#### [Is Perfection Possible for Mankind?](#)

The next day everyone got up fairly early, had a quick bowl of cereal and fruit for breakfast and, at Mark’s suggestion, took off in his SUV for a trip to see the Grand Tetons south of Yellowstone. It was a several hour trip, so the men chatted about the weather, their old campsite, future vacations, and other light subjects. When the Tetons finally loomed before them in all their glory, Morya said, “You know, in the universe there is no such thing as perfection. Certainly, nothing that exists in time and space is perfect. Everything is constantly evolving, moving from one state of existence to another. Perfection in this world, therefore, is not an end-state, but rather a constantly retreating goal never to be obtained. The question, Martin, is not whether you want to be perfect – for that is an impossibility – but whether you want to try to become your true self by continuously improving your character?”

Martin sat silently for a moment and then replies, “Let’s talk about this later this evening, because I can see it may lead to some interesting conclusions.” The others nod, and the rest of the day was spent in sightseeing and easy conversation.

That evening, after dinner and settling down with their habitual cups of tea, Martin reintroduces the discussion begun by Morya earlier in the day.

“To take up Morya’s point from this morning, let us assume that perfection is not possible on this planet. That implies that an ideal society or an ideal government is not possible either. Nor is it possible to have a perfect or an ideal person. Our daily observations prove that this is the case. We may have in our mind some ideal, but we will never see such a thing as an ideal tree, an ideal flower, an ideal car, an ideal building, an ideal institution, an ideal day, an ideal world, an ideal universe, an ideal person. Therefore, if the ideal is equated with perfection, then the realization of ideals and the achievement of perfection are impossible.”

He pauses for a moment to consider his next words. “But why do we as human beings constantly use the terms ideal and perfection, if they are non-existent? What are we actually describing? If, as it seems true, everything in the universe is changing and evolving, never reaching an end-state of perfection, then what does that say of spiritual things? What does that say of God? Is God perfect, as we all believe, or is He evolving? If not perfect, then how can He be God? If God, then how can He be constantly changing?”

Morya chuckles and Mark speaks up: “Martin, your logic is strong, but it is blinding you to an obvious truth. Why can’t God both improve Himself and still be perfect? Consider His universe of souls. His seeds of consciousness are scattered across cosmos – including the seed that we as individuals have as our inner quality. These seeds of consciousness are intended to mature, ripen, and bear good fruit. If you, Martin, increase your honor and integrity and express it in the world through your own creation and through your own correct use of energy, isn’t God Himself increasing because of that fruition of His own consciousness? You are His seed and the perfection that is God can increase as you gradually improve yourself.”

Martin smiles at this, and says, “Well, I suppose it is possible that God evolves as His consciousness and qualities expand throughout His creation. But why then do we say that God is perfect if He is constantly changing?”

Morya exclaims, “Enough! Who among us knows what God is, what God thinks, or what God may look like from the perspective of creatures on the other side of the Milky Way? We are discussing whether an ideal government is possible for man. We know that a perfect government is not possible – if we define perfection as meaning no further improvement can be made. But our terms seem to be getting in the way of our reasoning. Ideals are not necessarily perfection. Ideals are goals that we routinely can conceive of; perfection is an end-state of which we have no knowledge or experience. In government – as in all affairs of men – there is no perfection. There are, however, worthy goals that can be pursued. And it is in that sense – worthy goals to pursue – that we refer to when we discuss ideal government. An ideal government is a vision of an improved government that is much better than the government we have today. If we reach that goal, our understanding of what government can and should be will evolve, and we will set new goals so that further improvement can be made. Life evolves, society evolves, and individuals evolve. The planet itself is evolving beneath our feet – as Yellowstone so beautifully demonstrates. So let’s set aside all talk of the absoluteness of God (of which we know absolutely nothing), and human perfection (which we know is impossible), and instead concentrate on how government in this day and age might be improved.”

Martin enthusiastically takes up the theme. “If improvement is the goal, not perfection, then we are indeed in the realm of what is possible. Everyone on this planet would agree that improvement is feasible in their lives and in their social institutions. Improvement may be slow, but it is possible. In terms of government, and more precisely the conditions required for the

realization of a global commonwealth of goodwill, the major kinds of necessary improvements would include ... Let's see." He begins to count on his fingers and then lists those that come to mind:

- "Mankind must expand his sense of self-identity to include others.
- "Men and women must broaden their understanding of self-interest to include the interconnections and interdependencies that link us all together.
- "Leaders of nations must seek to serve their people rather than themselves.
- "Bureaucrats in government must be rewarded for meaningful service to their stakeholders and forgo the common 'we know best, trust us' attitude.
- "Institutions must be created at the international level that allow for the free, creative, and equal discussion what is the common good.
- "Some kind of international mechanism must be created that allows all governments – great and small – to seek fair redress for their grievances with other nations."

Martin pauses and continues, "These are just a few points that I can immediately think of. Yet, even these relatively simple improvements would help create an environment more conducive to the evolution of a commonwealth along the lines Morya is suggesting."

Reflecting for a moment, Mark comments, "What is interesting to me, Martin, is that you did not mention God or religion in this list. Did you deliberately avoid spiritual factors, or perhaps it was an oversight? This might be a serious omission, because human beings are both material and spiritual in nature."

Martin responds, "I did not deliberately avoid mentioning spiritual matters, but I am not sure that government should be based on religion. Government is a practical institution created by men to

address and help solve real-life problems. If man can improve himself through his own means, why can't we create an improved system of government without involving God?"

This sparks a quick response from Mark. "Wait a minute, Martin. Aren't you the one who argues that men and women have an inner quality that is spiritual in nature and that, as individuals express that inner quality, then they and their society will improve? And isn't it true, Martin, that also you believe that if individuals improve, their governing institutions will improve also?"

Martin says, "Yes, I believe that. But I also believe that individuals can improve themselves without God. If the inner quality exists in the consciousness of man as a potential our species has evolved through millions of years, then becoming one's true self is simply the natural unfoldment of evolution. If this is true, creating a commonwealth of goodwill may be possible without divine intervention."

Morya comments, "I think the only difference being discussed here is the extent to which God and spirituality are explicitly identified with our ideal government. Don't forget that many nations, including the United States, mention God in their governance documents. And many countries, such as those in the Islamic tradition, believe that religion and government are deeply intertwined and cannot and should not be separated."

Mark adds, "Yes, but I still am curious. Tell me, Martin, why didn't you list a stronger belief in God as being essential for an ideal government?"

Martin explains, "I do believe in God, very firmly. And I do believe that my inner quality is a gift of God and a window to Himself that we can use to expand our consciousness and draw closer to understanding some of His great mysteries. But that is my personal belief. I think that every person should have the right, and they do indeed have the capability, of understanding God

in their own way. Who am I to say that God is honor and integrity, and then feel hostility toward someone who understands God as love or beauty or harmony or order? None of us have a complete understanding of God. And if that is true, then why speak of belief in God as a precondition for an ideal government?

“There are many people who perceive the spiritual side of life but who do not conceptualize God as some sort of Divine Being. The key is not belief in an entity called ‘God,’ but rather a sense of the magnificence of life itself and a deep respect for that life. An individual could be a good citizen under an ideal government and still not pray to God as you do, Mark. He or she could instead embrace life all around them, seeing nature and the universe as a thing to be treasured and protected and loved. If this is true, then maybe belief in God is not as important as a common sense of goodwill in creating an ideal government. And that sense of goodwill does not necessary flow from a belief in God. Rather, a sense of goodwill might well flow from within man himself as he recognizes himself as part of the majesty of life all around.”

Morya ponders this and says, “Very eloquently said, Martin, but let us not forget that many of the most important advancements of mankind have been done in the name of God, however God might be defined. It is belief in God that reminds men of their innate nobility. If there is no belief in God, then it is hard to imagine that man, on his own, with all his selfishness and imperfections, would be able to create the fair and just institutions necessary for a commonwealth of goodwill. In other words, God is both the source as well as the inspiration for many of our ideals, including ideal government.”

Mark agrees, “Yes, that is true. God plays a central role in mankind’s evolution. Without God, man is nothing.”

Martin disagrees somewhat with this last point. “Well, I am not sure man is nothing if he doesn’t believe in God. An animal may not conceptualize God as humans do, but that does not mean that the animal has no existence or self-worth. I think that all of life has value.”

He pauses and then continues, “But, please don’t misunderstand me. I believe in God. What God is, I am not sure, but I can perceive the majesty of God through the infinite potential of honor and integrity within myself. These are qualities which I believe are aspects of God’s own character. Is that understanding of mine correct? I am not sure, since my understanding changes day by day. Maybe tomorrow I will have a different interpretation of what God means to me. I also believe in the existence of a spiritual dimension that is somehow intertwined with the material dimension of our body and earth and sky. I believe in spiritual things, but I do not understand spiritual things very well. I think – and I could be wrong – that most people are just like me. We love life, we believe in a spiritual existence, we want to improve our character and to be mostly good. That, to me, is sufficient material on which to build an improved form of government. A belief in God is not sufficient – in my estimation – to result in an ideal government. Ideal government must be based on human characteristics, not solely on a belief in God.”

Mark says, “Are you saying that man himself is the key to an ideal government? Not God.”

Martin thinks for a moment and then carefully answers. “Yes. I think that is true – at least to some extent. Let me explain. This planet is our responsibility. The forms of government that we create and live under are our creation. We ourselves must build an ideal government if it is to become a reality on earth. We should not expect that God will establish an ideal government for us. That is not to say, however, that we cannot be inspired and even spiritually fortified by God. But the building of an ideal government is our choice and our responsibility, not God’s.”

Morya considers this and comments, “You are right in saying that the creation of an ideal government is mankind’s responsibility, not God’s. The key question, however, is whether man is capable of building an ideal government without God.”

Martin and Mark are both silent on this point, so Morya continues, “I think that God – whether as a belief held by men or as a spiritual force behind the scenes – is intricately involved in the affairs of man, including the evolution of his political systems. To dismiss God from this role is a dangerous proposition because most people do not yet identify with their inner qualities. If men were more aware of their true self and were seeking diligently to reflect their good qualities, then we might be able to say that man himself can create an ideal government. But how many people are today aware enough of their inner quality to build an ideal government? If there were a sufficient number, then wouldn’t an ideal government already exist? In truth, there is a great gap between the type of citizen necessary to create and support a commonwealth of goodwill and the type of citizen existing today. I think that this gap can best be bridged by an alliance of faith between God and man, whereby God and His saints encourage men to become more aware of their true self. At a certain point, the awareness of the true self in the mass consciousness should enable man to build a vastly improved domestic and international political system. If that is true, then God or a belief in God is a necessary and enabling condition for the establishment of an ideal government.”

Mark nods and Martin raises his hands in acknowledgment of the logic of Morya’s observations. Then Martin says, “I think you are right, Morya, in at least one sense. Whether the inner quality is born of nature or of God does not make too much difference, especially if one considers that nature itself is from God, the Creator of all things. I guess it is a matter of what you believe, and a matter of practicality. If men themselves believe that they can create an ideal government, then

perhaps they can. If men believe they need guidance and support from God to create an ideal government, then that would work as well. The main point is that the establishment of an ideal form of government will require the best of mankind's character. And, in a practical sense, the bringing forth of that best character can best be accomplished by mankind working with God to improve the character of man and thence the character of his political, social, cultural, and other institutions.”

The men are quiet for a time, sipping their tea and watching the fire as it gradually dies down. Martin eventually stands up and observes, “That was an interesting discussion.” Reaching into one of the kitchen cabinets, he adds, “Now how about some cookies before we go to bed?” The others laugh, and reach into the extended box of cookies for a final snack of the evening.

#### Day Eight: Theodore Roosevelt National Park

##### [The Key Role of Education](#)

Following a leisurely breakfast the next morning, the three friends decided to drive over to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, a few hours northeast of Billings off Interstate 94. They took Mark's SUV and settled down for a relaxing and scenic drive through eastern Montana and the western portion of North Dakota.

As everyone sipped their coffee and Mark drove on, Martin asks, “Morya, we seemed to agree yesterday that one of the most important contributing factors to the establishment of a global commonwealth of goodwill is the realization of significant numbers of people – on a world scale – that they have a special inner quality that is, at its heart, good and in harmony with the will of God, or the Tao of nature, or higher evolution of humankind – however you might want to define it. Is that your understanding?”

Morya nods, and Martin continues, “Well, if that is the case, then we have to ask ourselves how are these large numbers of people to acquire this understanding, given the great variety of cultures that exist around the world and the deep divisions between many religions, or at least between the followers of the religions. How is this process of greater understanding to take place? In a practical way.”

Morya ponders this as Mark listens while driving through the open countryside. Morya says, “You are asking a key question, since a commonwealth of goodwill can never occur unless people and their leaders have goodwill, and a common sense of goodwill is difficult to come by if individuals are antagonistically divided by their faith and beliefs, including politics.”

Mark adds, “Many wars have been fought, not against good and evil, but between men with goodwill and with good intentions.” Everyone agrees with that observation.

Morya continues, “It must be remembered that humanity did not spring suddenly out of the earth to be the men and women we are today. There is a long, long history behind each of us, written into our DNA and recorded in our soul’s progression from its infancy. For much of that history, each of us has had to contend with two great forces of life: survival and transcendence. We have had to survive in order to live, and that has required a certain set of mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual toughness that evolved naturally to meet that need. We have also been internally compelled to try to transcend our current circumstances – to achieve a better life for ourselves, our loved ones, and our community. This need to transcend has required its own set of attributes: mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual. These attributes have also evolved over time.”

Morya pauses to take a drink of water and then points to a small family of prong horns a few hundred yards away in a pasture. As the SUV speeds on (Mark taking full advantage of

Montana's generous speed limits on the Interstates), Morya further develops his concepts on education:

“Let us consider the nature of education. Education is both the transference of knowledge and the absorption of knowledge. If there is nothing to be taught, education is at a standstill. If the students are not receptive, then nothing will be learned. Therefore, the substance of the information, the training and skill of the teacher, and the participation and hard work of the student are all essential to education.

“In terms of the commonwealth of goodwill, the substance of the information to be taught and learned includes such things as the mutual benefits that can come to nations if they cooperate on global issues. In terms of teaching techniques and student participation, the key is opening students' minds to the possibilities that exist for understanding and wisdom. Students must want to learn because they believe knowledge is good for them. Human beings mostly function on the basis of self-interest, and that is natural – part of the survival instinct we discussed earlier. But what is ‘self-interest’? Doesn't that depend on how you define the ‘self’?”

Martin and Mark think for a moment and nod. Mark then comments, “That is a good point, Morya, and it gets to the fundamental question we have wrestled with in all of our discussions: how can individuals come to understand their own divine potential, when they don't always know such a potential even exists?”

Morya responds, “I tend to agree with Martin here when he implies that self-understanding does not necessarily have to be defined in terms of spirituality. Individuals have enormous mental, physical, and emotional capabilities which almost no one on this planet has yet realized. Even someone who does not believe in God can see the advantages of worldwide cooperation on

meeting the challenges of global warming. That sense of ‘we are all in this together’ does not have to be based on spiritual belief. It can be based solely on mankind recognizing the need for global planning to survive a looming crisis.”

Mark quickly adds, “Yes, this is true. People can cooperate without doing so for spiritual reasons. However, a more permanent and meaningful cooperation between people, one based on love and mutual respect, almost certainly has to be based on spiritual understanding. That is why, throughout history, all lasting bonds – for example, the ceremonies celebrating marriage and the assuming of important positions of leadership in society have all been sanctified by spiritual symbols.”

Morya nods his agreement, and says, “Yes, there is some truth in that. Individuals, lacking belief in God or in things spiritual, can temporarily cooperate for selfish reasons and have done so for thousands of years. Survival of the species is programmed in us all. So one way for a commonwealth of goodwill to be created is for mankind as a whole to come face-to-face with a terrible threat to all of humanity, such as an impending explosion of a super volcano or predicted asteroid impact. Cooperation on a global scale between the world’s governments would almost certainly occur under these circumstances. But, as you say, there is another level of more permanent cooperation based on a mutual sense of goodwill to others – for its own sake – that is over and beyond cooperation based solely on survival.”

Mark says, as he checks his mirrors before zooming past a slow minivan, “Yes. God always prefers the gentler way.”

Martin interjects, “But when has man ever chosen the gentler way? Without pressure and crisis, men does not move very far from their comfort zones.”

Mark responds, “Who was it that said, maybe the historian Toynbee, that civilization if it is to transcend itself must face serious challenge, but not so serious as to consume all the energy of its people? He also discussed a creative minority that must exist if new solutions are to be found to propel the civilization forward. I think he had great insight there.”

Morya adds, “Yes, the creative minority does play a key role in the transfer of knowledge – the first component of education. The creative minority grasps a new idea and, if they are gifted in communications, convey that new insight to the rest of us in terms we can understand and apply in our personal lives. Having a teacher who is a member of this creative minority can be a great blessing to a student.

“The other side of the coin in education is the absorption of knowledge. No matter how insightful the teacher, no matter how well he or she communicates, if the student is not receptive one might as well be talking to a brick wall.” Both Mark and Martin agree with this, having been teachers at various stages of their lives. Morya goes on: “It is true that an outstanding teacher can usually gain the attention of students, but if the classroom is chaotic and undisciplined, then education is lost.” He shakes his head and comments, “How I wish that students could learn discipline and hard work before going to school. Then they would learn much faster. That was possible in the past, but times have changed and, in that way, they have not changed for the better.”

All were quiet for a few moments, as they drove past huge ranches and rolling hills. Morya then takes up where he left off: “I think that the training of students has to begin in the home and in the social environment. If the parents highly value education and insist that their children learn or face restrictions on their free time or some other appropriate discipline, and if the peer groups of students are supportive of learning in school, then we could make very fast progress as a nation

and as a society. But alas, I do not see either of those conditions right now. All too often, parents often seem too pre-occupied to instill discipline in their children, and peer groups too often encourage everything except the importance of formal education.”

By then Mark was turning off toward Medora, North Dakota, one of the entrances through the southern portion of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. For the next few hours, the men enjoyed the unique landscape and the numerous bison, wild horses, and prairie dogs throughout the Park. Around mid-afternoon, they drove back through the entrance and stopped to buy milkshakes in Medora’s small homemade ice cream shop. Everyone was mostly quiet on the way back. Martin, taking his turn at the wheel, drove to Billings, where the men stopped for dinner at Cracker Barrel before heading south to their condo. Everyone was tired at that point, so they said goodnight, washed up a bit, and retired without even starting a fire.

#### Day Nine: Morning in the Resort

##### [Society of the True Self](#)

The next morning was foggy with a light drizzle, a little on the chilly side, so the three friends decided to stay in their condo until later in the day. Mark fixed a full breakfast of eggs, pancakes, toast, and coffee, while Morya and Martin started a fire in the fireplace. Breakfast was served with fanfare, the fire fueled by more logs, and the men settled around the table. Martin complimented Mark on the breakfast, as he spread more butter and syrup on his fourth pancake. Later, they retired to the living room to warm their hands by the fire.

The men were quiet for a time, and then Martin spoke up: “Morya, last night we ended on a rather pessimistic note, with society not being very supportive of the type of education that is needed for the commonwealth of goodwill to emerge. I would like to pose a question: is society

responsible for the proper education of students, or is the student himself responsible for acquiring his education? Which has the greater responsibility?"

Morya ponders this for a moment and replies, "Ultimately, it is the student's responsibility to seek the education and training necessary for his or her wellbeing, but it is the responsibility of society to ensure that education and training are available to those who want it. There are mutual responsibilities here. However, if government does not do its job, there is still the possibility, even responsibility, for a student to educate himself. Furthermore, even if government does provide ample opportunity for education, the student still has to take personal responsibility to seize the opportunity. Therefore, the primary responsibility for one's education rests has to rest on the shoulders of the student. Ultimately, as in all things, we are responsible for doing what we can to advance ourselves in life."

Mark says, "I have heard of past golden ages – assuming, Martin, such epochs did exist – in which the leader was nearly perfect, but the people did not follow him, so the society eventually collapsed. I have also heard of past golden ages in which the leader was corrupt and society, even though comprised of outstanding individuals, collapsed as well. The lesson here – and a valid one whether or not one believes in past golden ages – is that, for an ideal government and society to survive, both the leaders and the citizens must be striving to achieve their highest potential."

Morya nods and Martin replies, "I can accept that premise. The question is almost like which came first: the chicken or the egg. But we are not talking about first causes here. We are talking about the evolution of society and government to a place where a commonwealth of goodwill is possible. Under these conditions, where should one's efforts be directed: towards improving social and political institutions, or towards improving individual character?"

Both Mark and Morya think about this, and then Morya responds, “That is a good point. I would have to say that the emphasis needs to be on the individual. Institutions, no matter how well organized or how noble their mission statements, can be corrupted by misguided leaders. Individuals, on the other hand, once on a path of self-improvement generally stay on that path and make steady progress toward strengthening their character. Over time, the building of individual character can make a tremendous difference in the quality of leaders and people and thence of the social and political institutions they may lead or participate in.”

Mark asks, “If that is true, then how is character-building education to take place, when so few people are pursuing the inner teachings that point a person to his true self?”

Morya smiles and says, “In the past, the inner teachings were only conveyed quietly because of fear of retribution from established churches and mainstream thinking. Remember that for many centuries, even scientific facts such as the world being round were dangerous to discuss openly.” He paused to take a sip of his coffee. “Nowadays, however, people look less toward their church for guidance and depend more on their own observations and education. Some people decry this as a falling away from religion. I see it as movement toward greater spirituality on the part of individuals.”

Martin comments, “Unfortunately, the propaganda of the church has been replaced by the propaganda of the state. Both institutions have sought to control the individual to serve their own ends.”

His friends agree, and Martin continues: “Focusing for the moment on spirituality, I have long felt that spirituality is something that most people accept as part of their lives. Fewer people today – as a percentage of the population – identify themselves as members of a church, but

more and more people seem to be seeking out the spiritual side of themselves. They sense an internal spirituality, they ponder its origin, and they think about how this sense of spirituality fits into their daily lives. There is, I believe, a gradual awakening of people to their own inner potential – which, when you think about it – almost always leads to a consideration of their spiritual aspects. The spiritual side of man is not dependent upon church doctrine. It is part of what makes us human beings. Churches can help us understand our spirituality, but our spirituality and our personal understanding of our spirituality is not dependent upon a church.”

Morya adds, “Yes, there is an observable evolution in the consciousness of mankind, as people move beyond doctrine and dogma to self-discovery and freedom of opinion. This process is long and convoluted, and sometimes cruel when fanatics claim their way is the only way and seek to harm or exclude anyone with different points of view. Still, this evolution is a key factor in our discussion. Let me ask you, Martin, do you think that this evolution of more and more people seeking to discover for themselves their own spirituality makes it more or less likely that a commonwealth of goodwill might exist in the future?”

Martin sits back in his chair and then carefully replies, “I think it makes it more probable. For at least two reasons: first, what we are talking about is an awakening of people to their own higher potential; second, a better informed people are more likely to demand global solutions to global problems – a demand that government leaders must respond to positively to guarantee their continuation in power. The greatest fear any politician has in the modern world is to be out of step with the citizens of his country. Politicians everywhere will first try to persuade the people that their views are correct. But, if that approach fails, the leaders will generally conform their policies to meet the expectations of the people. So, in short, yes, the fact that more people are

seeking to define their own spirituality would seem to increase the probability of your vision of a global commonwealth of goodwill one day becoming a reality.”

Morya and Mark nod their agreement. Martin gets up and observes that the sky is clearing, so maybe they should go for a hike. Everyone agrees and a few moments later, the three men start walking on one of the many trails that lead from the lodge into the nearby mountains.

A couple of hours up the trail brought the men to an overlook with a breathtaking view of mountains, valleys, and deep gorges where rivers had carved their way through ancient layers of volcanic ash. Mark says, “This is so beautiful. Even though we see all around us evidence of the power of change, the impermanence of human existence, the need always to struggle for survival – we are in awe at the majesty and incomprehensible power of nature that propels everything forward in time.”

Morya leans against a tree and adds, “Yet, humanity is in a unique position of having enough intelligence to see the infinite potential for improvement in their lives. They have sufficient motivation and skill to seek to make that improvement in practical ways. People are genetically engineered to fight or flee in the face of danger. Living on this planet requires humans to be exceptionally flexible and remarkably well-rounded. You can see the validity of the biblical statement that men are made a little lower than the angels but crowned with greater glory.”

After taking a long drink of water, Martin says, “That observation raises the question of whether men can be trained in transcendence in the same way as they can be trained in survival? I think the answer has to be yes. If people can acquire skills in surviving, then people should also be able to acquire the necessary skills to utilize their higher potential and become their true self. The problem that I see is that too many people do not have a proper sense of own self-identity. We

are all too often consumed with the need to make enough money to pay the rent and buy groceries. The need to concentrate on meeting the basic necessities of life tends to block out our motivation to explore the more noble side to ourselves.”

Mark comments, “I have found in my many years of counseling that almost everyone recognizes that they have a better side to themselves. And almost everyone wants to express that better side. To become a better person seems a near universal desire, at least in my experience. I have heard of individuals who are truly evil and destructive to the core, but I have never once encountered such a black hole in someone’s consciousness.”

Morya says, “There are indeed individuals who are destructive of life, and who are evil by their own choice. The reasons they are this way are varied, but it would be a mistake to ignore their existence, or to underestimate their cleverness in deceiving those with more honorable or innocent intentions. But that is a subject for future discussion. Even if such people exist, the commonwealth of goodwill can occur if the vast majority of citizens want it to happen. It is the majority of people, and exceptionally far-sighted leaders, that we are interested in, not a small minority of evil-doers who exist in all societies.”

Standing up, Martin urges his companions to walk some more before the clouds obscure the sun once again. The three set off, with Mark leading, Morya in the middle, and Martin trailing behind to ensure that his more senior companions are doing fine. As they walked, they suddenly spotted a black bear foraging on a slope a few hundred yards ahead. As they stood and watched, they saw two cubs chase each other around a bush before disappearing behind a large boulder near where their mother rooted in the ground. Martin says, “I don’t think it would be a good idea to get much closer. Let’s turn back and give them space. We have had a good walk and I am getting hungry. How about some hamburgers for a late lunch?”

They all agreed and walked back to the condo, enjoying the views – and an easier path – on the way down.

At the lodge, Martin got a fire going in the deck grill, while Morya and Mark prepared the patties and cut up the onions and tomatoes for the burgers. Martin then cooked the patties while his friends relaxed on the porch and enjoyed the scenery with a cup of hot chocolate in hand. After a short while, Martin asked them to prepare their buns and get ready to eat. When they were finished, no one wanted to move, so the dishes just sat for a while. Mark eventually got up and took care of the dishes, while Martin continued to snack on chips and dips, and Morya walked back to his room to stretch out for a bit in the coolness of the mountain air. Later, for dinner, Martin suggested they have some cereal with fruit. All agreed and, after about an hour, they sat around the fire drinking tea and amicably chatting about the weather and the next day's adventure in exploring some of the back country in Yellowstone.

Mark asks, "I have a question, Martin. From your perspective of working closely with the federal government, do you think it is possible to reform political institutions from within?"

Martin responds, "I have almost never seen rapid reform from the bottom-up in a governmental organization; I have often seen gradual change, usually requiring ten years or so. I have seen rapid change occur once in a while, when reform was initiated from top government leadership."

Mark says, "So, reform of government is most likely to be initiated at the top level. It is not likely that bureaucracy would be able to change the way government works?"

Martin answers, "Generally speaking, I would say this is true."

Mark continues, “If that is the case, then a movement toward a government willing to back a global commonwealth of goodwill would almost certainly have to come from the head of government. Is that correct?”

Martin slowly nods, wondering where this line of reasoning is heading.

Mark then asks, “What, then, is the likelihood of a head of a national government to have the political vision to see the value in a global commonwealth of goodwill?”

Martin is about to respond, but Morya replies first. “There actually is a very high probability that some heads of government would have this vision. National leaders are often extraordinary people and they certainly are not ignorant or ill-informed. Moreover, they generally are sensitive to the needs of their people, so a public’s desire for a global solution to some problem would very likely influence a leader to advocate global cooperation in the United Nations or in some other international forum.”

Martin says, “Yes, that is true. In fact, there have been many instances in which national leaders have advanced the need for greater global cooperation. Sometimes, individual leaders are successful in bringing other leaders on board with the idea. Even in these cases, however, there often is disagreement on how best to implement the idea.”

Mark then comments, “What does not often happen, from my observation of political events, is a situation in which a large number of national leaders agree on a plan to do something on a global scale and – at the same time – find or generate strong public support that this is the right thing for their nation to be involved with. I am thinking here of the climate change issue and war on terrorism. The broad level of agreement that something must be done is not easily translated into plans that can be put into effect. It would seem, for Morya’s idea of a commonwealth of

goodwill to be realized, that this rare concurrence of leadership, public support, and agreement on plans must take place. Morya, would you agree?”

Morya thinks for a moment and then responds, “I think what you said is valid, Mark. It does accurately reflect the current state of man’s self-identification with his own nation. Most people view themselves as citizens of a given country, rather than as citizens of the world. And national leaders usually attain and hold their position because they are exemplary models of how to serve the self-interests of the nation.”

Martin points out, “For leaders and citizens of a nation to consider themselves citizens of the world would require a change in their self-identification. This could occur either through some threatened world event in which mankind would have to cooperate to survive; or through some expansion of consciousness on a global scale. There is always the possibility of a major catastrophe threatening humanity. However, a global expansion of consciousness is largely unheard of. Such an expansion of understanding even on a national scale, such as in the United States or China, is rare enough that it is hard to think of an example. Although, I must admit, over a longer period over several decades, such a change in understanding can occur. But at best, this is a slow and uncertain process. Think of the time it took for nation-states to be accepted as the center of loyalty for people. Revolutions and wars had to accompany this evolution. It is true that time is being compressed today because of global communications, trade, financial interdependencies, and so on, so that this process might occur over, say, one or two generations. But for a speedy process, the only conceivable stimulus for a change in outlook would be a global crisis brought home by something like climate change, a pandemic, and or simultaneous regional disasters.”

Morya adds, “And let’s not forget the impact of large scale human disaster, such as genocide and forced migration, captured on television and broadcast around the world. If the suffering of others is great enough, then people around the world could start demanding that some solution be found. After all, we are all brothers and sisters on this planet. Evidence of this public demand has been seen in some of the response to terrorism, for example.”

Mark nods and continues with his argument. “So, it would appear that the general public is gradually assuming the perspective necessary to make a commonwealth of goodwill possible. And, more national leaders are seeking greater cooperation from their peers to address some of these global issues. So, Morya, it appears to me that at least some of the conditions necessary for your commonwealth of goodwill are gradually emerging. Such a commonwealth may not be comprised of perfect people with an enlightened spirituality, but it could be comprised of people who are willing to cooperate in order to protect our own interests. Does that seem a reasonable conclusion?”

Morya thinks for a moment, sips his tea, and then replies, “That, indeed, is what the trends would indicate. What we also have to be concerned about is that these trends toward greater global cooperation might be exploited for selfish or harmful reasons. All too often, high-sounding ideals, constitutions, and institutions are but a mask used by governing elites to exploit the people. This is always a danger when new political institutions, such as a commonwealth of goodwill, are being developed.”

Martin says, “From my perspective, a commonwealth of goodwill cannot be based solely on goodwill. There must be checks and balances to ensure that such a global enterprise is not misused. Let’s call it a night and continue this discussion tomorrow after our adventure on the trails.”

Morya and Mark agree, and while Martin tidies up the living room and kitchen, the two other men retire to their rooms for the evening. After putting things away, Martin sits by the fire for a while, thinking about what was said and wondering if, indeed, it would be possible for an ideal commonwealth to actually work.

### Day Ten: Hiking in Lamar Valley

#### The Need for Checks and Balances

In the morning, the three friends ate a hurried breakfast of French toast and coffee, and then drove in Martin's pickup to one of the trailheads off the Lamar Valley in Yellowstone Park. They saw large herds of bison, a few wolves in the distance moving under the trees, and thought they saw a grizzly bear running up one of the hills across from the trail. After several hours of hiking, they sat down to rest and to munch on their energy bars. Enjoying the fresh air and catching their breath, they decided to go another couple of miles and then doubled back around 1:30 to give them enough time to return to the truck and get to the lodge before nightfall.

Hungry after such a long day of hiking, the three men immediately started preparing for dinner. Mark and Morya prepared some camp lasagna to bake in the stove, while Martin worked on getting a fire started in the fireplace. After about an hour, the lasagna was done, and Morya served everyone a generous helping with hot buttered French bread. Hardly a word was spoken as the three ate dinner, with both Mark and Martin asking for another serving of the delicious lasagna. When the men had finished and settled back into their chairs in the living room, mug in hand, they remarked on how fast the night descended and how chilly it had become.

Martin eventually says, "I was thinking about our conversation last night and how trends toward interdependence, multipolarity, mass communications, leadership accountability, and so on are creating the conditions conducive for a commonwealth of goodwill. The other necessity – the

universal goodwill of people – is simply not going to occur any time soon. People are not purely good, nor do they have only good intentions. Many people are selfish, jealous, greedy, lustful, vengeful, liars, cheaters, and thieves. This is part of human character.”

Mark and Morya shift uncomfortably in their chairs and Mark begins to speak, but Martin quickly continues: “Not everyone has all of these negative characteristics at the same time, of course, and the degree of expressing these behaviors differs with each individual. However, they do exist in almost everyone, and that is why men agree amongst themselves that no one is perfect. Isn’t that true?”

Mark and Morya are silent but clearly do not like the path the conversation is taking. So Martin presses on with his argument. “Look, I believe in the essential spiritual nature of the soul inhabiting the human body. I believe that the soul is tied into some universal Spirit, which we all call God – although our interpretations of God differ. But that potential of spiritual goodness is not fully expressed under current human conditions, or under any past human conditions of which we are aware. We know this from observation. It cannot be denied. Why people are not expressing their inner spiritual nature is something theologians and philosophers and psychologists and great thinkers have pondered for thousands of years. Every great prophet and world teacher has postulated some theory about this, or offered some analogy by way of explaining how man in embodiment could be both good as well as bad, when his spiritual nature was essentially good.”

Martin pauses to sip his tea, while the others continue to remain silent. Martin goes on, “We cannot, in my estimation, depend upon the universal goodwill of man to provide the foundation for a global commonwealth of goodwill. If we do that, then the commonwealth is just another ideal form of government, one that sounds wonderful and one that maybe should exist, but one

that will never exist as long as men are men. Becoming a better person is an individual effort, undertaken by a deliberate choice of freewill. This process of personal improvement is difficult for most, easy for a few, and seemingly impossible for some. The probability of all of mankind – even a significant majority of mankind – to be good at one time seems so small as to not warrant serious consideration.”

He takes a deep breath and continues, “Individuals have to wrestle with themselves, one on one, to overcome their negative motivations, bad habits, impure desires, and morally questionable activities. It takes work – hard work – on a daily basis to overcome the conditions that stand in the way of an individual becoming their real self. Do either of you disagree with this?”

Mark speaks up, “Martin, that was one of the most depressing assessments of humanity I have ever heard. People are sons and daughters of God, miracles happen every day, and individuals can – with the help of God and the great teachers – overcome their weaknesses and become better people. This happens constantly. It happened to you, it happened to me, it happened to Morya here, it happened to hundreds of people that we have encountered in our lifetime. Why do you insist on bringing the imperfection of mankind into the discussion of the goal of creating a commonwealth of goodwill? People don’t have to be perfect before they address what nearly everyone agrees are global problems?”

Martin replies, “I think, Mark, you and I come at the problem of creating a commonwealth of goodwill from two different perspectives. You see the commonwealth emerging as the natural expression of mankind’s innate goodness. I see the commonwealth emerging as a political necessity to address worldly problems. Both perspectives are correct. But, from a political point of view, I cannot see such a commonwealth emerging solely as a result of the goodness in men’s hearts. As Morya has pointed out, conditions do exist for the emergence of such a

commonwealth in the not-too-distant future. These conditions include the improvement of men's character, as well as the need to address global issues such as climate change and scarce resources. From an organizational point of view, however, a commonwealth comprised of representatives from all the nations of the world must have not only an agenda to address (the pressing problem) but also an enlightened sense of what it means to have personal responsibility to try to leave the world a better place than we found it. Beyond these two conditions, however, is also a requirement for an institution to exist that allows the representatives to freely discuss the issues and to do so in an environment relatively free from selfish manipulation on the part of some. Wouldn't you agree with that?"

Mark frowns but nods. Then Morya speaks up, "I see where you are coming from, Martin, and, yes, those conditions are required for a commonwealth to work for the purposes for which it would be created. We need some system of checks and balances to increase the likelihood that selfishness does not undermine the important work that is to be done. God gave man free will and the earth is mankind's sphere of responsibility. No master, saint, or God Himself is going to step in and solve man's problems – personally, socially, or politically. It is mankind's collective responsibility to address and solve global problems, and it is mankind's responsibility to ensure that its political institutions serve their purposes."

Martin and Mark nod their agreement. Mark then asks, "All right, Martin, what kind of checks and balances do you think are necessary for Morya's vision of a commonwealth of goodwill to be successful?"

Martin thinks for a moment and replies, "If you recall the history of the American political experiment, the founding fathers did not assume the perfection of men but rather their imperfection. They made this assumption while at the same time believing that God was guiding

the founding of the nation. So we have a model of a political system based on both the innate goodness of mankind and his temporary imperfection. The American political system tries to balance these two assumptions about the nature of man, and it seems to me that, in considering a commonwealth of goodwill, we need to find a similar balance.” He looks for agreement from Mark and Morya, who look back with tacit approval.

Martin continues, “If we take these assumptions as being true for the organizational foundation of the commonwealth, then we would need to have certain institutions and procedures in place. The institutions and procedures would likely be different if people were perfect, and they likely would be different if people were inherently evil. The institutions and procedures of the commonwealth should be based on the assumption that the souls of men and their inner character are spiritually good, but that the behavior and motivation of men in their current state of consciousness is a mixture of both good and bad. Institutionally, therefore, the goal is to protect and encourage the good while guarding against and constraining the bad.”

Martin chuckles to himself as he sees a certain irony in this. “Look, the common characteristic of the pure and impure man is self-interest. But is the individual motivated by the interests of his true self, or is the individual motivated by the interests of his lesser self? Regardless, the foundation of the check and balance system of government is self-interest. The efficiency of the organization will depend on how well the self-interest of the individual representatives and their respective societies are served.”

Morya comments, “I would add that government should put into place incentives for the expression of the best of humanity and disincentives for the expression of the worst. Please continue your analysis, Martin.”

Martin goes on, “In large measure, the issues that would be discussed in the commonwealth would be global in nature and serious in consequence – otherwise, the individual nation-states could address them or they could be brought before the United Nations or regional intergovernmental organizations. Because the issues discussed by the commonwealth are by their nature very complex, it would be vital that they be well-researched and analyzed in an objective way and presented to the representatives in sufficient time for them and their individual governments to become familiar with the underlying issues. Thus, one key institution within the larger commonwealth organization would be a robust, well-staffed, and well-funded research and analysis center tasked with the responsibility to frame and study the issue beforehand, clearly and objectively setting forth the alternative approaches to the solution or management of the issue, with the costs and benefits of each alternative identified. This center would be an important part of the check-and-balance system because it would objectify the issues and identify the key discussion points for the representatives in their deliberations.”

Pausing to drink some tea, Martin continues, “A second element of the checks and balances is a highly efficient secretariat, whose primary responsibilities are to provide staff support to the members, provide public relations for the commonwealth, publish and distribute representatives’ reports, and ensure that all representatives have up-to-date secure communications. The secretariat also provides a professional facilitating staff to assist the representatives in their deliberations, if requested, and publishes periodic meeting summaries for the media and the general public.”

He thinks for a moment and then adds, “The research center would best be independent from the secretariat, and would receive its tasking from the Executive Committee of the representatives. The head of the research center would be selected by the Executive Committee and would serve

a fixed term in office. The head of the secretariat would be approved by a two-thirds vote of the representatives meeting in plenary session. The secretariat head would likewise serve a fixed term in office. These procedures would closely tie the research center and the secretariat to the representatives, yet ensure that the heads of these powerful support institutions would not become bureaucratically entrenched over time.”

Martin waits while Mark places another log on the fire and then goes on: “The representatives would be selected by each country according to its own procedures, but the criteria for selection would be commonly used and known to the public. Representatives should be leading intellectuals residing in the nation. Representatives could also be humanitarians with a strong record of public service, or some other uniquely outstanding member of society. The goal is to create a body of the most far-sighted individuals on the planet, representing each country and bringing to the deliberations a wide perspective and good heartedness in a common attempt to find satisfactory answers to some of humanity’s most pressing problems.”

He continues, “The representatives would meet formally, behind closed doors, in-person once or twice a year, and by teleconference once or twice a year. Deliberations could occur in all the meetings, but voting on recommendations would only take place in meetings held in person. The representatives would not be authorized to set policy or dictate actions the states must take. Theirs is an advisory role only, but their recommendations would carry considerable weight because of their prestige, recognized good will, and collective wisdom. The secretariat, in its public report of the meetings, would explain each recommendation and the rationale behind it, with caveats for different opinions to ensure a fair and true representation of what actually occurred in the deliberations. These public summaries would not identify the source of the opinion. Each country would be responsible for supporting its representatives and paying for his

or her expenses and per diem. Each representative would serve a fixed term of four years but could be re-selected by the country at its discretion. Each country could have two representatives at a time in the commonwealth, and all representatives would have an equal vote and opportunity to voice their opinion.”

Stopping to warm his hands over the fire, Martin says, “The Executive Committee of the representatives would be a much smaller body, selected for a fixed term by the representatives from among themselves. These individuals would be paid a handsome salary and work throughout the year to advance the commonwealth’s business. The Executive Committee would assign tasks to the research center and direct the activities of the secretariat through its head. The Executive Committee, in consultation with the representatives, would develop the agenda for the plenaries. For each plenary meeting, the Executive Committee would elect two of its own to act as the chair and vice chair.”

At this point, Mark interjects. “OK, I can see the logic behind your plan, but I do not see the structure of an actual government. Rather, what you have described is some sort of super committee. I thought the commonwealth was a global political institution, not a committee of intellectuals.”

Morya nods and asks, “Martin, when we discuss ideal governments we usually mean governing bodies. Did you omit something?”

Martin replies, “Let me explain. I don’t think that, over the next ten or twenty years, nation-states will hand over power to a world government. The international system is just that: a system comprised of nations. It seems to me that the most we can hope for in the short- or mid-term is some international institution staffed with the necessary expertise to address in a goodwill

fashion the problems that beset humanity. If that mechanism – we are calling it a commonwealth of goodwill – can be established, and if its recommendations can be adopted by nation-states out of their own interests, then that would be an historic accomplishment. Defined in this way, I think the ideal of a commonwealth of goodwill is possible within five to ten years.”

He thinks for a moment and then continues, “We have to keep in mind that people are not going to become completely good by, say 2025, nor are nation-states likely to surrender their sovereignty by then. If that is true, then we need some interim institution to address global issues from a global perspective. Because of its political nature, the United Nations has very limited ability to formulate policy on a global scale. The commonwealth is not political. It is based on an honest effort on the part of all nations to arrive at solutions to major problems that confront us all. I think it might work, but it will take a lot of effort to see it become a reality.”

Mark says, “Well, that is quite a model you have created and it deserves some careful thought. It’s getting late – I see Morya yawning over there – so I suggest we call it a night and take up the question of its possibility tomorrow.”

Everyone agrees, and the discussions end for that evening as the living room is cleaned up and everyone retires after a few moments of warming up by the flickering fire. Mark, however, seemed somewhat troubled over the direction Martin had taken the conversation and inwardly was determined to address these concerns the following evening.

### Day Eleven: Yellowstone Geysers

#### Strategy

The next day Martin got up early and prepared omelets and toast for breakfast, along with coffee and tea. Morya and Mark came out of their rooms to the waiting breakfast. Everyone gathered

around the fire with their plate of steaming food and cup of java to start the day. After eating, they drove into Yellowstone Park once again, this time to explore more thoroughly the various geysers. Martin in particular was interested in seeing how the landscape was being shaped by volcanic activity in the area. They ate lunch in one of the Park's inns, and drove back through the Lamar Valley, stopping frequently to watch the wildlife. Back at the lodge, Martin got the fire going once again, while Morya made vegetable stew for their evening meal. The three friends then settled into their chairs to continue their conversation from the previous night.

Mark spoke first. "Martin, I have been giving quite a bit of thought to what you said last night, not about the institutions and checks and balances of government, but about the character of man. You seem to believe that government should reflect, or at least take into account, the negative side of mankind. Yet, by its very definition, an ideal government should point people toward a higher and nobler possibility. Your description of the commonwealth of goodwill, which Morya initially described as an ideal, has changed our discussion from an ideal government to a practical governmental organization. Is that what you intended to do? Is there no role for idealism in government?"

Morya says, "Let me address this issue before Martin comments. We all know that mankind as a whole has a dual character. We all know that mankind individually has a spark of divinity, or – as non-believers might say – a potential for nobility and goodness far beyond what is normally expressed. The great world teachers have all instructed us on our divine potential, while at the same time exhorted us to improve our current character. Government can play a dual role in this process by addressing both the practical needs of the people and hope for a better future. It seems to me that the concept of a commonwealth of goodwill embraces both functions of government: it addresses current issues of great concern, and it provides a mechanism for enhanced

cooperation between all peoples – a critical step toward achieving world peace and global harmony. I do not see anything wrong in Martin’s analysis, even though he approaches the concept of the commonwealth from a slightly different perspective than we might have done.”

Mark nods and says, “OK. I can accept that. But I still believe that our emphasis in these discussions of ideal government should be on the ideal rather than on the practical. If we focus too much on the practical, we tend to accept and accommodate the current imperfections of man. If we focus on the ideal, we can note where improvement in the character of man might be necessary and possible. The outcome of our discussions will be different, depending upon our focus.”

Martin addresses Mark and replies, “What you say about focus is true. I do tend to focus on the practical because that is the world in which I live and work. You are a spiritual teacher and counselor. You are constantly trying to help people understand their inner quality and reach a higher vision for themselves and for society. Both of our perceptions are correct; it’s just that reality has as many dimensions as there are points of view. There are infinite ways to describe what is real and what is possible. I was hoping, in my short dialogue last night, to point out how, in a practical way, a commonwealth of goodwill might be created and sustained, given the conditions that exist or which are foreseeable over the next couple of decades. I think Morya’s idea is excellent. I was trying to see how it might be achieved.”

Mark says, “I know, I know. And that is a good thing. But let’s not forget the larger picture. Mankind individually and collectively has a dual character. We have agreed on that assessment. It is our responsibility – at least it is the responsibility that I have given myself – to try to help others expand their good character and diminish their negative character. In my view, we should not try to accommodate the negative characteristics of mankind; we should try to assist people

and society to improve themselves. And this requires the acceptance of a higher vision of what is possible for man.”

Morya comments, “It all boils down to strategies: how do you best assist mankind – by working with him as he is, or by exhorting him to his full potential? This is a debate that has been going on for a long, long time, and it is not one that we can resolve this evening. Ultimately, each of us must choose our own path to try to improve the lot of man. My own path has been to internalize the will of God as much as possible. As that alignment has strengthened over the years, I have found myself wanting to describe to others the joys of expressing the will of God. I love the will of the God. By my nature, I am not too accommodating to mankind’s weaknesses or laziness. I believe in discipline and hard work, because that is what it takes to shed impurities in one’s character and to adhere to the magnificence of the will of God inside each one of us. To me, the will of God is everything. That is how I know God. That is how I know myself. It is my role in life to reflect the goodness of the will of God.”

Martin says, “We all respect and admire you for that diamond-like commitment to the will of God, Morya. I have increasingly come to love that divine will myself. I know I spend too little time in meditation, and that my habits are not always pure. But I find that reminding myself of the goodness of the will of God helps me to at least keep my eye on the larger picture. I work in an environment dominated by self-centered people. But I have learned gradually to know my inner quality and to recognize the inner quality of others. This enables me – usually – to work at the level of the higher mind, understanding present conditions yet seeking pathways to a better tomorrow. But without an anchor of love to the will of God, I could easily be lost. I have been there before and know how easy it is to stray from an honorable path to one that is dishonorable.”

Mark comments, “We all love the will of God and we all have strayed in this and certainly in past lifetimes. Maybe that’s why we are still friends after all these years. Each of us functions as best as we can, given our current understanding and the opportunities we are given. Karma and dharma, circumstances and duty, are what drive us forward.”

The three men are quiet for a while, each lost in his own thoughts. Martin gets up after a few minutes and pours more tea, then adds some wood to the fire. He walked out to the porch and paused to look up at the clear night sky, brilliantly lit by the millions of stars visible even to the naked eye. He goes back into the living room, sits down, and pushes his hands deep into his coat pockets.

Mark says, “One thing that has interested me over the years, and which may have some relevance to our discussion, is the various strategies that have been employed by servants of light and servants of darkness to advance their respective goals on the planet. What are some of your ideas on this subject?”

Martin speaks first, “Upfront, I confess that I have some difficulty with the use of the terms ‘good’ and ‘evil’ in the context of strategy. I think these terms have moral connotations which make clear strategic thinking more difficult than necessary.”

Mark insists, “But surely you must have some definition in mind when you use these moral terms.”

Martin says, “I define ‘good’ as something that is in harmony with the will of God. For a person who best understands God within the context of his own inner quality, good is thinking, feeling, remembering, and acting in harmony with that inner quality. For me personally, good is acting with honor and integrity. That is the standard that I use, but I recognize that others have different

inner qualities and therefore might have a different understanding of what is good. The term ‘evil’, on the other hand, at least to me, is when someone deliberately violates the character of his own inner quality or seeks to harm or destroy the inner quality of someone else. It is a deliberate defiance of the will of God, with emphasis on the word ‘deliberate’. To be evil requires free will decisions that are not accidental. In my view, when someone does something not according to the will of God or their inner quality but with less deliberate intent, this can be ‘bad’ but not ‘evil’. Examples might be a bad habit or some momentum of moral weakness. When I use these terms, it is easier for me to conceptualize strategies of goodness and strategies of evil, even though I prefer to set aside moral considerations when I think about effective strategy. It seems to me, from my reading of history, that effective strategies have very little to do with concepts of good and evil.”

Morya comments, “These definitions are perhaps important in terms of our discussion, but from the point of view of the soul there is no misunderstanding of what is good and what is evil. At the level of the soul, the individual knows what he or she should do in a given situation. When the person in embodiment does not do that but rather choose some other path or even seeks to undermine or counter what their soul knows they should do, then the individual is venturing onto dangerous ground. If the individual so misuses his or one free will too much, the individual can become evil. Some believe that such an individual might even lose his soul, although this is a spiritual mystery best left to God the Creator. What does occur in our world, however, is that the individual in embodiment loses much if not all of his contact with his soul, leaving as it were the individual to drift hither and yon without a moral anchor. In that condition, almost any action – positive or negative – is possible from the individual, for they have become in essence a

rudderless ship in the ocean of life. It is these kinds of souls that Jesus addressed after his crucifixion, if the ancient wisdom is correct. ”

Morya continues, “There is a critical decision point in human consciousness when an individual decides, on his own free will, to depart from doing what he knows or believes God wants. At this point, the individual moves from strict obedience to the will of God to taking upon himself the responsibility of deciding what is right and what is wrong. This decision is not made from the perspective of the higher mind, but rather from the perspective of the lesser, self-centered mind. Because mankind has free will, he is always susceptible to rebellion against God, not because man is evil by nature, but the human mind is clever and human hands are skilled at creating many things. God does not intend for mankind to be a slave, and we should not forget that free will is a gift from God to the souls of man. The challenge and opportunity for mankind is to learn to use free will to create according to the patterns of his soul’s unique quality. For you, Martin, there is an infinite variety of creative activities that can be done with your inner quality of honor and integrity. For you, Mark, there is likewise an infinite variety of activities that can be done with the power of the spoken word. It is through the expression of his inner quality that mankind aligns his free will with the will of God. It is as simple as that.”

Martin observes, “This helps to place into context the strategies of light and darkness. At spiritual levels, there is a difference between strategies conceived for advancing mankind’s inner qualities of goodness, and strategies conceived for the purpose of undermining goodness among humanity. I still, however, am not clear on how strategies at spiritual levels can always be reflected in strategies designed for conditions on earth.”

Mark offers, “Well, the connection seems obvious to me. Strategists in whatever field they may function in on earth should develop strategies seeking to help mankind and further goodness. They should avoid developing strategies harming mankind or undermining his goodness.”

Martin response, “I can see the validity of that. However, we still have the ends and means dilemma. If your strategic goal is to achieve great good, then why is the utilization of questionable means not justified?”

Morya says, “It is possible to use questionable means to achieve some good end. However, it is morally incorrect to do so, because – in almost every conceivable situation – morally appropriate means can be found to attain the good goal. That is the role of the higher mind, of which we have spoken so often. The problem with employing immoral means to achieve good ends is that the criteria of appropriateness is moved by the human mind from morally correct to expedient. Expediency is often a valid standard of efficiency, but – in a moral context – expediency should never replace the ethical principles and moral standards of one’s inner quality. To set up expediency as the highest standard of one’s strategy is to start the process of disconnecting the individual in embodiment from the moral guidance of his soul. Expediency, in other words, is one of those slippery slopes we need to be careful of when we speak of strategy and morality.”

Mark and Martin nod their agreement at this explanation.

Martin then says, “You know, an interesting side discussion on all of this is the matter of trust, and this relates to the strategies which you mentioned, Morya. I found that for years, despite my love of God, I did not fully trust God. I could not let go of my lesser self because I feared I would somehow lessen myself if I trusted completely in God. I believed I needed the lesser self to survive in this world and – ironically – believed a strengthened lesser self would help me to do

good things in the world. Only gradually, and only after I experienced my inner quality, did I begin to see that trusting God depends on trusting oneself. I found that it was the disconnection between my outer consciousness and my soul that caused me to distrust myself and therefore to distrust God.”

Mark laughs and says, “Yes, I can see that. For me, I only came to fully trust God and His spiritual representatives when I was so beaten down by life that I was ready to live in a chicken coop. At that point of utter despair, the master came to me and showed me the reality of God. From that moment on, I began to trust God because I realized that my soul came from God. God gave me a certain potential and I could expand that potential to the full extent of my ability. But, ultimately, the good quality came from God. At some point in this transition from trusting only the lesser self, to trusting the higher self, to trusting God, I came to learn of some of the awesome power, endless love, and limitless wisdom that flows from the Godhead. Once you experience that kind of connection to God and to His representatives, you understand the incredible potential that resides within each of us, as sons and daughters, as children of God. So, Martin, when you speak of accommodating men as they are in your description of the commonwealth of goodwill, you are speaking of accommodating man’s lesser self. I believe that the ideal form of government must not accommodate the weakness in man’s character but rather serve and encourage his infinitely beautiful and powerful potential.”

Morya quietly sips his tea and comments, “As I listen to both of you, I see in microcosm the evolution of man’s soul on this planet. We are born innocent but soon become corrupted by our environment and by our own ignorance, laziness, and, yes, cleverness as well. We lose sight of God without and God within. And in our blindness, we accept an alternative reality: that of the lesser self and its creations. In doing so, we sin and sin some more, and the inevitable return of

karma causes us to fall even further. At some point, if the spark of God can be quickened within, we admit to our artificiality and begin to seek a way out. It is at that point, when the soul determines to return to its higher purposes in life, that God is able to assist us. And, with God's assistance, we can begin to find our way, walking our own path to reconnect our outer consciousness to our inner reality. Once that connection is made, often through some kind of spiritual experience, then we by our own free will want to express our inner quality. Rapid progress toward a return to God's will can then be made. All of us born of earthly mothers must walk this path."

Martin says, "I see, then, Morya, that the strategies you mentioned earlier are deeply psychological as well as moral. Strategies of good and evil have mostly to do with man's vision of himself and, ultimately, with man's relationship with God and with all things spiritual."

Morya smiles and agrees, "Yes, ultimately all strategies of good have as their goal the establishment and retention of man's connection with his own divinity and with the larger divinity of the universal God. All strategies of evil have the opposite goal: the breaking of the link between man and his inner quality and thus the breaking of the link between man and his spiritual Creator. The plans and methods to achieve these opposite goals are as numerous as the stars, but almost all center around man's self-awareness. Does man see himself as a soul expressing his inner quality, or does man see himself as separate from God and hence left to his own devices? Man's vision of himself heavily influences the course of his lifetime. Of course, the strategies of good are stronger in the longer run, because man (whether he knows it or not) is a creature of spirit as well as of flesh; but the strategies of evil can be devious. Even the wisest of men can fall victim to the rationale that they do not really need God because of their own internal greatness. That is why it is so important to never let go of your appreciation, love, and obedience

to the will of God. Acknowledging the existence of God in whatever form you identify with, and loving the will of God as it unfolds in your life, maintains the vital connection between your outer consciousness and God. God will almost never interfere with your free will. But you will never have true freedom unless you embrace the will of God and use your free will to express your inner quality.”

The men sat silently for some time, staring at the fire, and then, one by one, they quietly retired to their rooms.

### Day Twelve: Billings

#### [How Does One Know the Will of God?](#)

The next day was again cloudy and rainy, so the three men decided to drive up to Red Lodge for breakfast, and then to go into Billings to stock up on groceries and to eat lunch or an early dinner at Cracker Barrel. Mark drove his SUV, with Morya in the front and Martin in the second row of the roomy vehicle. After breakfast, they went on to Billings and shopped for food and other supplies. About 2 pm, they went to Cracker Barrel and each of them ordered their favorites. Around 4:00 they drove back through Red Lodge and on to the condo. Martin got a fire going and put on some water to boil, while Morya and Mark unloaded the groceries and put things away. After a bit, the three men sat down to enjoy the fire and the Dutch apple pie they picked up on the way down from Billings.

Now comfortable and settled in, Martin broached the subject for the night. “Morya, we all appreciate your commitment to God’s will and feel the intensity of your belief and the power that it gives you. But I have a question. It seems that people have a problem interpreting what God’s will actually is. Maybe that is a misstatement. They don’t have a problem articulating what they think God’s will is, but – if you compare the various points of view being expressed on what

God's will is in a given situation – you are likely to find several and even some contradictory interpretations of what God's actual intention is. So, how can you know what is the will of God? Or, more specifically, how can you know that your interpretation of God's will is correct?"

Mark shifts in his chair and is about to respond, but Morya says, "That's a very good question. In reality, no man knows what the will of God is – in its entirety – because man's consciousness does not encompass the totality of God. Who among us would venture to describe what God's will is for the inhabitants of a planet in a distant galaxy? Who of us can say what God's will is for humanity? We don't even know what the will of God is for our own children. What each of us can know, with a fair degree of certainty, is how God intends for us to act in our daily lives. God's will for us as individual human beings is to discover and to express the inner quality that He has placed as a seed of infinite potential within our lifestream. Every person can come to know their inner quality. It is the core of our individuality; it is what we are. God intends for that inner quality of goodness to be expressed in our thoughts, feelings, and actions. For the individual, expressing one's true self is to act according to the will of God."

Mark comments, "The key, however, is ensuring that one knows his true self and not some artificial self that he may have imposed upon his consciousness."

Martin adds, "And the added complication is that some people present themselves as knowing what the will of God is. How do we know these individuals truly know the will of God for ourselves and for others?"

Morya nods and continues, "While no man can know God's will entirely, an individual can know the will of God for himself – at least in part. Knowing the will of God for oneself and acting

upon that will be key challenges for each of us. For God has given to everyone the ability to know His will for them individually. This knowledge is not a secret available only to a few.

“Once an individual knows his true self and becomes that true self, he or she is ready to move on in the great adventure of life. For most of mankind, discovering the inner quality and learning to become the true self requires lifetime after lifetime. The processes of reincarnation and karma are necessary because men and women have so often misused their creative energies in ways not in keeping with God’s will – or with their own inner quality for that matter. Everyone has to let go of their lesser images of self and embrace the true image of themselves. The cycle of rebirth can only be broken when an individual realizes his true identity and then uses his free will and creative energies to express that true identity. Even then, it can take a while to balance all the karma made in lesser states of consciousness.”

Martin asks, “But what of the role of spiritual teachers and those who say they can tell us what the will of God is?”

Mark answers, “This is a tricky issue, because spiritual teachers vary widely in their knowledge of the will of God. Most of those teachers do have a greater understanding of things spiritual than do most of us. However, there are two levels of responsibility at play here. First, there is the responsibility of the teacher not to overstate their wisdom and insight. Second, there is the responsibility of the student to discern the level of spirituality of the teacher. Admittedly, these responsibilities are hard to fulfill – on both accounts. Teachers tend to believe in themselves and in their special knowledge of things spiritual. Students often lack the discernment necessary to recognize their teachers’ accuracy in describing the will of God. But both parties have their karmic responsibilities, because all men and women have free will. Deciding whether to lead others on a spiritual path, and deciding whether to allow oneself to be so led are true tests of the

soul seeking to become the true self in embodiment. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to your question, Martin. Which means that, often, the safest path is to discover and come to know one's own inner quality, and thereby to know incrementally the next steps in life they should take."

Martin says, "This is an important point. The inner quality of an individual is close to the surface of consciousness, yet it is often hidden to the outer mind because of the myriad distractions that pull one's attention this way and that. It takes a certain discipline and act of concentration to see one's true self. Remarkably, however, once that inner quality is perceived, then the individual knows it immediately and his eyes start to open in recognition of his true self. It is like rising above the clouds in one's consciousness."

Mark notes, "As the Buddha says, 'Go Be.' The idea is for man to go and be his true self."

Morya resumes his explanation: "Finding one's true self is the critical first step in knowing the will of God for oneself. Yet, as you so often remind us, Martin, becoming one's true self is not a common goal among humanity, and certainly not on the minds of most people as they go about their daily lives."

Mark interjects, "Although most people probably are not aware of their inner quality, they almost universally sense they have unrealized potential."

Morya continues, "This is where God's mercy comes in. The sins of most people are serious and numerous enough that it would take an enormous amount of time to balance their negative karma. Individuals often become so burdened with the weight of their misdeeds that they seem unable to recognize their own inner nobility. Having lost the vision of their true self, they almost give up in the quest for self-improvement. God and His saints often intervene in such cases to

clear the burdened consciousness sufficiently so that the individual can glimpse – even for a moment – their true reality, their inner quality. Often, this single spiritual experience is enough to change the course of one’s entire life. We begin to pursue the source of our inner quality and then, as we begin to see that this is, in fact, the character of our true self, we self-correct the course we are on and begin to pursue the will of God that is written in our hearts.”

Martin, thinking that this indeed was what had happened to him, says, “I can deeply appreciate what you are saying, Morya. The will of God is sometimes seen as a stern task master because it requires us to change the way we live from a selfish existence to one in harmony with the greater purposes of life. However, the mercy of God is such that it can tenderly take us the way we are and gradually open our eyes to see the right direction. I feel most humbled and grateful in the presence of such mercy.”

Mark says, “And that, indeed, is our saving grace. As long as we love God, there is always hope that the proper path can be found. Once a person feels – truly feels – the mercy of God, then that experience gives him or her the self-determination to improve their character and behavior.”

Morya reflects, “Yes, we have all benefited from God’s mercy. I pray and have faith that His mercy will be sufficient to bring all of humanity to that point where individuals realize their true self and seek to express their inner quality in their personal and social life. When that occurs, the individual and then society will be able to build our commonwealth of goodwill. In this way, the ideal of a commonwealth and the will of God on an individual level will merge into one reality.

That is the vision of the future I carry in my mind and in my heart.”

The men sit silently for a while. Then, Martin and Mark thank Morya for his insights and excuses themselves for the evening. Shortly thereafter, Morya retires to his room as well.

## Day Thirteen: Rock Creek

### Role of Evolution

The next morning was cold, damp, and misty, so the three men got up a little later than usual and decided to stay at the lodge beside Rock Creek until the weather cleared. A few snowflakes blew down from the mountain peaks, several of which were blanketed in thick gray clouds that indicated snow. Martin cooked up some eggs, bacon, grits, and toast, while Morya and Mark started a fire. The men settled down with plates of hot food and mugs of steaming tea for breakfast. After they ate and Morya cleaned up the dishes, the three refilled their cups and sat down by the fire. Martin was the first to speak.

“Guys, we have had a couple of wonderful exchanges about the will of God and His mercy, and how the commonwealth of goodwill can become a reality under certain conditions. The commonwealth might evolve either because of social, economic, and political trends, or because people come to accept the concept as being in their mutual interests. We have also spoken of the experience and education of man and of divine intervention in individuals experiencing their inner quality and becoming their true self. We all agree that this is true, and we all agree that the inner quality is in fact a quality of God, somehow individualized in human beings.” Martin sips his tea for a moment, and then continues, “I would like to propose an alternative explanation for the inner quality, one not linked to God but linked to evolution.”

Mark and Morya look at Martin and indicate their wish for him to continue.

Martin says, “We know from science that life is remarkably resilient on earth. We are finding life in the most unusual and hostile places, many of which are uninhabitable by human beings. We are also almost daily hearing of the discovery of planets orbiting distant stars. We are learning that comets and meteorites often contain the building blocks of life and even molecules of water.

Scientists tell us that the complex atoms essential to life and the composition of the earth originate in eruptions of ancient stars. Because of these discoveries, many scientists are beginning to think that life is far more widespread across the universe than we originally thought. However, we are also learning that the form which life takes in remote or difficult ecosystems is likely quite different from what we see each day on earth.

“If that is the case, then the idea of God being manlike or His attention being placed completely on humanity may be wrong. Logic tells us that, if there is a God, then He or She or It would need to be universal. God’s form may not be manlike. God may not even have form at all. Who can say what the form of consciousness is or what the form of a soul looks like? God may be a Spirit or some other thing that we cannot comprehend because we have not experienced that dimension of existence. Maybe what we call God is in reality only our imaginings of an all-powerful, all good, omnipresent human being.”

Morya and Mark are silent, so Martin continues yet again.

“What we know about mankind is that we have a very powerful imagination. I believe that imagination is one of our most important tools for survival as a species. It enables us to imagine a better future, to imagine a goal toward which to strive, to imagine a strategy to reach that goal, even to imagine how to govern ourselves. It enables us to imagine God as a supreme Judge to weigh our moral decisions. Let’s not forget that it is in the striving that we transcend ourselves. The power of imagination, in other words, is one of the primary drivers of our desire to realize an ideal person, an ideal society, an ideal government. We tend to identify our ideals with the divine and the spiritual, so we often think of an ideal society being comprised of morally perfect individuals, a government that is in harmony with the will of God.”

He pauses for reaction, and finding none, goes on: “If this line of reasoning is correct, then our so-called “inner quality” – which we all have experienced as being real – is actually some kind of psychological phenomena related to humanity’s evolution. Think about it. We define the inner quality as the best character of an individual. Experiencing the inner quality is, in essence, an experience in self-discovery, a recognition of our noblest side. And who among us doesn’t wish to be better person? If you think of it in this way, then the inner quality – while absolutely real – may actually be a product of human evolution. What better way for the species to guarantee its survival than to have each of its members believe in its own divine-like potential? And if you accept the premise that the individual can improve so greatly, then you have to, by extension, accept that society and its institutions, including government, can improve as well. Everyone knows that our brains are not being used to their fullest potential. If somehow we are tapping into more of the mind’s potential when we experience the inner quality, then we are not necessarily proving the existence of God. Rather, we are proving that we ourselves have incredible, untapped resources for self and social improvement.”

Mark sits back in his chair and objects, “But man’s self-discovery of his inner quality does not negate the existence of God, who may have placed that inner quality in the mind of man or even as a seed of human evolutionary potential.”

Morya says, “Both of you are correct, to a degree. The inner quality is inherent in the mind of man and it is a product of life’s evolution. It is one of the many characteristics of man that make him unique on this planet. And you are right, Martin, in saying that God is not a person like a human being. The inner quality is found in the soul as a seed of divine-like potential for the individual to discover and to express. But the soul of man and the body of man are both subject to evolution. The goal here on earth is the merging of the soul and the body of man. When that

occurs, the potential of man – both spiritually and materially – is exponentially closer to full expression. This process takes lifetimes of embodiment, and it is part of the unfolding of life on this planet. God did not create the universe complete upon its birth, but rather created it as a seed to expand without limit through billions of years of evolution. There is no contradiction between God the Creator and evolution here on earth. Spirit and matter co-exist quite comfortably in cosmos.”

Mark comments, “But there is the danger, isn’t there, Morya, that men and women – upon seeing their inner potential – may reject the idea of God and try to become gods themselves?”

Morya smiles and replies, “God does not need man’s adoration or acceptance to exist. Mankind benefits when it tries to understand the role of spirituality in life and tries to incorporate that understanding into everyday activities. But the fate of man rests largely in the hands of man. What they do with their free will is their own decision. What God has provided is a framework in which free will operates. That framework includes karma, whose role is to ensure that cause and effect work morally as well as materially. Individuals, whether or not they believe in God, usually come to the conclusion through their returning karma that it is in their own best interests to be the best person they can possibly be. What occurs – not always but normally – is that when people discover their own noble potential, they decide to pursue that potential because of the harmony it creates in their own consciousness.

“Hence, the expression of one’s inner quality is both an important step in mankind’s evolution as well as the fulfillment of part of God’s plan. The various ‘dimensions’ of man – for simplicity’s sake let us call them spirit and matter – coexist whether the outer mind is aware of these multiple dimensions or not. It is far better for man to acknowledge and understand his spiritually, but life goes on regardless of whether he believes in God.”

After a moment, Mark says, “This has been very interesting, but the sun is beginning to shine. Let’s drive up to the pass and take some pictures. With the clouds and snow and the sunlight, this should make a perfect setting.”

Martin and Morya agree, and all begin preparing their day packs. The three friends then pile into Martin’s truck and drive up the Beartooth Highway to the top of the pass.

### The Tao of Government

After an afternoon of walking in the snow around the Beartooth Pass, the friends arrived back at their lodge hungry and tired, and ready for a good warm meal and to settle in for the night. Mark prepared some stir fry with chicken and vegetables, while Morya started a fire. After the meal, cups of hot chocolate in hand, the three men gathered in the living room in anticipation of another round of discussion on what comprises an ideal government.

Mark asks, “Morya, I know you have spent countless hours thinking about ideal government. We have talked about, from a practical point of view, some of Martin’s suggestions for the institutions required for such a government to function, and you have shared with us your views on some of the spiritual characteristics that would make a commonwealth of goodwill both possible and sustainable. I would like to ask you: what kind of leader should be the head of an ideal government? What makes an ideal leader in an ideal society?”

Morya smiles at the question and says, “OK. If you want my views on this, I will give them to you. But first, I would like to hear Martin’s opinion.”

Martin leans forward in thought, and then frames an answer. “I would say that we must first understand that these are generalities, because there is no such thing as a single model for ideal leadership, just as there is no such thing as a single model for ideal government. Governments

must fit their environments, and leaders must fit the times and circumstances of their moment in power.”

Morya says, “That is true. The circumstances often make the leader. On the other hand, there are certain characteristics of a leader all of us would like to see, especially if we are considering political leadership in an ideal society.” He continues, “I think, first and foremost, such a leader must be dedicated to the well-being of his people and be mostly unselfish. Such a leader must have strong moral character, as well as personal discipline to follow the moral standards that he or she believes in. The leader must be willing to work long hours and, if necessary, to sacrifice the personal pleasures that make life pleasant and enjoyable for the rest of us. The leader must be humble before God, life and nature, and respect the dignity of the people. The leader must be compassionate towards the lives, possessions, ideas, hopes, and dreams of the people. The leader must be approachable by all, rich and poor alike, the powerful and the needy, because he or she is the leader of all of society, not just a privileged few. The ideal leader should also insist upon equality and fairness in society and its institutions. The leader should know when to be stern and when to be merciful, because every society – no matter how ideal – will have its moments of peace and prosperity and its moments of challenge and need.”

Mark asks, “Morya, do you think the political leader of the nation should also be its spiritual leader?”

Morya answers, “It is very difficult for a political leader to also be a spiritual leader. Difficult, but not impossible. The difficulty arises because a political leader must address the practical needs of society, whereas a spiritual leader must address the aspirational needs of the soul. It is true that both parts of mankind need to be addressed, but it is asking a lot for a single person to be able to solve both practical and spiritual problems. This is especially true in modern times,

when society is so complex. Perhaps in ancient, simpler times, or perhaps in very small modern communities, such a combination of functions is possible.”

Martin asks, “But even assuming it is possible, is it a good idea for an individual to wear both secular and religious hats at the same time?”

Mark responds, “The ancient teachings show this to be possible and beneficial. If it worked before, why won’t it work now in certain circumstances?”

Morya comments, “There is nothing wrong in having a single person carrying the dual responsibilities of state and church. But because such a person would have considerable power, there is increased risk of misuse of that power. So is such an arrangement a good idea, as Martin asks? I would say that it depends on the individual and the circumstances. This is something almost impossible to predict beforehand.”

Mark then asks, “I have always wondered whether leaders have a different morality than normal people. Morya, do have some thoughts on this?”

Morya says, “Being a good leader following a moral life is fairly easy during times of peace and plenty. When war occurs or society is threatened internally, then being a good leader always following moral principles becomes more challenging. When national survival is at stake, the leader’s first responsibility is to ensure the safety of nation and the people. This requires different strategies, depending upon the source of the threat. Responding to external aggression, domestic turmoil, or natural disaster might require the leader to be a commander-in-chief, a law enforcer, or an emergency manager. In each case, the leader must direct the resources at his or her disposal and solicit the resources controlled by others in order to mitigate the suffering of the people.

Almost inevitably, this will require the leader to ask, expect, and in some cases demand personal

sacrifice from the people until the emergency passes and normalcy returns. The actions taken by the leader to protect society during times of emergency might not be appropriate during times of stability. Are these extraordinary measures immoral? The distinction between proper and improper behavior can blur in some situations. What is most important, however, is that leaders hold themselves accountable to an ethical and moral standard that is reasonable and necessary under the circumstances. In an imperfect world, perfect morality is something rarely if ever achieved, especially among leaders seeking to protect their people. Still, all leaders should exercise great care in their behavior and do their best to use good means to achieve their good ends.”

After giving this some thought, Martin observes, “Historically, it has proven to be hard for even the best intentioned leader to relinquish command authority when stability returns.”

Mark replies, “That has certainly been true in many cases, but this is where Morya’s description of the ideal leader comes in. A truly moral leader would be able to relinquish his emergency powers once the emergency passes. No matter his or her role during various circumstances, the leader would always have a solid core of moral integrity. Holding on to this core of integrity enables the leader to use his or her higher mind and thereby see more clearly the most appropriate strategies for the situation.”

Morya and Martin agree with this, and then Martin asks, “Morya, when the survival of society is at stake, can the leader employ immoral means to protect the society?”

Morya chuckles and replies, “Still revisiting your Machiavelli, I see. Well, OK, let’s address the issue of whether there are any circumstances that would justify an ideal leader to compromise his moral standards.”

Martin nods, and Morya continues, “I think this point more than any other illustrates why it is so difficult for an advanced spiritual teacher to assume a position of political leadership. Someone who is very spiritually advanced – Jesus comes to mind, and Gautama – would simply not accept a political leadership position because it would cause them to face the dilemma between doing everything necessary to protect society and doing everything morally correct as an example of proper behavior. A great spiritual teacher is a teacher of mankind, a teacher who tries to explain man’s relationship to God and nature and to all of life, including other men. The duty, if you will, of a spiritual teacher is to teach spiritual things. The duty of a political leader is to lead the people in peace and in crisis. As we have noted, the two positions can be filled by someone functioning from a high level of consciousness, but there are differing responsibilities. Jesus, for example, did not compromise his principle that to live by the sword is to die by the sword. A political leader, on the other hand, must be prepared to wield the sword and to ask the best young men and women of society to face the possibility of death. You can see this difference in duty in the story of Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. One might be tempted to argue that a spiritual teacher is more highly advanced than a political leader, but it is nearly impossible for us to judge another’s position on the spiritual ladder. We probably should focus less on hypotheticals dealing with other people and more time on understanding and doing our own duty.”

As Morya pauses to drink from his cup, Martin stands up to add wood to the fire, and then Morya says, “In terms of duty, when a leader who is functioning from his higher mind is faced with moral dilemmas and complex problems offering no easy solution, he or she can use two primary guides. First, the leader should use his own moral standards inherent in being in contact with the inner quality. The inner quality contains within itself a set of moral standards for that person. If you contact your inner quality, those standards will become apparent to you. Being

true to those standards is the first guide for a leader – or for any of us for that matter. Second, a leader who has contact with his inner quality should use the higher mind to make sound decisions. Access to the higher mind comes naturally as a result of contacting the inner quality, because the individual has expanded their mental capability.

“The wonderful thing about the higher mind is that it broadens enormously perceptions of the environment in which decisions must be made. Far more strategic options are available to someone using the higher mind than would otherwise be the case. One’s intuition becomes sharper; one’s reasoning power more acute; one’s perceptions enhanced. And, like the moral standards of the inner quality, the capacity of the higher mind is available to anyone – although the skill in using the higher mind varies considerably. Combined, these two guides – the individual’s standard of morality and the higher mind’s ability to make improve decision making within challenging circumstances – enable the leader to work through the difficult choices he or she must face in protecting the nation and serving the interests of the people. Does that answer your question, Martin?”

Martin thinks for a moment and then says, “For the most part, yes. I can see, even from my own limited experience with the inner quality and higher mind, that my perceptions are keener and my options more creative than before. From a practical point of view, every problem faced by government has multiple solutions and there are many paths that can be chosen. Every law, policy, executive order, or regulation has its costs and benefits. No matter what path is chosen, some stakeholders will find their interests are better served than others. That is why politics is part art and part science, and it all usually boils down to an equation of how limited resources are to be distributed. I can see why, if a leader can draw upon the enhanced rationality and intuition of the higher mind, he would be able to make better decisions. So, yes, I can understand that part.

I can also appreciate the need for the leader to have a strong set of moral standards by which to live his personal life. I can't tell you the number of promising careers that have been derailed in Washington because of some moral indiscretion. It's a terrible waste, and it goes on and on even though everyone knows there is a pitfall likely waiting due to personal immorality. Power very often corrupts one's moral strength. I suppose it has to do with the perception that, with sufficient power, one can do no wrong. To me, that is one of the main failings of political leaders throughout all of history."

Mark comments, "That is why it is so important for any person desiring a life in politics to have a strong moral code and to follow it closely in his or her personal and professional life. That does not mean the person has to be a saint. It means that the aspiring leader must have a rock solid set of moral values to live by. From my observations, the return of karma through public exposure of indiscretions will come precisely at the time the individual is on the verge of making their best contribution to society. The lesson here is painful: our sins hurt those we love the most and prevent us from doing the good that we have sought to do."

Mark then adds, "I think, from all we have said tonight, that being a political leader is one of the most challenging of all professions. At the same time, it is one of the most rewarding in that the lives of countless people can be improved if one's decisions are correct. Leadership – and I suppose it would apply to leadership in all aspects of society – is a grave responsibility. No wonder the ancient teachings say that the karma – good and bad – of leaders is much greater than the karma of those who are led. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the world's greatest spiritual teachers chose not to be political leaders. And yet, at the same time, there is some validity in the concept that you cannot separate spirituality and politics. In some ways, the two

go hand in hand, for only when politics is guided by moral and spiritual standards can society achieve its highest potential.”

Both Morya and Martin agree, and all three men retire to their rooms as small pellets of ice start to fall from the overcast sky.

### Day Fourteen: Yellowstone Park

#### Role of Church and State

The next day was warm and sunny, so the three friends ate a quick breakfast and headed out to the Park for a day of exploring and photography. They ate lunch in Gardiner, Montana, and then drove back to Rock Creek, arriving about 4:30 in the afternoon. They prepared a full dinner of grilled chicken, mashed potatoes, corn and green beans, with an apple pie for dessert they had picked up in Gardiner. After eating and cleaning the pots and pans, they settled down into their chairs, a steaming cup of Darjeeling tea in hand, and began their conversation.

Mark began, “Yesterday we had a good discussion on an ideal leader and we ended on the question of how spirituality and governance could be combined. This relates to the issue of the respective roles of church and state. Should their functions be combined, or should they be viewed as separate social activities? In my view, the two should be combined because mankind is both spiritual and material, and it is impossible to separate spiritual beliefs from the values that influence the decisions of political leaders. Despite the institutional separation of church and state in some countries such as the United States, this is a governance mechanism only; it does not reflect what happens in the real world. Nor do other countries follow the American model. Let’s just take the United States. When have the American people elected an atheist as President? And do not all Presidents make a point of attending church while in office? In other words, the U.S. Constitution may not allow for a state-sponsored church to dominate politics, but most all

individuals in the country have some kind of religion in their personal lives. The separation of spirituality and governance does not exist in the United States, although institutionally churches and branches of government are separated.”

Martin nods and says, “That’s a very good point, but I think the purpose of the separation of church and state in America was to avoid the situation found in Europe at that time in which a state-sponsored or state-approved church used its favored position to gain converts and to influence policy in ways beneficial to itself. Most of the Founding Fathers were, as far as I know, religious, and religious symbols are found throughout American political institutions. ‘In God We Trust’ is a national motto. ‘God Bless America’ is perhaps our favorite national anthem. But to what extent should an ideal leader draw his or her personal religious or spiritual beliefs into politics? Morya, what are your views on this?”

Morya leans back, thinking, and then says, “Martin is right in describing the intentions of the Founding Fathers. They wanted to avoid a state-favored religion, preferring strongly the freedom of religion for all citizens. But many of the leading Fathers also believed America had a divine destiny and that they were doing the will of God in establishing the country. This is reflected clearly in the Declaration of Independence and other early documents. Mark is correct in saying that it is impossible to separate in an individual leader his spiritual beliefs from his political decisions. And there is nothing wrong with that. The discussion that Mark is introducing, however, has to do with ideal circumstances: an ideal leader, an ideal government, an ideal citizenry. That makes the issue all the more interesting.”

Martin asks, “How so?”

Morya explains, “Well, for one thing there appears to be a hierarchy within the spiritual world. We have, for example, God, archangels, angels, saints, prophets, teachers, and so on that reflect a wide variety of spiritual attainment and areas of responsibility. For thousands of years, men have debated whether, in ideal government, this hierarchy principle should be reflected in some way in how governing bodies and political leadership are organized?”

Morya continues, “If by ideal, we mean a leader, government, and society that are highly advanced spiritually, then it would seem natural for there to be a hierarchy in leadership based in part on perceived levels of spirituality. Under this model – which has been attempted many times in history – the ideal political leader would be one of the most accomplished, spiritual persons in society. His or her authority would come not only from the legal system, but also from acknowledgement by other citizens of his spiritual wisdom and attainment.”

Mark comments, “This indeed is a model that has continued in existence yet today, for example, in theocracies.”

Martin interjects, “But it is a model that is almost nowhere to be found in today’s world, because modern complexities overwhelm the abilities of any single person to successfully manage or even adequately understand the challenges faced by larger nations. It is probable that future societies will be more complex than they are today. For this reason alone, it would seem unrealistic for theocracies to be an ideal government in the future. And we could say the same for totalitarian models as well. Complexity of society means diffusion of power and responsibility; otherwise, society won’t work.”

Morya smiles and says, “I think the qualities of omniscience and omnipresence are only attributed to God, so I agree with Martin that no single person on this earth could possibly

understand or master everything in a large, complex society. However, Mark is also correct in pointing out that many traditional conceptions of ideal government were hierarchical in nature. And don't forget, Martin, as you have said, the Founding Fathers created institutions designed to balance people's flaws. Presumably, in an ideal society – which is our assumption in this discussion – people would have fewer flaws and therefore have less need of extensive checks and balances in the distribution of power and responsibility.”

Martin considers this and responds, “Even if we are talking about an ideal society, how can an ideal leader have sufficient knowledge to be able to administer the entire nation? That seems impossible to me.”

Mark jumps in. “Well, I am not sure it is impossible for a spiritually advanced soul to be intelligent and practical enough to have all if not most of the political power concentrated in his hands. For example, let's consider how business executives or heads of state or military generals manage control over their subordinates. It has to do with the delegation of responsibility, proper planning and procedures, the flow of information, trusted advisors – all ensuring that the right people are in the right positions to enable the chief executive to make informed decisions and have those decisions carried out. None of this is new. To have a single political leader with extensive power is not that much different from having a single corporate or military executive with command decisions. It happens all the time. Why not in government?”

Martin reflects for a moment and then says, “I catch the drift of your argument, but we have to remember that the responsibilities of a head of state or national leader are far greater than the responsibilities of a corporate executive or military commander. And speaking of responsibilities, we need to ask ourselves if this ideal political leader would also have authority over the personal aspects of people's lives and their local community activities. If absolute

power is concentrated in the hands of a single person (spiritually advanced though he or she may be), where do the rights of the individual begin and the authority of the leader end? I, for one, could never support a system of government with absolute power concentrated in the hands of a single person, party, institution, or any other entity. There has been far too much abuse of power through the centuries to allow that to happen again.”

Morya comments, “I understand where you are coming from. You tend to view things historically and from the perspective of what you personally have observed. And I agree with you that, in today’s world with people’s weaknesses and imperfections, it makes more sense to have a good system of checks and balances than to experiment with power resting in the hands of a single person or a small group. On the other hand, if government on earth is to mirror government in heaven, then a hierarchical system would – theoretically in an ideal society – seem to be both possible and perhaps appropriate.”

Martin observes, “Maybe I could support a hierarchical system of government if the citizens of earth were as good as the citizens of heaven. But until that occurs, I believe we are better off with checks and balances and limited concentrations of power – at least in political systems.”

Mark tries to sum up the discussion: “So, it appears that we all agree that an ideal government could – under the proper conditions – be led by a single ruler with considerable political power. However, under current conditions, such a system would probably not work well. In other words, the Golden Age is not yet with us and seems to be somewhat distant in the future. Still, the ideal exists and has merit, but it is not appropriate for the present. Would you agree with that, Martin?”

Martin nods, then says, “I think we have discussed this point sufficiently for this evening. We all wish society and people were better than they are today, but they are not. We all are working in our own ways to improve society and those with whom we come into contact, but our progress is slow and limited. The ideals are there, and their implementation may be valid under certain conditions. But those ideal conditions do not yet exist, so we must do what we can with what we have. I see no other way forward.” He gestures to the others for comment.

Morya adds, “What you say, Martin, is true about current conditions. But we must be careful not to let current conditions blind us to the opportunities to improve those conditions. Most importantly, in our efforts to work with what currently exists, we must not ignore the potential for positive change that is everywhere present. It is better, I believe, to work on the cusp of positive change than to engage fully in the day-to-day struggles of the world. People only have so much time and energy, and how they choose to use that time and energy becomes all important in the activities of our daily lives.”

Martin and Mark both nod in agreement, and the remainder of the evening’s conversation centered on what to do the following day, as their extended vacation was rapidly drawing to a close.

#### Day Fifteen: Cody

##### War and Peace

After breakfast the next day, the three men left in Mark’s SUV to go visit Cody, Wyoming, and to explore the area around the east entrance into Yellowstone, before winding back through the Park to the Lamar Valley. They were fortunate to see a couple of grizzlies and lots of other wildlife on the way back. So with plenty of good pictures to remember their trip, they were

happy to arrive back at the condo toward nightfall. After preparing a quick meal of goulash and green beans, they settled in for their talk of the evening.

Martin initiated the conversation. “It seems to me in our discussions that we have presented two alternative views of the future. One, the ideal, in which everyone and everything is optimally good and in alignment with the will of God. The other, a vision of a society much improved from today but still characterized by the same mixture of good and bad that has always – at least in recorded history – accompanied mankind. We have seen that, in an ideal society, all of the wonderful things we cherish can come to pass. We have also seen that, in the improving society, things can get better but will still be far from perfect. I truly believe that the ideal will never occur on this planet, but that gradual improvement can happen as men and women work toward ideal goals. The ideal goals, while perhaps not practically attainable, nonetheless plays a crucial role. It appears that we have a need for ideals written in our DNA as a goad to aspire us to constantly transcend our limitations. So the discussion I would like to introduce is how war and peace fit into these two alternative visions of the future. Could war exist in an ideal world; is peace achievable in an improving global political environment?”

Mark comments, “I think that you have hit the head of the issue. Is the future to be an ideal one, or is it to be an improvement of the present condition? I think that, as men and women come into contact with their inner qualities, they will gradually improve their character to such an extent that a more perfect society is possible. Each of us have witnessed – individually in ourselves and in others – the transformative power of a personal experience with one’s own spirituality and true relationship with God and with other parts of life. What to us now seems like a distant and improbable ideal, may in fact become a reality because man nature is changing. If individuals

can dramatically improve their character, then why cannot society improve dramatically as well? And, if society can improve, why cannot a more ideal government emerge?"

Morya says, "Such change is possible and it is the hope of all of heaven, I am sure. However, the future of mankind rests always in the hands of mankind. Not even God Himself will intervene to create an ideal society for us. Man has to create an ideal society himself, if it is to exist at all. At the present time, Martin's perspective is probably closer to realization. People can gradually improve, but achieving perfection even for an individual seems only remotely possible. Mark, your insight is also valid, in that social improvement is dependent upon the improvement of individuals, and – very importantly – individuals can reverse course very quickly. Think of Paul, or Saul as he was known then, on the way to Damascus. A complete change of direction in his life because of a single spiritual experience! Such a thing is possible for everyone. And if sufficient numbers of people have a spiritual experience, then the vision of an ideal society conceivably could come to pass."

Mark says, "This is true, Morya, and I believe that it is the will of God that such a transformation of man's character take place. But changing the heart of men is something that only God can do, and it must occur with the individual accepting the change. God has planted a seed of Himself in the soul of everyone: what we call the inner quality. Each person must discover his or her own inner quality and decide, by their own free will, to express that inner quality."

He pauses and then continues, "I guess what I am saying is that, even though every person has the potential of becoming aligned with the will of God – and hence able to build and participate in an ideal society – only God has the power to bring the experience of the inner quality to sufficient numbers of people to bring about the mass change of character necessary to create an

ideal society. We – as individuals – seem incapable of producing the ideal society on our own because it requires too many of us to be enlightened at the same time.”

Martin says, “I think that, theoretically, maybe an ideal society is possible. But I think it is highly unlikely because of the nature of man and because God has given man free will to pretty much do as he pleases in this dimension of time and space. I do not believe that God would give man free will and then take it away in order to create a perfect society. Society is man’s own creation, and it will likely so remain. And if society is man’s creation, then it will reflect the strengths and weaknesses of its creator. Since man is imperfect, society will be imperfect, and all social institutions – including government – will be imperfect as well. I don’t see how you can get around that.”

Mark shakes his head and observes, “With God all things are possible.”

Morya comments, “Well, again, both of you are correct in some ways. But, for the sake of discussion, let’s assume Martin’s analysis is true – at least for the foreseeable future. To your question of the evening, Martin, what do you think the implications are for war and peace in the future, if gradual improvement in people and in society actually occurs?”

Martin stirs the fire with a stick and responds, “I think that most major governments have concluded that war and other forms of violence are not the preferred solutions to their problems. The costs of war are too great. But there are minorities, fanatical groups such as terrorists and professional revolutionaries, who continue to wage war as a means of advancing their agendas. However, except in rare circumstances such as crazy leaders, the number of armed conflicts between nations seems to be diminishing. This positive trend should continue into the future, although hot spots of local or regional conflict could erupt in a major war.”

He pauses and then continues, “Countries will always have different and sometimes conflicting interests that sometimes prove impossible to resolve by peaceful means. This is the nature of international politics, and it likely will continue for several decades into the future. The hope we can have is that, as leaders and peoples become better educated, they will see options other than violence to serve their purposes. And these purposes, hopefully, will be seen not as win-lose propositions but rather potential win-win opportunities. Overall, therefore, it seems that a reduction in war will occur, but that war will not be entirely eliminated. If you factor in the possibility of greater numbers of people becoming aware of their inner qualities and hence sensing their larger potential, then the possibility of war would presumably be reduced even further.”

Mark adds, “For two reasons. First, the inner quality provides an individual with access to the higher mind, and the higher mind perceives many more options from which to choose in addressing complex issues. Second, the spiritual experience accompanying the discovery of the inner quality helps one to identify more closely with one’s fellowman, so there is a greater sense of brotherhood and global community. This expanded sense of ‘we are all in this together, so let’s try to find a workable solution that benefits us all’ will tend to draw leaders and peoples together in a more concerted effort to address common concerns. And, as Morya has so eloquently reminded us, when people of goodwill work together to find a commonly beneficial solution to complex problems, those solutions – or at least ways to manage the problems – usually can be found. The bottom line here is that higher levels of education and acknowledged interdependencies, and an increase in the number of individuals coming into contact with their inner quality, will likely work together to reduce the frequently of conflict and increase the peaceful resolution of international issues. That is what I think.”

Mark, thoughtfully sipping his tea, then says, “I would add, however, that the power of God can accelerate this process. I believe in my heart that divine intervention for a more peaceful world will occur if larger numbers of people ask God for such intervention.”

Martin just shrugs his shoulders and comments, “That is a statement of faith. I hope it happens, but I cannot be sure it will.”

Morya then says, “We started our discussion during this trip with an exploration of whether a commonwealth of goodwill was possible, and we have brought the discussion today to the observation – which I agree with – that both spiritual and practical trends are toward greater peace on the planet. Not complete peace by any means, but greater peace. I foresee the day when the commonwealth will be created and it will serve as a convenient forum for the greatest minds of mankind to come together to address the problems that lead to conflict between nations and civilizations, ethnic groups, communities, and individuals. My hope is that, eventually, as this meeting of great minds occurs, mankind will reach a point in his material and spiritual development where his full potential can be realized. That is my vision for the future, and I am encouraged to hear both of you move in that direction, even if you both start from different positions on the issue of whether spiritual or material conditions will prevail in mankind’s motivations.”

Morya adds as an afterthought: “We need to consider mankind’s decisions here. God, having given man free will, is not likely to take it away. God only very rarely intervenes in humanity’s affairs. Moreover, there is a difference between moral decisions of right and wrong, in which God is interested as evidence of the soul’s spiritual growth, and decisions of taking this path or another as a matter of free will choice. We all have experience in our lives where a decision has made all the difference in our career path, the person we marry, where we live, etc. These are not

moral decisions. They are not even decisions on which God is likely to have a strong opinion. These are decisions for us to make, to live with, and to draw lessons from. As long as we act and make our best choices, then we can go forth and see where our path leads us. Moving toward an ideal society is one of those kinds of decisions, I believe. Mankind should make his choices and see where they lead. Sometimes the motivation and effort are as important as achieving the goal itself.”

Everyone nods their agreement and satisfaction over the course of the dialogue, and Morya continues: “I suggest we end our discourse for the time being and talk about our new adventure for tomorrow. We will be leaving in a couple of days and we want to fill every moment of our vacation with a fond memory of the majesty of these surroundings.” Everyone then relaxed to enjoy the evening’s fire and the peaceful sounds of the nearby stream.

#### Day Sixteen: Bitterroot National Forest

##### [The Need to Survive and to Transcend](#)

The following day was bright and sunny, so after breakfast the three friends decided to drive out to Missoula, Montana, and explore the Bitterroot National Forest area, especially some of the gravel roads off Highway 93. On the drive out I-90 from Billings, the men enjoyed coffee and donuts picked up along the way and remarked on the beautiful scenery. They all agreed it would be wonderful to have some property out here, but Martin reminded them that the winters in this part of the country were bitterly cold and windy. After consideration, they concluded that visits in the late spring or early fall were the best options.

Near Bozeman, Martin raises a new topic for discussion. “I have been thinking about the roles of survival and transcendence in human affairs, and how these twin motivations influence people as they go about their daily lives. By their nature, individuals cannot ignore the drive to survive, nor

the need to transcend themselves to meet ever more challenging circumstances. It seems to me that these two motivations are keys to mankind's evolutionary progress. They are also intertwined, because survival is enhanced by transcendence, and transcendence is only possible if one survives.”

He pauses to point out a large buck standing in a field close to the road, then continues: “Yet, human behavior can be influenced quite differently by these two motivations. For example, a person will do almost anything to survive – lie, cheat, steal, kill. But, to transcend himself, a person will often seek to control these survival instincts and instead cultivate his higher vision and nobler side. In my estimation, it is the contradiction between these two basic motivations that explain – to a great extent – why people are so often conflicted between their moral ideals and their actual behavior. The desire to do better and the desire to behave in amoral ways are natural expressions of motivations springing from inside of ourselves. Isn't this mankind's primary moral dilemma? We ask ourselves: How could these impulses to do noble things and to do selfish things both originate from within ourselves? And why do we tend view the one as proper moral behavior and the other as being immoral? If they both spring from our natural selves, then why is the one praised and the other criticized? Logically speaking, it doesn't make sense, other than the explanation that society has artificially created moral guidelines which are not at all based on nature or even on God's will. Morality, in other words, might perhaps best be seen as nothing more than a social construct, with no reality at all except in people's minds.”

Martin holds up his hand to halt Mark's interjection, and says, “And, if that is the case, then all discussion about a higher culture or a nobler way is largely meaningless. Why can't people just live the way they are, with so-called good and bad impulses accepted as being normal? We might

be a lot happier and less psychologically stressed if we drop all of these artificial moral dilemmas.” He challenges both of them: “What do you think about this argument?”

Mark and Morya both laugh. Mark then says, “Thank God you are not a national leader, Martin. That is one of the most perverse arguments I have ever heard! You would have us all be savages, rather than the finely cultured people which we are.” Martin smiles at the trace of sarcasm in Mark’s reply, but acknowledges the beginning of a counter-argument.

Morya, who has enjoyed this exchange, comments, “That’s a good one, Martin, and I know from our conversations that you are posing an argument for the sake of discussing an important point, rather than favoring a return to barbarism on a global scale. Yes, all men do have twin motivations for survival and transcendence, but is not the evolution of mankind from roving nomad to modern civilization proof that humanity is moving from a predominant concern about survival to a greater desire to realize the full potential of the human condition? Is not that evolution in mankind’s consciousness both natural and good? Is not that evolution the same path an individual goes through as he decides to improve his character after discovering his inner quality? And isn’t this path of progress the exact one taught to us by world teachers throughout history? We human beings have the creative ability not only to change our environment but also to change ourselves. Since we have both the choice and the ability to realize our higher potential, shouldn’t we work to create a better self? Shouldn’t we all strive to improve our environment, along with ourselves? You speak of the nature of man as being brutish, but higher sides of man exist as well. So why not tap into that inner potential and become the very best person we can be? Clearly, that would lead to a better world. And certainly that would reflect the will of God for the individual and for society.”

Martin nods and stares out the window. After a while, he says, “When we talk about survival and transcendence, we are not only speaking of individuals but also of society and government. In eons past, survival of society was never taken for granted because enemies and dangers lurked everywhere. In today’s world, many of the threats to social survival have diminished in intensity – although many remain. Nowadays more people have the leisure to contemplate how they might transcend themselves to become better individuals. Perhaps in the future, greater numbers of people will think about creating a more ideal society. Perhaps it takes a stable, prosperous, and secure world for an ideal individual, society, or government to emerge. If that is the case, then the focus of those of us alive today should be on making the world more stable, more prosperous, and more secure. If that could be accomplished, bit by bit, generation by generation, then one day the conditions may be right for these ideals to be realized.”

Mark comments, “I think that is true, but the issues that men face in the future may or may not be less challenging than those we face today or our ancestors faced in the past. Each generation has its own challenges to overcome, its own evils with which to contend, its own wars to fight.

Maybe the ideal is not something that is actually achieved, but rather an ever retreating goal that is never attained but constantly strived for. I think we reached a similar conclusion earlier. In what you just said, Martin, you seemed to imply that an ideal society or ideal government might actually come into being. Have you changed your position?”

Morya says, “Both of you make excellent points. Challenges will no doubt remain in the future, and some ideals will always exist as goals toward which we strive but never quite reach.

Nonetheless, great improvement in the character of people, society, and government can occur.

The future is largely determined by what we do here today. Remember the sage advice of the Buddha: ‘We are what we think, having become what we thought.’ There is great wisdom there.

What we think in our minds can be under our personal control, or could be if we exercised that discipline. We do not have to be captives of our past. We can improve our decisions and thereby improve our future. That is the karmic law of moral cause and effect. We have free will, and it is our responsibility to build our own future. Not even God makes that decision for us. What God and nature have given us are common sense, a measure of freedom of choice, and an internal and external need for both survival and transcendence. These are sufficient tools to enable us to move in a right direction.”

By then the three men were getting hungry, so they stopped at the next McDonald’s and then continued on their journey, with frequent comment on the beauty of the land through which they were travelling. They returned to the Lodge toward evening, had a quick dinner, and then retired to their rooms early because they intended to go on a long hike tomorrow, their final day, weather permitting.

### Day Seventeen: Hiking

#### Finding the True Self

They arose early, had a quick breakfast of oatmeal and toast, and then piled into Martin’s truck for a trip down the Chief Joseph Highway to one of the trails they saw when they had driven through the area earlier. A few miles down a rough dirt road, the men came to a clearing. They parked the truck, Martin strapped on his revolver in case of bears, Mark took out a can of bear spray, and Morya loaded up on water and energy bars. The three men set off on a narrow game trail, which led to a high plateau overlooking the deep gorges of Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River. After walking several miles along this ridge line, the men stopped to build a fire, warm their hands, and snack on the energy bars and water Morya had stuffed into his backpack. As the men lay back on the grass and stared at the clouds rolling across the bright, sun filled sky, they

quietly absorbed the majesty of this place, so far removed from the city life in which they worked and would soon return. After a while, they headed back down the trail to the truck and then returned to the condo by 4:30 to prepare a final evening meal of baked chicken, fresh salad, and French bread. When all was eaten and the dishes cleaned and put away, the three friends sat in front of the fire and listened to the night sounds of the forest and the creek. There was no moon that evening, so the stars were brilliant and the evening crisp and cool. The fire was comforting, and the hot spiced tea delicious, so the men were very relaxed as they recounted the day's adventure. At a certain point, Mark spoke up.

“I couldn't help but think as I was walking on that trail today that life really is a journey. The interesting thing is that we neither know the beginning nor the end. All we know is the present and that small part of the past we can remember. Most of our journey is never retained in our memories, yet we are constantly experiencing so many things. Often I wonder: what is it all for? Are we here, born in this life, only to live in the moment, or is there purpose in our journey?”

Martin and Morya just look at Mark, so he continues, “I can remember when I was a small child and my mother taking care of me. I can also remember when she was about to pass from this earth, how I looked at her aging features and wondered about all the things she had experienced but which I would never know. And now, as I am getting older, I see my children and realize that they cannot possibly share the experiences I have had. Sure, they listen to my stories, but they can't experience the pain and joys I have felt. Nor can they learn the hard lessons, good and bad, that I have come to know over the years. It seems as if the doors on one's life are opened and closed only for oneself, and we leave very little behind. Sometimes I think that is such a waste. How often I have counseled my children to do this or that, only to have them do the opposite. I have learned through the years that one cannot impart wisdom to children, because they lack the

experience from whence the wisdom comes. They wind up making the same mistakes I made, and I can do little to help them. All I can do is love them.”

The men are quiet for a while, and then Morya says, “Yes, this is a characteristic of humankind. I know that the world teachers, having spent their lives gaining wisdom that would benefit humanity, find it sometimes disappointing that those who hear their message are unable to comprehend its true meaning. Still, progress in men’s understanding incrementally goes on. This is certainly true technologically and, to some extent, culturally, but improvement in mankind’s character is much slower. The motivations and actions that influenced the ancients are pretty much the same that guide us today.”

Martin comments, “And yet, if we think about it, progress at the individual level is being made. In this single lifetime, we ourselves have improved our understanding and, hopefully, improved our character. As we grow in wisdom, the doors of understanding open and the lessons taught by our parents and teachers become clearer to us. How often have I turned my thoughts to older and wiser friends and suddenly understood what they were saying to me. Maybe, rather than thinking about mankind’s improvement as a group, we should think about mankind’s improvement as individuals.”

Mark adds, “Still, one would think that self-improvement should have a more widespread influence on one’s family and society as a whole. Isn’t that our assumption about how conditions might arise for a more ideal government in the future? Are we saying that social progress is not cumulative, but rather must start all over again with each generation? I think of the greatness of classical Greece and how its achievements faded from memory for a thousand years. Who knows what insights might lay buried beneath the dust of history.”

Morya says, “This indeed is an interesting point. Should we focus our efforts on today, by seeking self-improvement first; or should we focus on the future, with a view toward improving humanity over generations? Might the evolution of mankind be something we should leave in the hands of God, and only be concerned about ourselves, our loved ones, and perhaps our current social, political, and ecological environment?”

Mark comments, “I am reminded of the old teaching that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, and other adages advising physicians to first heal themselves before attempting to heal others. The message from past religious leaders has often been that we need to concentrate on self-improvement, before we think about improving the world.”

Martin shakes his head slightly and says, “I have to confess that, in my own life, I tended to try to heal the world before I was whole myself. I tried to avoid the hard discipline of mastering my passions and instead concentrated on doing good things for society as a whole. From my experience, good intentions are not enough. Your service to your country or society will always be limited by your own weaknesses. I suppose, if I had my life to do over, I would have worked harder on self-improvement before I tried to take on the challenges of the world. But I found it easier to wrestle with the problems of the world than to try to overcome my own imperfections. That’s probably a reflection of my character, because many others have first tried to improve themselves. Maybe in each lifetime we have a slightly different inclination in this matter, having a different set of karmic issues to work through.”

Morya observes, “We all have learned that lesson, but let’s not be too hard on ourselves. Did we not make the best decisions we could at the time? Mankind as a species has certain limitations, and one of those is that we do not have genetic memory to pass subconsciously from one

generation to the next. On the other hand, we have tremendous capability to learn one person at a time. We all must walk our own path in life. That is the price of free will.”

After thinking for a moment, he says, “Let me share with you my grand view of the purpose of mankind. It may not be accurate, but it is the best explanation I can find at the present moment.”

Mark and Martin express interest, so Morya continues, “I think it reasonable to assume that, when God created individual souls of humankind, he created them pure and innocent. In this state of spiritual infancy, the soul was closely aligned to God’s will because the soul had not yet begun to use free will. At some point in the evolution of the individual soul, it decided to reach and act upon its own willfulness. This single act of self-determination began a long process of the soul making more and more of its own decisions, using the free will God had given it from the beginning. As the individual soul grew more accustomed to deciding what it wanted to do, there emerged an increased separation in the individual’s consciousness between God’s will and human will. This developing sense of self determination led, in turn, to the individual soul creating for itself an artificial identity – let’s call it the lesser ego.

“Over time, however, the maturing soul began to see that the lesser ego was actually a limitation of the soul’s natural capabilities. Being an artificial creation, the lesser ego could not really account for or express the unlimited potential of the soul which it possessed by virtue of its spirituality. Gradually, therefore, the soul in embodiment began to seek out its innate spirituality, until – at some point – the soul’s consciousness set aside its lesser ego and embraced a higher ego incorporating both the lessons of the soul in using free will and the potential of the soul as a creation of God.

“The most interesting thing about this theory is that it reflects God’s intention for the soul from the very beginning. The human soul could never mature until it mastered the use of free will. When it finally did and embraced its reality as a creation of God, the soul could then play its full role in the unfolding drama of life. From this theoretical perspective, my friends, life on earth is certainly a schoolroom in which perfection is not expected but lessons must be learned. If we look at things from this paradigm, we can see the role of ideals, the need for pragmatism in improving ourselves and conditions in the world, and the majesty and wonder of the will of God in action through the evolution of the human soul.”

Both Martin and Mark were busy contemplating the implications of Morya’s theory, so Morya continues, “I think the key is to remember that we are individual souls. That is what the human species is: a collection of individuals, each of which has a soul, free will, and a fairly developed mental capacity. On this planet we are unique. On other systems of worlds, maybe we are not so advanced, but that is beside the point. If we accept the premise that we evolve as individuals, that we are in a human body to develop and master our individuality, then the priority of our lives should be clear. We should, each and every one of us, play our unique role in life to the best of our ability. Some will be kings, some will be paupers, and roles change over time. It doesn’t make that much difference in the larger scheme of things. What does make a difference is that we play our role well and not fail in our duty for this embodiment. The conditions of society are important to the development of the individual, but the individual himself is the one who must progress in life and develop good character by becoming the real or true self. We should not feel guilty about an imperfect society. We should not feel guilty if we ourselves are not perfect. The challenge for mankind is to work toward an ideal government and, more importantly, to work on

improving ourselves. If we can improve ourselves, then an improved society and system of government will soon follow.”

Martin asks, “But I thought we concluded before that there is no such thing as a perfect person. Why should we try to perfect ourselves, if perfection is impossible? And why can’t we strive to improve government and society, even if we are not perfect?”

Morya smiles and says, “Perhaps I used an incorrect term. When I say “perfecting ourselves” I do not mean becoming a perfect person. I mean that we should become – to the fullest extent possible for us – the very best in ourselves, which we call our inner quality. And that best person is the true self of the individual. The true self is simply the individual expressing his or her inner quality. The true self is not an end-state that, once attained, remains forever static. The true self is a state of consciousness that strives continuously by free will to express one’s inner quality in greater and greater measure. There is no other law in nature more important than that – at least for human beings embodied on this planet. We are not gods. We are people. So becoming our true self should be our personal goal. If one’s character is inclined toward politics, then the individual, in becoming his or her true self, will naturally work to improve systems and institutions of governance.”

He thinks for a moment and then adds, “We are human beings. As human beings, we have a certain duality in ourselves that we must work through in order to separate the wheat from the chaff in our consciousness. Society will always have those who pursue evil ends or use evil methods. We should not, in our desire to become perfect, fail to protect that which is good in ourselves, in others, and in society. It is the process of improvement that is important for mankind, not the attainment of perfection which is near impossible in this octave of time and space. There will be some among us who retreat to the mountain top in order to find nirvana.

However, most of us will choose to labor in the fields of everyday life, meeting our responsibilities and trying – even as we seek to improve ourselves – to build upon and improve the society in which we live. So do not, Martin, despair of being imperfect or walk away from your desire to improve government. Embrace that desire and work toward your ideal goals. But at the same time, do not neglect to improve your own character. Your character is the foundation of your contribution to society. Strengthen your character by expressing more of your inner quality, and your contributions to society will increase as well.”

Mark asks, “If becoming one’s true self is man’s purpose in life, then why is it so difficult?”

Morya replies, “Becoming one’s true self is simultaneously the easiest thing for a person to do and the most difficult. The character of one’s true self is very close to one’s highest motivations. The good person we dream of one day becoming often is a reflection of our true self. If we would always strive to do our best, then we would make steady progress toward finding our true self. And once the inner quality is discovered – and the experience is often akin to a religious awakening – then the individual begins to understand the goal toward which he or she should strive. Progress toward becoming the true self can become quite fast at that point.”

Morya sips his tea, and continues: “You see, the true self is not a portrait or a photographic image. The true self is dynamic and changing. But it is changing in a certain direction. The true self moves in accordance with the pattern of the inner quality of the individual. You, Martin, indicated that you believe honor and integrity are your inner qualities. Your true self is you expressing your honor and integrity. The true self is what you would be if you always tried to express your inner quality. It is what you are. But to become the true self requires a decision by free will on the part of the individual. We exercise our free will to choose what we will become.

Choose to be your inner quality, and you choose to become your true self. And, over time and through effort, your true self is what you will become.”

Martin and Mark ponder this, and then agree that it is an insight well worth remembering. After a few moments of staring at the fire, Martin says, “Well, friends. Our trip to Yellowstone is ending tomorrow. We have been here, during this fine vacation, for nearly three weeks. We have grown beards and become stronger through daily hikes. We have become better people because we have witnessed the beauty and vastness of the land around us. And, most importantly, we have learned from each other the importance of always trying to improve our character. If I were to take a single lesson from our discussions over the past few days, I would conclude that the key to an ideal government resides in our own selves, not in any institution or in any other person. If we want an ideal government and an ideal society, then we must start with ourselves. We must recognize our inner quality; we must choose to express that inner quality as we go about our daily business. An ideal government can only be based on each and every one of us striving to become our true self. Becoming our true self is what God and nature intend. Our potential is written in our DNA, and our inner quality is stamped indelibly on our soul and in deep recesses of our consciousness. That is what I have learned here, and I treasure the opportunity to have shared these experiences and lessons with you, my close and enduring friends.”

Mark and Morya smile broadly and all toast with their cups the end of a great vacation and a promise of future trips together.

### Chapter 3: Building and Sustaining Spiritual Communities

The following year, the three friends decided to invite their wives to a long weekend retreat at the Muleshoe Ranch near Willcox, Arizona. The Nature Conservancy had established lodging for small groups – perfect for what the families had in mind. Each had rented a fully equipped casita in the headquarters of the 49,000-acre ranch in the Galiuro Mountains. Preserved as a Cooperative Management Area in a joint project between the Conservancy, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Coronado National Forest, the ranch featured natural hot springs, lots of wildlife, and miles of trails and unimproved roads through rugged desert terrain, deeply carved canyons, and rocky hills. Martin had recommended the area as one he was familiar with. He liked the ranch's remoteness, its wilderness setting, and the plentiful geodes and other interesting rock specimens found around the ancient volcanic outcroppings on the ranch and adjacent open ranges.

At Mark's suggestion, the three friends decided that the topic for discussion during the holiday would be community, specifically the characteristics of a spiritual community and what would be required to make such a community successful in modern times. Morya liked this idea because – from his perspective – an individual could progress spiritually only so far by himself. At some point, people would have to work within communities to advance their spiritual evolution. Martin was initially skeptical of such a discussion, but nonetheless agreed to participate because his friends had earlier indulged him for three weeks discussing politics and government – topics very close to his heart.

After a three-hour's drive from Tucson, they arrived at the isolated lodging area on late Friday afternoon. The rest of the day was spent unpacking and settling into their casitas. Each family ate

its own dinner, and around 8:00 pm everyone gathered in the living room of the King Casita that Mark and Elizabeth had rented.

Helen had prepared a wonderfully delicious tray of Indian tea snacks. Sitting in front of the fire in the cozy chairs and couch, the group chatted for a while, with the ladies discussing the décor of the casitas and the men commenting favorably on the snacks and the weather.

After a while, Martin spread a detailed map of Southwestern Arizona on part of the table and traced where he thought the group should go tomorrow. He said this would require a four-wheel drive vehicle, so he suggested they all pack into his rented Grand Cherokee. The ladies had other ideas, with Marcella proposing instead that everyone hike the nearby trails leading to one of the local hot springs. After realizing that their wives did not want to bounce around in a crowded Jeep for several hours just to collect a few rocks, the men relented and agreed to the more leisurely hike. The women promised that, for the following two days, the men could pretty much do as they wanted, as long as they returned home for dinner before dark.

Morya then suggested they walk outside to view the stars, since it was a new moon and the constellations would be clearly visible in the nearly cloudless sky. There was a chill in the air, so they all went to get a coat. A few moments later, they strolled several hundred yards away from the courtyard to an area where the stars seemed almost within reach. Mark tried to point out a few of the major constellations, but the brilliance of the stars and their vast numbers made it nearly impossible to see any familiar patterns.

### Day One: Walk in the Desert

The next morning, everyone ate breakfast in their casitas and then, about 9 am, met in the courtyard to begin their hike. Martin had recommended that everyone wear sturdy boots and long

pants, and they all wore a sweatshirt or light jacket and carried a bottle or two of water. Mark brought a small backpack with extra water and some energy bars, and Martin handed walking sticks to the women to help them navigate the rocky and at times steep trails.

The hike was pleasant, although Helen slipped once on some loose rocks and slightly bruised her hand. Mark got pricked by a cactus and Martin almost turned his ankle stepping into a hole. But other than that, spirits were high and the group thoroughly enjoyed the bright sunshine and blue sky. They walked about five miles, all told, and felt they accomplished something for the strenuous effort. The hot springs reeked of sulfur, a testament of the volcanic origin of the area.

By mid-afternoon, they returned to the lodging area, tired and some with sunburned faces.

Martin suggested they fix their own lunches, rest a while before the pot luck dinner planned for around 6:30. After lunch, the ladies prepared their contributions to the dinner, and the men talked of politics while sitting in the shaded courtyard and drinking iced tea.

Around 6:00, Helen and Marcella brought their dishes over to the King Casita and helped Elizabeth arrange the table. They called the men into dinner, and smiles quickly appeared on their faces as they eyed the waiting feast. Appetites were strong and the several courses set out by Elizabeth, Helen, and Marcella were consumed with relish. After coffee and dessert, the men thanked the ladies and helped clear the table. They then politely excused themselves and walked out to the lawn chairs in the courtyard.

Martin asked Morya and Mark whether they were up to an off-road trip tomorrow, and they all agreed on an early start right after breakfast. Mark got a fire started in the open pit as the women came out with cups of steaming yogi tea and sat down beside their husbands.

## Perspectives on Communities

Martin says, “Ladies, that was such an enjoyable meal. And – if I may speak for us menfolk – we are so happy you were able to come out for this vacation.”

The women smile over their cups, and Elizabeth replies, “Well, you never know what mischief you might be getting into, so we wanted to come to make sure everything would be all right. Besides, we need a vacation, too, and this is an ideal opportunity to have a little adventure without the kids.”

Mark says half-jokingly, “You know, we go on these trips not for mischief but to talk about important issues that can help save the world.”

Helen laughs. “And what was the big, important issue for this trip, if I might ask?”

Mark says, “We were going to discuss communities. Especially what a spiritual community means in today’s world and how such a community might be successful.”

Marcella asks innocently, “And perhaps you thought that we would not be able to contribute to this discussion?”

Mark quickly adds, “No, of course not – I mean, no, we did not think you had no ideas on the subject. It’s just our habit to discuss these things on our own.”

Elizabeth comments, “I assure you, gentlemen, that no successful community could exist for long without women. In fact, I would say that women are the foundation of a successful community, because they are the ones who hold families together and families are what comprise a thriving and successful community. Wouldn’t you agree?” She raises her eyes to Martin.

Martin answers carefully, “Well, yes, that is true. A community to exist beyond a generation or two must have families to sustain it. But if we are going to discuss this, then let’s be more analytical about what a community actually is.”

The ladies exchange amused glances as Martin continues: “First of all, there is the issue of the type of community we are discussing. Then, we must talk about what makes a successful community of that type. And, finally, we need to be aware of the points of failure that cause such a community to not succeed.”

Marcella smiles and comments, “That is a very good analytical framework, Martin, but I think if you would ask a hundred women what makes a successful community, almost all would say that a community must, first and foremost, provide protection and sustenance for the families of that community. Why live in a community if it does not offer a suitable environment in which to raise your children and a reasonable opportunity for you and your mate to provide for family needs? That to me – and probably to most women I know – are the essential purposes of a community, whether it is a spiritual community or any other kind of community.”

Both Elizabeth and Helen nod, and Elizabeth adds: “As you know, my husband has been involved with spiritual communities for most of his adult life. Some of these have been successful; others have closed their doors for various reasons. But in every case that I can remember, there always was tension between the spiritual aspirations of some of the members of the community and the practical considerations of what it takes to raise children and support one’s family. In my view, this tension should not exist. But it does. And that has always been one of my concerns as a mother and as a spiritual devotee.”

Helen says, “I think that the focus of community, spiritual or otherwise, should be on supporting the family and the raising of children. If you cannot do that successfully, then the community will fail. Men and women will always be attracted to each other and want to form families. It is a natural instinct and one that cannot be ignored or hidden under a cloak of so-called spirituality.”

Morya, who had been listening attentively to this discussion, comments, “I believe our ladies have pinpointed the exact issue we should be discussing: how can a community be both spiritual and family oriented? I can think of numerous spiritual communities that have failed because they could not accommodate families. God intends for children to be brought into this world, so it makes no sense for seekers of God to deny the importance of family.”

Mark adds, “In truth, a human being is both an individual and a member of a community – several communities actually, if one counts his family, his neighborhood, his city, state, country, etc.”

Elizabeth says, “From my perspective, a family is a spiritual microcosm, and the lessons of spirituality played out in family drama are very critical to one’s spiritual advancement. If someone can’t learn the lessons of spiritual attunement and proper social behavior in a family setting, then it can be difficult for them to function well in a community of any sort.”

Martin observes, “I do not disagree with what is being said here, but I would like to remind everyone that we are, first and foremost, individual souls in embodiment for the purposes of discovering our inner God-given qualities and then expressing those qualities to the best of our abilities in our daily lives. We are individual souls. Our communities do not have a soul.

Communities are where we live. In discussing spiritual communities, we should concentrate on how those communities can support and sustain our souls, not on how to sustain our families. By

definition, spiritual communities exist, or should exist, as places where we as individuals gather for our own spiritual evolution.”

Marcella raises her eyebrows and asks, “Are you saying that your personal spiritual evolution is more important than your family? Do you really believe God thinks that way?”

Defensively, Martin tries to clarify his views. “Now don’t misinterpret what I said. Even though a family does not have a soul, the family is like a nest for a group of linked souls. A family should be a place where every soul is loved, nourished, and given the strength and wisdom to develop to his or her fullest potential. But a spiritual community’s main purpose, it seems to me, is to nourish the individual soul.”

Morya thinks about this and says, “What you are saying, Martin, is insightful but it can lead to discrimination against families in communities that seek to serve spiritual ends. That is the historic experience, and we see its repercussions in the ill treatment of women around the world. Men, whether they seek to be spiritual or not, find their attention drawn to women and their children. Some men who pursue greater spirituality for themselves view this attraction as a weakness they cannot overcome, and they subsequently look down upon women because of their “ungodly” power of attraction. But, in truth, God intends for men and women to work together to advance their individual souls and the souls they bring forth into the world as children.”

Elizabeth offers, “Let’s look at this from the perspective of a man and a woman. A man – generally speaking – is much more self-motivated than a woman. A woman – again, generally speaking – is much more attuned to the opinions of others and more considerate of others’ needs.” She looks around, and everyone nods. She continues, “So we have two slightly different points of view in terms of individuality. The man is more self-centered; the woman is more

community-oriented. I would venture that God Himself – or Herself – is aware of the needs of both the individual and the community. In fact, every soul must learn – I would hazard to guess – the important lesson that life is both for the individual and for the community. No one can pass into heaven without first learning what it means to be ‘self’ and what it means to be ‘selfless.’ What it means to be an individual, and what it means to be a member of a community.”

Morya smiles at this and says, “That is a wonderful explanation, Elizabeth, articulated as only a mother can do. In my view, God is both male and female; God is both individual and collective. In fact, I consider God not only a ‘He,’ but also a ‘She,’ and even an ‘Us.’ If God is the God of the universe, then God is within each one of us, and each one of us is within God. To understand our relationship with God, therefore, requires that we be aware of both self and selflessness.”

Mark says, “I recall once hearing of a great master called the ‘Spirit of Selflessness.’ It is said that the master earned this title, first, by mastering himself completely, and then surrendering that self to the universality of God and life everywhere.”

Martin asks, “Are you saying, Mark, that one’s orientation toward the self or toward the community depends on where one stands in his spiritual evolution?”

Mark thinks for a moment and replies, “It would seem to be the case, although I am not saying that the one perspective is spiritually superior to the other. Spiritual growth does not appear to be linear, but rather like a spiral. What do you ladies think?”

Marcella answers, “I think that may be true. I am fairly comfortable with Martin being self-centered, while I focus on serving the needs of our family. And I never even consider whether one or the other of us is the more spiritually advanced. We are parts of a whole and we have different roles in life. Maybe in the future he will be born a woman and I will be born a man.

Perhaps that is sometimes required for the soul as it learns to develop the self and then to surrender that self for the good of others.”

Helen and Elizabeth agree while Martin shifts in his chair. Helen says, “Really, Martin, there is a natural cycle at work here. I remember being told that we must possess something in order to surrender something. That is why love in a family is so important to a mother. The more she is loved, the more love she has to give. It seems to be the nature of things.”

Martin replies, “Let’s not forget that women are not the only ones to sacrifice the self. Men have always sacrificed their lives for their loved ones and for their communities. And, to be honest, I have found many women – present company excluded, of course – to be as self-centered as men in many respects. How do you explain that?”

Elizabeth laughs and says, “Yes, I admit it is true. We do have a selfish side. We have learned that from men. We would only hope they would learn a little selflessness from us at the same time!”

Everyone chuckles and Helen serves more tea to her friends.

Elizabeth continues, “Seriously speaking, we all know that many male and female personality traits are selfish and many traits of both genders are not. We are not saying that men are selfish and women are unselfish. I think we are seeing the yin and yang of creation at work here. There is a time for the soul to focus on the development of the true self, and there is a time for the soul to understand that it is part of a much greater whole.”

Everyone nods at this. After a few moments, Martin stirs the fire with a stick and says, “Well, it has been a fun conversation and I know that we will revisit these ideas tomorrow night. I suggest

we prepare for our adventure tomorrow. Are you ladies sure you don't want to go off-roading with us in the morning?"

The ladies smile and shake their heads, saying they have other plans in mind. Everyone gets up, says goodnight, and returns to their casitas.

### Day Two: Galiuro Wilderness

In the morning, the men got up early, ate breakfast with their wives, packed a few snacks and bottles of water, and met in the commons about 7:30. Marcella brought out a small ice chest with hot dogs, buns, and the makings for a cook-out Martin had said they planned for lunch. Both Helen and Elizabeth walked out with their husbands to see them off. After putting everything into the Jeep, Martin sat down behind the wheel and Mark and Morya got in. They waved at their wives and drove out to the Muleshoe Ranch Road and headed up the creek bed to the sign-in sheet for the wilderness area. Getting back in, he shifted the vehicle into four-wheel drive and proceeded to drive up a steep bedrock incline to get on National Forest Road 691. After several jarring miles, they passed into the Coronado National Forest and finally parked just inside the Galiuro Wilderness area. There, they got out, put on their day packs, and started exploring.

Mark says, "This really is quite amazing, Martin. Much different than Yellowstone and the Beartooths, but magnificent in its own way. You can see forever in this desert air, yet I did not see a single other vehicle the entire ride. When you listen ... you hear nothing but the wind and the occasional cry of a hawk. I don't think I have ever been in a place so remote and so ... I want to say desolate ... but life appears to be everywhere when you look carefully: tufts of grass, weathered trees, shrubs in all directions, and all types of holes in the ground for different

creatures. I can see why people who come here fall in love with the place. Your mind expands to the far reaches of the horizon, and you feel totally alone yet part of nature.”

Morya, breathing deeply the cool, clear air, nods and points to a small group of mule deer meandering up a nearby hill. He adds, “I have heard that the desert does this to people, whether in the Sahara or here in southern Arizona. The desert seems to speak to the soul. Perhaps what really happens is that the silence of the desert allows one to hear his own soul.”

Martin nods and indicates with his rock pick a volcanic outcropping near the top of an adjacent hill. “Let’s head up that way first. These outcroppings often contain geodes. As we get close, look for oval shaped rocks and loose crystals on the ground. But be careful, everything here is sharp and will cut you.” Martin heads off and the others follow, grateful they had worn heavy boots and thick pants to navigate through the sharp rocks and thorns.

After about 30 minutes of walking, they were at the base of a large volcanic outcropping. Martin pointed out the geodes embedded in the lava, noting some that had broken off revealing the beautiful crystals inside. Once they had identified what they were looking for, Morya and Mark started exploring around the base of the outcrop and soon discovered many fine specimens they put into their canvas map bags provided by Martin. Martin, meanwhile, walked further up the hill, where he found some larger crystals that seemed to have come from a nearby vein. Martin shouted to Morya and Mark to come up, and then carefully began to chisel out some large, clear crystals. He also noticed a vein of green fluorite, which he pointed out to his friends as they came up. They immediately began to work on the vein with great enthusiasm.

A couple of hours later, the men were exhausted and loaded down with geodes, crystals, fluorite, and other minerals which had caught their eye. They sat for a few moments, drinking water and

eating energy bars, looking down across the valley to the foothills of the Galiuro Mountains. In the distance, they could see Bassett Peak, nearly 8,000 feet high.

#### How Does One Draw Closer to God?

Martin says, “In all of our talk about community, I must say that I would rather sit here in the desert, watching wildlife and talking to a couple of close friends, than live in a large community and try to be social and nice all the time. I think our womenfolk consider me to be an odd ball, but many times I prefer to be alone rather than to be in a group. Also, amazing enough, I never feel closer to God than when I am alone in the wild beauty of nature. Looking at a vein of crystals in a bed of rock makes me feel humble and grateful to be part of the magnificence of God. On such occasions, I feel at one with the grass, the rocks, the sky, the mountains, and the creatures all around – like we are all brothers and sisters here on earth, living on the bounty the Creator has provided us. I must confess that I never feel as close to God in a community of people. I need space in my life to nourish my spirituality, not the confines of a community.”

Mark, sipping his water, leans back against a large rock and says, “I can appreciate that, Martin. But for me, I feel closest to God when I mediate upon the vastness of His creation, roaming in my mind through the various dimensions of life – physical and spiritual – and sensing how the Brotherhood of Light is linked across the cosmos with a common purpose in mind: to express and expand the will of God as it is given them to understand. When my consciousness reaches that point of realization, I feel at peace and oneness with God and His creation. This sense of oneness makes me feel at ease in a spiritual community because I know we are all looking for the same experience.”

Martin acknowledges the validity of Mark’s experience. Morya, meanwhile, is looking across the valley in silence. He then says, “I was thinking about what Durdhara said to me the other day.

We were discussing the joys our family had brought to us, and she commented that she feels closest to God when she looks into the bright, innocent eyes of a baby. In those eyes, she said, are the hopes and expectations of the universe. Those eyes, she said, are the eyes of God.”

Mark adds, “That is a beautiful statement. Elizabeth said something similar a few years ago. We were looking at Mount Shasta from one of the many pull-offs on Interstate 5 and I had mentioned how majestic the mountain was – a symbol of the power of God. She said she too feels that power, but she feels closest to God when she meditates upon the Mother of the Universe – that part of the Creator that nurtures all of life and without which nothing could be born or sustained.”

Martin, thinking fondly of Marcella, says, “My wife says she feels closest to God when singing hymns in a choir, the many voices blending in intricate and never duplicated ways to express the myriad aspects of God, His children, and the prayers of the faithful here on earth.”

The men were quiet for a while. Then Morya says, “I think this discussion teaches us something important about communities. We should remember that the earth is a schoolroom in which we, as souls, discover our potential and learn through years of experience to realize that potential in ever greater portions of our lives. Each of us experiences God differently, and each of us understands God differently. Yet we all worship the same God. A spiritual community exists to enable each of us to share our blessings and insights with others. But we also need our times of separation so we can commune one-on-one with the Creator.”

He drinks some water, and continues, “A spiritual community must accommodate the individual soul and its unique needs, as well as bring together souls sharing a common purpose. I think we are talking about, not just one community, but many, many communities, spanning continents

and cultures and hundreds of years. Our dharma and our karma naturally place us in different communities at different times – one in India, one in the United States, one focused on farming, one centered on trade, one led by a single person, one led by consensus, and so on. The community with which one is affiliated changes over time, because souls evolve, with different lessons of life needed at different times.”

Morya then announces he is hungry. His two companions smile in agreement, and all head back to the Jeep for their cook-out.

### [Spiritual and Secular Communities](#)

The men were famished by the time they got to the Jeep. Martin took out the hot dogs and makings, while Mark and Morya gathered small mesquite branches from the surrounding area. Soon a hot fire was going, and the men sat in camp chairs propping their feet on the rocks surrounding the fire, warming their hands. Even though the sun was brilliant with hardly a cloud in the sky, the air was chilly with a breeze coming down from the mountains, where a patch or two of what could be snow could be seen in the distance. After eating, the men relaxed, enjoying the sun on their faces and looking out across the landscape which seemed to extend to the ends of the earth.

Mark finally broke the silence and, gesturing to the horizon, says, “Out here, where there is such solitude and yet close companionship amongst us around this fire, I wonder if there really is a fundamental difference between a spiritual community and other forms of community? I mean, think about it, the environment draws us closer together – sometimes spiritually, sometimes culturally. The environment has a great impact upon us. Maybe the environment in which a community is formed is a key determinant of whether it is successful, and maybe even the type of community it is.”

Martin observes, “From what I can gather, the nature of a community is pretty much determined by the purpose of the people who put it together. Families are a basic community, and they are bonded by blood line and affection, as well as the natural instincts of men and women to raise children in a protected environment. Larger communities, such as tribes, form because survival is easier in a group and there are economic benefits in exchanging goods and services. Still larger communities are established through political processes or a unifying military leader. The very largest communities, such as nation-states, are complex entities comprised of multiple smaller communities, all held together by common institutions, contiguous land mass, and a sense of citizenship or belonging to a defined group.”

He drinks some water and continues, “In my view, a spiritual community can be large or small. We have countries in the Middle East that could be described as large spiritual communities. We have communes right here in the Tucson area that have been formed by spiritual leaders or built around common beliefs. All of these are spiritual in the sense that there is a common faith, an adherence to a certain lifestyle believed to be appropriate, and a common purpose or goal. That common purpose can, of course, be different between various spiritual communities. Some spiritual communities have as their goal the ascension of their members into higher planes of existence; some have as their goal the following of a particular doctrine or lineage of teachers; some have as their goal service to mankind in general or some disadvantaged group. I suppose the most universal theme in spiritual communities is the belief in, and commitment to, a certain lifestyle believed to further one’s spirituality. What that lifestyle is varies, of course, but the attempt to live according to that lifestyle – usually felt to be divinely inspired – is one of the signatures of a spiritual community.”

Morya replies, “Still, like Mark, I believe there is something in the environment that draws souls together into a spiritual community. Certainly, an environment such as this frees the mind to commune more easily with one’s own soul, one’s own purpose in life. In this sense, an environment can reinforce or even make possible the success of a spiritual community. This is why, throughout history, spiritual communities often have been located in out-of-the-way places – at least out of the cities.”

He pauses, then continues, “We have had perhaps thousands of spiritual communities throughout history. Most have ended. A few have continued through the centuries. Mark, you have established and lived in various spiritual communities. What has your experience taught you in terms of what makes a spiritual community successful?”

Martin interjects, “Don’t forget, Morya, that this desert environment not only is conducive to the development of spiritual communities but it also is conducive to the most brutal side of mankind. The ‘Wild West’ did not get its name because of the humanness of its inhabitants.”

### [Leadership in Spiritual Communities](#)

Nodding his agreement with the point, Mark says, “To answer your question, Morya, I would say that leadership is perhaps the most critical factor. The purpose of a spiritual community should be spiritual in nature, that is, refinement of individual character and the uplifting experience of fellowship with others who share the same beliefs and values. It requires someone with great charisma to initially articulate a set of beliefs and to identify an appropriate lifestyle on which a spiritual community can be established. And good leadership is also required at key junctures of the community’s development if it is to continue to succeed in its purposes.”

Thinking for a moment, he continues, “Good leadership – whether from an individual or small group – is necessary to continually focus the community on what is important about its purpose.

If you do not have this constant point of reference, then people – being who they are – will deviate from their higher motivations and get caught up in the day-to-day experiences and challenges of life.”

He reflects thoughtfully. “Being a leader in a spiritual community is a heavy responsibility. A true spiritual leader must exercise self-discipline and not abuse his or her authority. They may be surrounded by all the ornate trappings of spiritual office, but these are but symbols of things far more important. The old adage that absolute power corrupts absolutely is especially true in spiritual communities, because often there are no checks and balances on the authority of the leader – at least not from within the community itself. Members of spiritual communities tend to be believers, and believers want to hear from their leaders what they should do and what they should believe. This can lead to all sorts of rules set out by spiritual leaders – what to wear, what to eat, how to manage your relationship with your spouse, how to interact with members of the opposite sex, what to watch on TV or which music to listen to, etc. Some have argued that, if you are on a spiritual path, then every part of your life should be aligned with the requirements of that path.”

Taking a bite from an energy bar, Mark continues, “The rules of behavior in secular communities are generally different from those followed in spiritual communities. Yet the two kinds of communities often interact with each other on a daily basis. What frequently occurs is that spiritual communities try to insulate their lifestyle from the outside world, but this creates problems of its own. Local secular communities become suspicious of what goes on in the spiritual communities. Young people in the spiritual community become attracted to the more liberal lifestyles of their secular schoolmates. New people who join the spiritual community sometimes bring with them habits not always compatible with the more strict standards of the

original spiritual community. After the glow of becoming a new member fades into routines of more disciplined behavior, there often is a period of rebellion on the part of newcomers. All of these challenges must be managed by the spiritual leader. And – let’s be honest – the quality of leadership in a spiritual community varies greatly. To have the combination of spiritual insight, the power of the Holy Spirit, administrative skill, and the compassion of a counselor is rare in a single individual. Usually, leaders in spiritual communities have mastery in one or two of these areas, but not mastery in all. In these cases, their leadership and decision-making can be flawed, because spiritual leaders can only do what they are capable of doing. Followers in spiritual communities tend to believe their leaders are far more perfect than they in fact are. This can lead to some unfortunate events and disillusionment.”

He shakes his head, and remarks, “I could go on and on about the challenges a spiritual leader faces. Most of these are practical and common sense. At the same time, the leader has to be attuned to the higher purposes of the group and the mission it is intended to serve. The leader must commune both with God and with his followers, to be led by a higher calling and to lead others in both spiritual and mundane matters. It is quite a challenge to balance these needs, to switch from one level of consciousness to another, from moment to moment. Good leadership is essential for the success of a spiritual community, but it is rare to find such leadership on a consistent basis.”

Martin observes, “It is even rarer to have the mantle of spiritual leadership in a community successfully passed from one person to another. Often, organizations fortunate enough to have one good leader find themselves bereft of good leadership at the time of transition. I wonder, Mark, from your experience, if the role of a strong spiritual leader can be replaced by group leadership after the passing of the initial founder?”

Mark says, “That is a good question, Martin, and it is a necessary one because no leader lives forever.”

He thinks for a moment and continues, “In my experience, the first transition in leadership in a spiritual community goes relatively smoothly. The initial leader generally appoints his or her successor, who usually is a very close disciple. This heir apparent is almost always universally accepted by the members of the community. It is important to remember that most spiritual communities are hierarchical in nature. Community members tend to accept the idea that certain individuals are more deserving of leadership than others. So, if the original leader makes clear who is to be the successor, the first leadership transition can go smoothly.”

He sips some water, warms his hands by the fire, and says, “But no two leaders are ever the same. Almost inevitably, the new leader will say things or do things differently from the original leader. When this occurs, there will be some among the membership who take exception to what the new leader is trying to do. Gradually, this creates a schism in the community between those who accept the new leader unconditionally and those who question the new leader’s spiritual authority. Eventually, one or more factions may leave the community and perhaps form another community that follows what that group believes is the ‘correct’ interpretation of what the original leader intended.”

Mark stops to point out a hawk gliding silently down a hill. He continues, “Moreover, the new leader will have his or her own style and emphasis. If they are charismatic, they will go out to the public and bring in new members which expand the organization. These new members are often different from the old members: a newer generation with new experiences and different expectations. The character of the organization gradually changes. The net result is that within a few years of the passing of the original leader, the organization is quite different. The

fundamental teachings may remain largely intact, but the packaging of the message is different. Some old members leave, some new members join. In short, even though the first transition to a new leader goes smoothly, there is set into motion an almost inevitable chain of events that result in a change in the community itself.”

Martin asks, “Is this necessarily a bad thing?”

Mark replies, “No, I don’t think so. Times change, circumstances change, leaders change, generations change. Change is inevitable. But some people adjust to change easier than others, especially when it comes to spiritual teachings and the cultural standards of behavior for community members.”

He pauses and then continues, “But what is really interesting – and getting back to your original question, Martin – is what happens at the time of the transition from the second leader to subsequent leadership in the spiritual community? It has been my experience that the second leader often is unable to appoint a widely accepted successor. This transition from the second to the third leader is crucial in determining the future of the community and the continuity of its original beliefs. If procedures have been set into place to appoint a new leader after the retirement of the second leader, then the community can generally continue – with the evolution noted earlier taking place naturally. If procedures have not be set into place, or if those procedures result in the appointment of leaders not widely accepted by community members, then the community and the spiritual organization it supports will often become led by a coalition of leading members of the community. This tends to further splinter the organization, because there will usually be more leaders than there are positions of leadership. Some of those potential leaders who are not selected for community leadership will move on and a few will even start their own organizations.”

Morya repeats Martin's earlier question: "Is that necessarily a bad thing, Mark?"

Mark smiles and answers, "Well, it might be, or it might not be – depending on multiple factors. A spiritual community led by committee can work well if the community itself is strong and supported by its members. It might not work well if the community has severe economic or social constraints, making it difficult for members to support themselves and their families, or if the committee becomes too bureaucratic or doctrinaire, thereby losing the organization's dynamic appeal to new members. There is also the key factor of the Holy Spirit. Some people have it in greater measure than others. In some ways, committee leadership is not necessarily the best vehicle through which the Holy Spirit can work. The Holy Spirit, while it can descend upon a group of people, seems best communicated through one spiritual leader at a time. In short, each stage of a spiritual community has its own set of leadership challenges. Nothing predetermines the success or the failure of the community. However, the role of leadership is vital, whatever form that leadership might take. Does that answer your question, Martin?"

Martin nods, "Yes, that is quite a good explanation, Mark. But other than leadership, what else is important to the success of a spiritual community?"

Before Mark answers, Morya interjects. "That was a good discussion, and it rings true in my experience as well. But look at the sun. We have about an hour and a half drive back to the lodge. Since we have our crystals, thanks to Martin, I suggest we return before the ladies start to worry – and we miss our dinners. What do you say?"

Mark and Martin quickly agree. While Martin puts out the fire, the other two men load up the Jeep and get in. After a moment of once again taking in the scenery and privately giving thanks

to God for a wonderful day, Martin climbs into the driver's seat and starts back down the rough road to the lodge.

### Masculine and Feminine Leadership Styles

By the time the men arrived back at the lodge, it was dusk. The ladies, who had been relaxing in the commons, walked up to the Jeep, welcomed their spouses, and expressed amazement at the beautiful geodes and crystals. After graciously accepting Elizabeth's invitation to come over to the King Casita about 8:00 for a glass of wine and some cheese and fruit, the couples returned to their individual casitas for dinner.

It was windy and cold by the time the couples gathered in the King Casita and, true to her word, Elizabeth had set out on the dining room table several bottles of wine and a wide assortment of cheese, sliced fruit, and crackers. Everyone complimented Elizabeth on the arrangement, and Martin expressed special pleasure at seeing the cheesecake off to the side. Elizabeth smiled and said everyone knew of his sweet tooth and that she hoped he would enjoy the treat. Martin moved over to help himself to a slice of cheesecake, but Marcella gently guided him toward the wine and cheese, around which everyone else had gathered to pick up a plate.

Seated comfortably by the fire in the living room, the couples chatted about the day's events and relaxed. The men related their adventures on the Jeep trail and rock collecting, and the women recounted their walks around the lodging area and the sighting of several coyotes trotting along the dry creek bed in front of the main lodge. After a second glass of wine and another helping of cheese and crackers, Marcella served Martin his slice of cheesecake, while the others politely declined. As Martin ate the dessert with an appreciative glance at Elizabeth, Marcella says, "Mark, I understand you made some interesting comments in regards to the role of leaders in a spiritual community. Would you like to share your observations with us?"

Mark took another sip of wine, and then summarized his views, to which the ladies nodded their understanding. Helen then asked, “Did you by any chance consider the different styles of leadership that might be used by a man or a woman in a spiritual community?”

Mark replies, “I was speaking of leadership in general, not really distinguishing between the styles of a man or a woman. I am not 100 percent sure there is much of a difference. A leader has certain responsibilities, and fulfilling those responsibilities requires certain traits and actions. But I may have oversimplified things. I would very much like to hear how you see leadership. Would women lead in a way significantly different from the leadership shown by a man?”

Elizabeth leans back into the chair and then straightens her back as she cradles the glass of wine in both hands. “Let me try to explain how I look at leadership. Women differ as much as men in their character and approaches to problems. But, generally, I would say that women prefer to lead by consensus rather than by explicit directives. They tend to listen more and to take into consideration the personalities, feelings, and relationships that are involved in decisions. They like to be involved in details, but they also like to delegate responsibility. They take their roles and responsibilities – and their authorities – quite seriously; and usually they are very hard working. However – and this is a subtle point – they often want and need the loyal and (dare I say) loving support of others. Women at heart are care-givers. In the transition from a founding leader – often a dominant male figure – to a woman successor (who may have been a close disciple or wife – possibly both), the new female leader may gather around herself a small, trusted group of advisors and friends to help her administer the community. Remember that the first male leader of a spiritual organization is often a strong personality, one who does not easily delegate executive responsibilities. So the woman successor may be highly trained spiritually but

not necessarily trained administratively. She has to learn on the job, when the responsibilities are hers alone.”

She sips her wine thoughtfully for a moment, and then continues, “What occurs all too often is that those she initially trusts and delegates responsibilities to fall short of her expectations. This can lead to some unpleasantness, because emotions always play an important role in a woman’s life. The experience of having others fail her – those in whom she placed great trust and into whose hands she gave great power – hardens her somewhat. She becomes more self-reliant and then confident in her ability to lead and direct the organization and the community. This is a period of change in the community, because many of those who were initially her advisors move away from the community because they no longer have as much power as they had originally. Perhaps they don’t feel as needed as before. But those who leave are quickly replaced by others. Assuming she is charismatic and energetic, the organization can expand and the community become stronger. The community quickly changes its character to reflect the style of its new self-assured leader. A spiritual community can thrive under a woman’s leadership, just as it can thrive under a man. But the style of leadership will likely be different, and the character of the community will be different as well.”

Martin says, “We were talking today about the difficult transition from the second to the third generation of leadership in a spiritual community. Elizabeth, do you think this would pose an exceptional challenge to a woman who may need to pass the torch to someone else?”

Elizabeth was quiet in reflection, so Helen answers. “The time of passing is especially difficult for a woman who leads a community, because she is – in many ways – a mother to everyone in that community. As her time of passing draws near, her heart goes out to those she leaves behind, and she wants more than anything to leave the community in good hands. But, if experience is a

guide, the third generation of leadership in a community often is not as charismatic, not as gifted, not as spiritual, as either the first or second leader. I don't know why this is, but it seems to occur in the cycles of spiritual communities. There are exceptions, I am sure, but the transition from the second to the third generation of leader – male or female – is often a problematic one.”

Martin says, “I personally think that spiritual communities during the second period of leadership need to put into place some consensual-based mechanism to select successive leaders. No dynasty can last forever. A spiritual community must prepare for the eventuality of an administrative-type leadership rather than a charismatic-type leadership.”

After considering this, Morya comments, “I have observed that spiritual communities are very often karmic communities into which great souls draw those with whom they have karma and those who have loved them through the ages. Every leader has his or her own karmic community. When karmic ties change in a community through such things as leadership transition, the community itself changes to reflect the needs of a new karmic group.”

Mark says, “But we still usually have in the community the bedrock of spiritual teachings upon which the original community was built. Surely, even if the karmic group comprising the community changes over time, the spiritual truths taught by the original leader and the leading disciple will continue to be valid. The third and successive generations of the community should continue to practice the original spiritual teachings.”

Marcella explains her view on this. “In my experience, I have found that the teachings of the founder do remain the bedrock of the community for at least the second generation. However, those teachings almost always are expanded upon by the second leader – fleshed out, if you will, in some of the details, the gaps filled in here and there. By the time of the transition to the third

leader, there are several interpretations of what the original leader may have meant in certain instances. Like children who inherit a certain quality from their parents, members of the community tend to adhere to one facet of the teaching more than others. The facets of Truth are infinite, so every teaching will have multiple layers of understanding and ways of expression. The original leader has his or her understanding. The second leader has his or her understanding. Subsequent leaders will have their own understanding. And the further removed the members are from the original leader, the more the members tend to draw their own conclusions about what was originally meant.

“What I am trying to say is that different interpretations of the original teachings are unavoidable. Martin always speaks of the inner quality as a seed of God in every person’s soul. The teachings are like that. They are seeds of God’s wisdom that allow for infinite interpretation and expression. That is the nature of things and it should not be viewed as something to avoid. In fact, I believe that the attempt to enforce a certain interpretation of God’s wisdom can do more harm than good. After all, the purpose of the teachings is to enable the son or daughter of God to discern the truth for themselves. Ultimately, this is the fruit of the teachings.”

Morya says, “Marcella, that is a very astute observation, and I agree with you. On the other hand, in this variation of interpretations of the original teachings, some may be more accurate than others. Some interpretations can be completely wrong, in fact.”

Martin adds, “We have a dilemma here. On the one hand, various interpretations of the true teachings are inevitable. On the other hand, the more removed the generations are from the original teacher, the more likely at least some of the interpretations will be wrong or even harmful. Even though, in theoretical terms, every man should be able to define his own

interpretation of truth, some interpretations will be more 'true' than others. Not everyone can be a Jesus or a Buddha. So where does that leave the rest of us?"

Morya answers, "Jesus and Buddha did not consider themselves the only teachers of truth. There have been many, many souls on this planet who have understood a certain facet of the consciousness of God. Some have kept this insight to themselves; some have shared it with others. God's truth is all around us, like the sunlight in the day and the darkness in the night. It is our own minds that interpret what it means. No single human vision of truth is the complete truth. We have talked about this before. When a word leaves the mouth of the teacher, it already is a vessel holding some, but not all, of the truth of the universe. Can the ocean be defined by a cup of its water? It is merely a sample of the whole, not the whole itself. So it is with the teachings of the Great Ones. Each teacher has glimpsed a vision of the ocean of God. The mind grasps what it can and shares it with word and pen and action. You ask, Martin, about the rest of us. Well, are we not all on the path leading from and to the Creator? If we can understand what is possible for us to know today, that is sufficient until the morrow. At that time, our interpretations and perceptions will almost certainly have changed somewhat. The understanding of truth evolves in the planes of matter just as everything else evolves."

Everyone thinks about this and is silent for a few moments.

Finally, Martin says, "Well, tomorrow is our final day here, so I propose we find a nice picnic spot and enjoy the desert in the wintertime. What do you say?"

All smile and agree. The couples say goodnight and return to their casitas, promising to meet in the courtyard around 9:00 in the morning.

Day Three: Picnic

In the morning, the couples loaded several ice chests into Mark's SUV and Martin's Jeep, and drove out to the sign-in area of the four-wheel vehicle section of the road. There they parked and hiked along the dry stream bed about a half mile to a nice location sheltered by cottonwood trees. The couples left their ice chests on some rock ledges, with a heavy rock on top to ward off the javelina, whose presence Martin noted by pointing to the many small, pig-like hoof marks in the soft soil. As they walked around, the women admired the many small flowers that could be found on the sunny side of the hills, while the men scanned the horizon for deer or other animals. Occasionally, Martin would stop to pick up an interesting rock washed down from the hillside. After an hour or so, the couples returned to their ice chests, finding them secure with no sign of being disturbed.

Marcella spread out a brightly colored tablecloth over a fairly flat rock, and Elizabeth and Helen took out sandwiches, iced sodas, water, chips and dips, and a bean salad Elizabeth had prepared the night before. The men laid paper plates and plastic cups and silverware on top of napkins, and – after filling their plates – everyone found a comfortable rock on which to sit. The friends chatted while eating, enjoying the sunshine, cool breeze, and solitude of the desert oasis. When the sandwiches had been finished, Helen reached into one of the ice chests and took out a chocolate cake, much to the appreciation of the men who had been wondering how to top off the lunch. Helen cut generous pieces for everyone, and even Elizabeth, who normally did not eat much dessert, ate with relish. By then, all were full and looked as if they would enjoy a short nap. Martin got up and put away the remaining food, passed around bottled water to those who wanted it, and put the trash into a couple of plastic bags. They returned to the lodge about 3:30 and, after unloading, retired to their casitas, promising to meet again in the King Casita after dinner.

That evening, about 7:30, everyone gathered in the King Casita once again, standing around the warm fire in the living room. The evening was chiller than previous nights. Mark and Elizabeth brought out cups of hot, spiced, Willcox apple cider, and Marcella passed around a tray of sweets. They all toasted each other, sat down close to the fire, and chatted about their experiences during this brief, but very pleasant vacation.

### Generational Survival of Spiritual Communities

A half hour or so passed, and then Martin again raised the question of how a spiritual community could sustain itself, given the natural transitions in leadership that are inherent in the lifecycle of all communities. He says, “We have talked a bit about leadership in a spiritual community, and have noted that the charisma and insight of the initial founder almost never is duplicated in successive leadership transitions. This is not an isolated phenomenon within spiritual communities, but rather a common occurrence in nearly every organization and social structure. Think about the kingdoms of Europe, or dynasties in China. But, regardless of the nature of the community, if it is to survive more than a couple of generations of leaders, it must find something to sustain it. So, I would like to ask you: in a spiritual community, what are the conditions under which it can survive and prosper, after the initial leader has passed from the scene?”

After thinking for a moment, Mark volunteers an answer. “This is an intriguing question. If we were fortunate enough to be a member of a spiritual community during its early stages, then we may have experienced a certain blessing that comes from knowing personally the leader and listening first-hand to the original wisdom he or she may have shared. If we were present at the first transition, then we learned something of the adjustments the community must make to new leadership styles. And, if we were there at the moment the organization moves into – what I

would call its corporate phase – then we can attest to the challenges that the leadership faces as it tries to be true to the teachings and intentions of the founder, yet ensure the organization’s survival on a more permanent basis. To survive, the third-generation organization must not only preserve original teachings but also adjust to new social and personal conditions.”

Marcella comments, “Yes, that has been my observation as well. The birth of a spiritual community is a time of great enthusiasm and commitment, which can continue – albeit with a somewhat new cast of characters – into the second phase. But when the first two leaders are gone, the enthusiasm of the members seems to wane a bit and their commitment seems to falter. Many people commit to people rather than to ideas. From what I can gather, one of the main problems is that the third generation of leaders is not universally accepted as the true successor. We must remember that one of the major purposes of a spiritual community is the propagation of the beliefs of the founder. All spiritual teachings have both a doctrinaire aspect – which you can read or listen to in a recording or video – and a spiritual aspect – a transmission of the Holy Spirit conveyed by a great teacher to those around him or her. The doctrine can be passed from generation to generation in publications and media, but the personal blessing of the founder cannot so easily be passed. As the intensity of the Holy Spirit fades over time, the level of commitment of the followers may likewise diminish. I suppose this is natural and unavoidable.”

She sips her cider, then with another point: “The teachings also tend to change in focus over time. And this has an impact on whom the teachings attract and on the nature of the community itself. The community at the time of the founder is quite different from the community several generations removed. In my heart, I would like to say this is unfortunate, but I am not sure it can be avoided.”

## Children in Spiritual Communities

Elizabeth says, “We have not yet spoken of children in a spiritual community. This is an essential consideration in the continuity of the community, because the loyalty of the children to the teachings is a strong indication of the community’s success and longevity.”

She thinks for a moment, looking into the distance, and then continues. “From a mother’s perspective, her children are all important. If she believes in something that is beautiful and true, she wants to share it with her children and hopes that they will be able to draw from it the same inspiration and strength that she has gained. A mother knows in her heart that, at some point, she must let go – to allow her children the freedom to take wing and pursue their own calling. On the other hand, she has learned many lessons in life that she wants to share with her children to protect them from harm and ease their path in life. So she educates them – body, mind, and soul – to the best of her ability. She will not be completely successful, but nature drives her to use all of her strength and wisdom to help her children.”

She pauses and says, “In a spiritual community, a mother is both a devotee and a teacher. She would not live in such a community – and, believe me, there are many challenges to raising a family under such conditions – unless she was committed to the teachings of that community. She tries to teach her children, almost from infancy, the truth as she understands it. Children, being what they are, take some of this with a grain of salt, ignore much of it, but also absorb it into their psyche almost like mother’s milk. Some children rebel against the teachings; others see merit in it; most pick and choose what appeals to them. But every child in a spiritual community has imprinted upon their consciousness some fundamental impressions that stay with them for their entire life.”

Marcella, who had been listening closely, takes up the conversation. “I have had the opportunity to talk to many children raised in spiritual communities, and they do have their own unique set of issues. One of these is the challenge of how to reconcile the community’s beliefs with their own observations and experience. We all know that children go through stages of wanting to distance themselves from their parents. This is programmed into the human consciousness. It is how generations build upon the foundations laid by their forefathers. If every child accepted without question the beliefs of their parents, then human progress would be very slow indeed. But in a spiritual community, there is added to this natural parent-child tension the additional burden of how to deal with ideas and lifestyles supposedly coming from God.”

Mark says, “This is true, and I have seen it myself in talking to young people in various churches.”

Marcella continues, “Some spiritual communities handle this youthful need for personal experience very well. They engage them in fun activities, give them challenging things to do, involve them in group excursions, and so on. Other communities are not so attuned to the needs of young people. And in these circumstances, there often is a generational conflict within the community.”

Elizabeth says, “I have a close friend who is a mother of four in a spiritual community. She is a wonderful, loving mother. But each of her children went their own separate ways. One remained faithful to the church. One pursued a professional career in a large city. One married early and became a stay-at-home mom. And one became totally rebellious, rejecting everything his mother stood for. Four children from a loving home. Four separate ways. Yet each of them was reacting to the strong beliefs of their mother.”

Martin observes, “It seems to me, then, that a spiritual community cannot completely rely on its children continuing the traditions of the founder. Some children will remain in the community. Most will move on with their lives. So the community must base its survival on the infusion of new adult members. The challenge faced by the community is that, as new members join and as new leadership emerges, the community itself must change. The direction of the change and the balance between the founder’s teachings and intent and the new members’ needs and expectations are critical to the sustainability of the community.”

Helen quietly comments, “We must remember that every soul and every group of souls have their unique lessons to learn and their own contributions to make in life. We are talking about the evolution of souls here, not the beginning or ending of a certain community. Looking at a spiritual community from the eyes of a child is different from looking at the community from the eyes of an adult. The parent joins the community with a sense of commitment to something larger than themselves. But, to a child, the universe is mostly comprised of their parents and the family structure into which they are born. A parent in a spiritual community can easily assign their child to a babysitter or daycare center in the church, can easily spend night after night on crash projects, and eat communally with scores of other people in rushed meals before morning or evening worship services.

“These things are fairly easy to do for an adult parent. But what does the child perceive in all of this? Does a child understand the teachings, or the persuasive power of the spiritual leader? I don’t think so. What they see are parents who put the community and the church first, their children second. What they see are parents handing them off to others while they rush off for hours on end. What they see is no family time at all, just a large group of people – all friendly and kind – but not their parents in one-on-one fun and loving moments. What children want

most, especially in their formative years, are their parent's time, undivided attention, and all-encompassing love. Parents in a spiritual community do love their children, of that there can be no doubt, but community demands on their time and attention sharply reduce what they give to their children. And children are left wondering if, somehow, they are not worthy of their parents' love."

She pauses, then says, "What we often have in a spiritual community are highly sensitive children who question their self-worth because their parents' attention is elsewhere. And this questioning of self-worth can be heightened under conditions where the leaders' children are continuously praised as being special and given favored treatment. But, alas, even these privileged children often carry with them a sense that they were less important to their parents than the community or the church. Is it any wonder, then, that so many children raised in spiritual communities are rebellious in their teenage years? They are filled with anxieties they do not understand, because the anxieties stem from their treatment as infants and toddlers. They were raised in an environment which seemed to view them as something of a distraction and inconvenience to 'getting the work done for the good of humanity.' Never mind that this may not be the intention of the parents or other adults in the community. It is a message received in the consciousness of the child."

Marcella, with moist eyes, adds, "I am afraid that all of us as mothers and fathers have fallen short in our responsibility as parents. As members of spiritual communities, we thought we were doing our best – and usually we were. But somehow we neglected our children more than we should have. Looking back, I can see that I understood this at some deep level of consciousness. But I set that concern aside for what I considered to be a greater good. I don't know if that was a mistake in the larger scheme of things, but I do know that spiritual communities must do far

more to support their families than many have done in the past. We have no right to add to the burdens of our children as they mature and come to terms with their rightful place in the world.”

Helen says, “That being said, it is worth mentioning that children, like adults, are individuals. And individuals react to circumstances differently. One child may find the spiritual community very comforting and beneficial to their mental, physical, and emotional growth. Another child may have difficulty because they feel too separated from their parents.”

Marcella comments, “I suppose, since we are on the subject of families, we should mention the relationship between husband and wife in a spiritual community. From my observation, there can be strong and permanent bonds formed between couples who share the same spiritual vision and who are equally dedicated to the purposes of the church and its community. But, where there are differences in spiritual perception, these can undermine a marriage and eventually result in divorce. Have any of you witnessed the same thing?”

Both Helen and Elizabeth nod, with Elizabeth saying, “I think that is true. However, I keep going back to the principle that married couples are adults. As such, they have their own responsibilities. It is difficult to say whether the success or failure of a marriage is a factor of spirituality or some other fundamental issue between the couples themselves.”

Martin says, “Well, I’ll tell you my view. My conclusion on raising a family in a spiritual community is that it is not necessarily a good thing. Communities based on spirituality are for adults, not for children who are developing their character and personality, along with their bodies and minds. I am thinking of the various spiritual communities in the Far East, compared to those in the Western tradition. In the West, we have had spiritual communities for eons, way before Christ. But in the East, as far as I can recall from my study of China and other parts of

Asia, spiritual communities are more like retreats, where monks and their devotees reside. It is easy for me to see that Eastern-style spiritual communities are ideal environments for those who seek to increase their spirituality. It is more difficult for me to see the benefits of Western-style spiritual communities in which whole families are raised according to some belief system. We do have some examples of large-scale spiritual communities in the West – one might think of the Mormons, Catholics, and Amish, for instance – where strong and resilient families are raised. Part of their success, I believe, is a firm, religious-based commitment between couples to make their marriage work. But smaller spiritual communities seem to have less success in being both spiritual and family-oriented. These are just my observations and they could be wrong.”

In the silence that follows, Mark gets up, adds a log to the fireplace, and pokes the coals to generate a bit more heat. He sits down and after a while says, “This is a very hard lesson for adults to learn, because many of us are both devotees of God and parents of children. There surely must be some way for spiritual communities to serve both sides of their members, without having to sacrifice one for the other. As I think about it, I believe finding this balance must be the responsibility of the community’s leaders. It is they who set the tone of the community’s attitudes towards families, and it is they who assign priorities for time and resources. But, I confess, this is one area of community building that I have not given as much thought to as it deserves.”

Mark continues, “Overall, I have concluded that there are many similarities between all communities, spiritual or otherwise. Let’s ask ourselves, what does a community – in the generic sense of the word – need to survive and prosper? We have talked about the key role played by leadership and the community’s special links to its children. Martin, what else is required for a spiritual community – or any community – to survive and prosper in today’s world?”

### Key Factors in Community Success

Martin responds, “Well, there are several factors that come to mind. In addition to good leadership and success in supporting a good family structure, there is the need for financial stability in a community. Communities are expensive to build and maintain, and members cannot all be on the community payroll. Families need to be supported by working adults; the spiritual organization needs contributions from its members to pay its bills. This means that employment opportunities must exist, either within the community itself, such as enterprises, or in local urban areas where many members can work. I suppose, if the sponsoring church was large and rich enough, a community could be supported by the church’s headquarters. But in most cases, financial support has to come from local sources. The point is: if there is not sufficient financial support, then the community will not long survive.”

He thinks for a moment and then continues, “Another factor certainly is a sense of identification with the community by its members and their loyalty to its principles. Communities are held together by common purpose. If that purpose is diluted too much, then members will drift away. Community leaders must work hard to ensure that members believe in the community’s purpose. Loyalty is an interesting issue. Leaders tend to think that member loyalty is to them personally, when actually member loyalty – if the community is to be sustained – must be to the larger goals of the community or its parent organization. This is especially true in the case of spiritual communities, but even a secular community needs its residents to believe they are part of something larger and more important than personalities.”

Mark asks, “What about governance structure? Does that make a significant difference?”

Martin answers, “We have talked a bit about that, and it can make a difference. Certainly the style of leadership varies between a single dominant leader and a consensus-based committee.

But more important than the style or type of leadership, in my opinion, is the effectiveness of the leadership structure. A dominant leader can be very effective in a community. And a committee can be very effective. What determines effectiveness? I would say that effectiveness in the governance of a community requires that the leadership be respected and followed by the members, that the leadership truly have the best interests of the community and its members in mind, and that decisions reached by the leadership be based on wise deliberations of known facts and probable outcomes.”

Marcella comments, “Sounds like politics to me.”

Martin laughs and nods. “Yes, it is politics. Politics is the art and science of governing, and the characteristics of a good leader and the attributes of good governance are pretty much universal. But we are not talking about politics in which the goals of the leader are worth any cost to the members of society, but rather a style of politics where the leadership assumes the mantle of responsibility for improving the lives of the people.”

Helen observes, “We should not forget, however, that many great advances and accomplishments in civilization have occurred precisely because the leader was willing to push his followers to the point of exhaustion. Think of the Great Wall of China and magnificent temples and palaces around the world. These never would have been built if the leader wasn’t willing to sacrifice his people for a vision. This raises a question: At what point in a spiritual community is it justified for a leader to sacrifice the comfort of the people to achieve some great goal?”

Morya says, “Good point. Motivating people to achieve great things is not always a comfortable process. However, demanding too much of the people can destroy the community. Many great

historical achievements have resulted in bankruptcy and collapse. I often wonder if those leaders concluded, in hindsight, that the accomplishment was worth the price.” For a moment, his attention turns to distant memories, then he asks, “Are there other keys to the success of a spiritual community?”

Elizabeth replies, “I can think of one: resilience in the face of challenge. Every community, just like every individual, will face challenges both great and small. To prosper, a community must be able to overcome these challenges, or at least be able to adjust to them in a way that moves the community forward rather than backward.”

Martin nods his agreement. “I suppose there is one other factor that comes to mind, and that has to do with providing growth opportunities for members. If community members don’t feel they have an opportunity to grow in character and responsibility – to become their true selves in the community setting – then their tenure in the community will either be limited or they will wilt on the vine. Communities with little opportunity for individuals can fall into a kind of rote routine that stifles initiative and dampens enthusiasm. To me, one of the most important purposes of a spiritual community is to help everyone find and express their inner quality – that part of themselves which gives true meaning to their lives. Whether an individual stays or leaves the community is less important than whether the community helps that individual discover his or her true self. If that goal is achieved, then the community will grow and prosper because new members will come to find themselves, and many old members will remain because they have found their place in the world.”

Elizabeth says, “But, Martin, let us remember that not everyone who joins a community is in search of their true self. Many, if not most, join the community because they already know who they are and wish to align their energies with others for the common good. The community is not

just for individuals to find themselves. It is for a collective contribution to mankind. There is great joy in being part of such a community. I have found that even the children are aware of this joy and feel they are part of something big and important.”

Morya leans forward and says, “Let’s not forget that a spiritual community is formed for mainly spiritual purposes. Sure, its members have to eat and its families have to be supported – just like any other community. But, in essence, what holds a spiritual community together is a belief structure, a faith in a set of principles that everyone believes to be true. Even the founding leader, as charismatic as he or she may be, is not the primary reason the community was formed. It was the leader’s ability to communicate spiritual teachings, to convince others of their validity, to use the power of the Holy Spirit to bring people together in Holy Communion. It is commitment to the love, wisdom, and power found within the teachings that forms the basis of a spiritual community.”

Looking at the fire, he continues. “We all know there is no such thing as a complete expression of the Truth of God. God is far larger than any of us can imagine. Man is simply unable to comprehend the totality of God’s creation. As is often said, we don’t understand ourselves, so how can we understand God. As individuals, we tend to understand God through the prism of our own consciousness. And there is nothing wrong with that. God is pleased when individuals understand His plan through the lens of their own minds and hearts. So, in reality, there are potentially as many spiritual communities as there are interpretations of God and His will. And believe me, those interpretations are as numerous as the stars in the heavens. But only a few individuals in each generation will have the spiritual strength, the communication and leadership skills, to convince a sizeable number of people that he or she has a correct interpretation of what God is or what God wants. These few – some more successful than others, some more insightful

than others – are the founders of spiritual communities. And certainly the roles of fate and opportunity come into play, because there are times when the social, political, and religious environments smile upon the creation of new spiritual communities, and times when established institutions will do everything in their power to stamp out new interpretations of God.”

He thanks Helen as she pours more cider into his cup. Then he says, “The principal challenge faced by spiritual communities is that people always interpret God’s will differently. The founder of a community has a powerful vision; his or her successor usually shares that vision, with some modifications. The third generation of leadership is raised with different experiences and expectations. Often, they are better educated and may have a broader perspective of world cultures. By the third and subsequent generations of leaders, the founder’s vision of what God intends has been reinterpreted in fundamental ways. New leaders can always train community members in what the founder said, but newer generations will understand the teachings somewhat differently, because their experience and knowledge are different from those who first followed the original teacher. For example, the analogies and parables used by the founder will sometimes seem quaint and antiquated. Off-handed remarks by the original teacher will be misinterpreted because the newer generation does not know the context in which the remarks were made. All of this means that the loyalties of members in the third-generation community will be tested by competing interpretations of the so-called ‘correct’ path outlined by the founder.”

He smiles. “There is no easy answer to this challenge. Often, in these circumstances, the new leader will say that God has revealed Himself in new ways. And this may be true. But what I am saying is that the spiritual belief structure that originally held the community together changes over time – for good or for ill. Tremendous effort – including tight discipline – can be used by

the organization to try to preserve the original belief structure, but these efforts will never be more than partially successful. And they may indeed be harmful if carried too far, because they will tend to isolate the spiritual community and its beliefs from the rest of society.”

Morya thinks for a moment, and then continues, “Nothing in this universe is stationary, so it is natural that man’s spiritual understanding evolves. It is this natural evolution in spiritual understanding that is the greatest challenge to successive generations of community leaders. How that change in understanding is managed determines whether the community will be successful over the long run. We spoke of the role of the Holy Spirit earlier. Each new generation of leaders in a spiritual community must be able to communicate their understanding of truth – not always in terms of what the founder might have said – but in terms of the convincing power of the Holy Spirit.”

Helen observes, “It is like our children. We give them birth and share with them all that we hold to be true. But, as they grow and experience more of the world, they come to understand things differently. This does not mean that we or they are wrong. It means that their experience and understanding are growing beyond our own. We, as parents and spiritual teachers, must learn to let go in order for the next generation to discover truth for themselves.”

#### [Checks and Balances in Spiritual Communities](#)

Martin then introduces a new concept: “In our discussions on government at Yellowstone last years, we identified the important role of checks and balances in most modern systems of government. What do all of you think about the merits of checks and balances in of spiritual communities?”

Mark answered first. “I think that checks and balances may be impossible in some spiritual communities. I, for one, cannot imagine that Jesus would condone a system of checks and balances in his own group of disciples.”

Elizabeth comments, “That may be true for Jesus, but certainly after he passed a system of checks and balances might have prevented schisms in the early church.”

Helen observes, “But we have the issue of the purpose of a spiritual community, which is the propagation of a set of beliefs and the communal support for its followers. There might be a need for a check and balance system in the day-to-day administration of community services, but it is hard to conceive of a check and balance system to control or monitor the teachings being delivered by the spiritual head of the community. These are two different functions.”

Martin says, “Those are interesting observations. Yet, as we have agreed upon previously, once the founder and perhaps his or her immediate successor have passed the torch of leadership to others in the spiritual community, then the teachings risk being changed. Does that not justify having a system in place to ensure the proper continuity of the teachings?”

Morya then says, “It is indeed difficult, in any spiritual community, to have a functioning system of checks and balances in place. Remember, that most people join such a community because they have faith in either the teacher or the teachings, or in both. It is easier for people to believe and trust in a single leader and interpretation of the truth than it is for them to believe in a committee and doctrinaire consensus. In this sense, there is a dual karmic responsibility at play here. First, the leader of the spiritual community must adhere to strict guidelines of honor and integrity in the message of the teachings and in the administration of the organization. Second, the members of the community must accept their own responsibilities for deciding to be there in

the first place. If either of these parties – the spiritual leader or the member – fails in their responsibility, then some accounting must be made. In the case of the spiritual leader, this accountability would most often be with God or His Representatives. In the case of the member, this accountability would most often be with the administrators of the community – which may or may not be the spiritual leader of the community.”

Martin objects, “But, Morya, while the administration of justice might be swift in the case of the member, who is to know if the administration of justice is even carried out in the case of the spiritual leader, who has no peers that normal men can see?”

Mark says, “This is a karmic issue and is best left to God and His Representatives. Men have never been able to effectively administer God’s justice to spiritual leaders here on earth. It seems to me, therefore, that while a system of checks and balances may be successful and perhaps necessary for the administrative side of the community, the evaluation of the spiritual leader on the part of others has to be limited to one’s own decision whether to remain in or withdraw from the community.”

No one has a better solution, so after a few moments, Marcella says, “I have learned a lot today. I have been troubled for many years by the breakup of certain spiritual communities with which I have been associated. On the one hand, I love those who remain in the old communities; on the other hand, I no longer feel that it is the same community to which I used to belong. Despite my best intentions and deep commitment to the teachings, at a certain point I felt I had to leave the community because I sensed it was moving in a direction I was uncomfortable with. I felt a certain amount of guilt and regret about leaving, but over time I came to understand that I needed to find the spiritual center within myself as opposed to finding it in a community.”

Elizabeth comments, “I believe that, at judgment day, we will not be evaluated on the basis of which church or community we belonged to, but rather on what we did or did not do with the potential God placed within our souls.”

Mark says, “All of this is true, but we should not understate the importance of a spiritual community in our lives. At a certain point, we need the protection and nourishment provided in a community of kindred souls. A community can help us find strength and wisdom to make our best contributions to life. And, as Morya has told us, spiritual communities are often karmic groups: people and places we must live amongst in order to balance karma and free our souls for their next adventure.”

There was a warm and reflective silence as the old friends finished their cups of cider and thought about the past few days. Then, the friends smiled at one another, expressed appreciation for a wonderful weekend, and leisurely said goodnight. Early the next morning, everyone packed their vehicles and drove together out Muleshoe Ranch Road back to Willcox and the interstate west to Tucson.

## Chapter 4: Becoming the Real Self

A few months after their vacation at the Muleshoe Ranch in Arizona, Morya conference called Mark and Martin to see if they would be interested in a late summer outing to discuss the importance of individuals understanding their real or true self. Both Mark and Martin thought the idea was great, and Mark suggested somewhere in Colorado because of the ideal weather that time of year. After discussing options, Mark recommended they spend a few days in Ouray, known by many as the Switzerland of America. Martin liked the idea, because he would be able to explore the old mining districts in the San Juan Mountains to the east of Ouray and Silverton. Morya agreed that would be fine, but preferred to rent a house in the area for a few days rather than camp in the nearby national forests.

Mark knew a realtor in Ouray and said he would contact her to see about a short-term rental for early or mid-August. A week or so later, Mark called his two friends to say he had put a tentative hold on a three bedroom, single family rental a few blocks west of the Commercial Historic District in Ouray. They decided to lock it in and agreed to share all expenses. Mark suggested that everyone meet in Denver and take his SUV out to Ouray. He also said the realtor had recommended a Jeep rental company near the house, noting his large SUV probably would not be able to navigate the rough and narrow mining trails up in the mountains. Martin volunteered to drive the Jeep. Everything planned, the friends agreed to meet in the Denver airport in early August, spend the night and next day with Mark and Elizabeth in their nearby home, and then drive to Ouray.

The friends left Denver early the appointed day, travelling via I-70 to Grand Junction and south on Highways 50 and 550. They made the trip in about six hours, because they wanted to meet up with the realtor before her office closed at 5:00 pm. As they entered the Uncompahgre River

Valley leading to the picturesque town, the men enjoyed the spectacular mountains on either side of the valley, many with peaks over 10,000 feet, far above the tree line.

The realtor took them over to the house a few blocks away and showed them around. Receiving three sets of keys, the men began to unpack and move into their bedrooms. After they settled into the small but comfortable two-story brick house, they sat on the porch for a while and looked at the towering bluffs to the west, now casting huge shadows towards town.

“Absolutely beautiful,” Martin commented, and the others nodded in silent agreement. About 7 pm, at Mark’s suggestion, they walked over to Main Street and ate a delicious trout dinner at a restaurant. Afterwards, they strolled about town, looking into store windows and noting where they might like to eat the following days. About 9 o’ clock, the men returned home, finished arranging their rooms, and went to sleep, planning to rise early for breakfast and to make arrangements for renting a Jeep.

### Day One: Black Canyon of the Gunnison

#### [What Is the Real Self?](#)

Finding the next morning that no Jeep Wranglers were available until the following day, Mark suggested they drive around a bit to explore the area. He especially wanted to see the Black Canyon of the Gunnison a few miles east of Montrose. They grabbed a hamburger and milk shake for the trip and headed north.

On the way to Montrose, Mark asked Morya why he wanted to talk about the real self during this trip. Morya say, “I am very interested in this subject because most people do not know their real self, and I believe it is this lack of understanding that leads to many of the world’s problems.”

Martin looks over at Morya and replies, “Morya, what is so difficult about discovering the real self? We are what we are, and that is real enough for the moment. We change every day, every moment in fact, so there is no such thing as a real self – if by real self you mean something permanent.”

Morya laughs and says, “Well, Martin, you always do have a different perspective and here I believe you are playing the role of the devil’s advocate. But that is one reason I enjoy discussing philosophical issues with you. In fact, I do not think the real self is a permanent, static state of human existence. There is no permanence for human beings. What I mean by the real self is that part of the human consciousness which expresses the fundamental qualities God has implanted in the individual soul.”

Mark, watching his rear view mirror at a fast approaching semi, says, “I guess the real self – or true self as some would call it – is something like an ideal person. Are you saying, Morya, that this ideal can actually be realized in the world as we know it?”

Morya answers, “Yes, indeed. The real self can exist in the world of form. Don’t forget, the real self and the human self are different levels of consciousness within the same person. It is a matter of self-awareness, self-identification, and self-expression. An individual can be aware of himself as angry and cruel, or he can be aware of himself as loving and kind. The key here is how an individual expresses himself, how the individual perceives himself.”

Martin watches the truck speed by, then says, “Let’s take that truck driver for instance. He probably is focused on getting to his next destination. I doubt he is thinking about Plato’s cave or the sacrifices of Jesus. How can a person be concerned with both immediate things like completing his truck run for the day, and what he should ideally become tomorrow? There is a

mismatch here somewhere. How can we focus on being both ideal and practical at the same time? Isn't that somewhat schizophrenic?"

Mark chuckles as Morya slowly shakes his head. Mark says, "Martin, of course we can have completely different personalities at different times. When you are at a football game with the Broncos at Mile High Stadium, you are acting and feeling differently than when you are at home relaxing with your family over dinner. We all have mood swings, we all have different thoughts and opinions. We all act differently depending on the circumstances. Our different moods and thoughts do not mean that we are different people. We are the same person, acting and thinking differently at different times."

Morya adds, "Yes, this is true, but I am trying to get at a more fundamental issue. Given that individuals can act differently at different times under different circumstances, is it possible for an individual to always act from the level of his real self?"

Martin thinks about this for a moment and then comments, "I can see where you are coming from, Morya, but if we look around to see people as they currently are, I do not see many folks acting as their real selves, if by real self you mean expressing their highest potential. Quite the opposite. I see people everywhere concerned about living under challenging circumstances, trying to prosper and survive in an often hostile world. Sure, we all turn to God at times, and most people really do appreciate all of God's blessings, but the focus – for most of us – is living in the here and now. I know this is not universally true, because thousands of people are very religious and try every day to do nothing but good. But it seems to me that to survive and prosper on this planet you have to be willing to defend your own interests and aggressively establish yourself as a person of consequence. If you don't, then others will walk all over you – and be glad they did!"

Mark says, as he turns into the entrance of the National Park, “Hey, let’s talk about this later. I want to walk around a bit and see the Park.” Morya and Martin agree, and, after glancing at the map handed out at the south entrance station, ask Mark to stop at Tomichi Point and then the South Rim Visiting Center. They also visited the Chasm View and the Painted Wall View, where they were fascinated by the 2,500-foot cliff, the tallest in Colorado. Time passed quickly, and after three hours of hiking and taking pictures, the friends drove back to Montrose and ate dinner at a small restaurant. Martin suggested they buy some groceries while in town, so they stopped at Safeway and purchased enough food for several days.

On the road back to Ouray, Martin takes up the earlier conversation. “You know, Morya, the problem with concentrating on the real self is that people are – generally speaking – either satisfied with their lives and therefore unwilling to change, or they need some basic necessity of life and don’t have the time or inclination to search for life’s higher meaning. You and Mark have spent your entire lives trying to understand the spiritual side of things, and I think that is a very good thing to do. However, most people are not on the same wavelength as you. And, to be honest, sometimes I wonder myself whether it is worth the trouble to always be trying to improve yourself in some idealistic way. Why not just live life to the fullest? Why not just accept where you are on the ladder of life and live normally? Sometimes I want to let it go and enjoy the moment! I guess that makes me a sinner, but there are lots of folks just like me.”

Mark laughs and says, “I understand you very well, Martin. You always advocate for human nature, even if you do not always advocate for what is best. But I have a question for you. You have often spoken of your experience in finding your inner quality and your conclusion that this inner quality is your best character. You have said that your purpose in life is to express that inner quality and that, in doing so, you were becoming your true self. You do not know whether

the inner quality is a gift of God to your soul, or some latent potential residing in your DNA, or both. But you said you were convinced that the inner quality existed. Further, you were emphatic in stating that, if people knew and expressed their inner quality, they would either be fulfilling God's will or they would be participating in the evolution of mankind. Does that pretty much summarize your views?"

Martin thinks for a moment, then nods in agreement, looking out at the dark landscape.

### [How to Discover the Inner Quality](#)

Mark continues, "If that is true, then the question I have is this: What process did you follow to discover your inner quality?"

Martin leans back against the headrest and answers, "Well, if I think about it, the discovery of my inner quality was the result of two factors. One, a sense that I had just about wasted everything worthwhile in my life; and secondly, an acknowledgement that, no matter what I did to the contrary, there was a core of goodness at the center of my heart. I decided one evening that I would just follow in meditation that sense of goodness and find where it leads."

He drank from a bottle of water and continues, "This exercise, or meditation, on the source of my inner goodness led to an experience of 'seeing' a light deep within my consciousness. And that 'light,' amazingly enough, had a color of ... sort of pale teal green ... and radiated a distinct quality of honor and integrity. Although surprised at this experience, I understood intuitively that these twin qualities of honor and integrity were the bedrock on which my internal sense of goodness was built. I also realized that honor and integrity – which I later called my inner quality – was something not created by my outer consciousness. Somehow, deep within myself, this pre-existing quality was my true character. I could only conclude that my purpose in this lifetime

was to express honor and integrity, and that, in so doing, I would in fact gradually become my real self. My real self was simply the best person I had the potential of becoming.”

Morya asks, “And you concluded that others had similar, if not the same, inner qualities?”

Martin says, “Yes. It was obvious to me that, if I had an inner quality, then other people had to have their own inner qualities. However, I could tell that other people had inner qualities somewhat different from my own. This led me to conclude that the purpose of all of mankind must be to individually discover their own inner quality, to express it in their daily lives, and thereby become their real self. Theoretically, if one person can improve their character by becoming their true self, then humanity as a whole can improve its behavior and the vicious cycles of history can be replaced by cycles of cultural excellence. I decided to test this theory on myself to see if it would work. Amazing, I began to see changes in my behavior and my judgments improved. I came to the conclusion that, if we use our free will to become our real self, then we can improve both ourselves and society. Our future really does rest in our own hands.”

Mark comments, “Both Morya and I have had similar experiences and have reached the same conclusions. So, Martin, tell me again why you now think finding the real self may not be a worthwhile objective for everyone?”

Martin laughs, “Perhaps it is my cantankerous nature, Mark. I do feel that I should improve myself, and I try daily to do so, bit by bit. But it requires a level of effort and commitment that I am not sure others want to give. There are some awful things happening in the world and sometimes I get pessimistic that change for the good is possible, especially in the short-term.”

Morya says, “Cantankerousness, lack of effort and commitment, pessimism ... These are but temporary clouds in one’s consciousness. If you remain focused on the beauty of the will of God planted in your soul as your inner quality, then you will continue to move forward. All of us have doubts and weaknesses in our life, but we cannot long ignore the essential goodness at the core of our being. By its very nature, this internal goodness must find expression. The will of God is built into the higher consciousness of every individual. Unless one tries to express one’s inner quality, one will always be prone to feelings of unworthiness and incompleteness. The urge for goodness can be ignored, but not forever. It can be rebelled against, but not forever. Thus, there is always hope for mankind individually and collectively. The question is: how best to awaken the individual to his own potential?”

About this time, Mark pulls into the driveway of the rental in Ouray. Everyone gets out, unloads the groceries, and then sits down to enjoy a cup of tea around the fireplace. Martin promises his friends a good adventure the next day in the backcountry of the San Juans, and the men call it a night.

### Day Two: Silverton

As luck would have it, the Jeep Martin had intended to rent the next morning was being serviced and would not be ready for pick up until late in the afternoon. No one thought this to be a problem, however, as Mark suggested they drive down the Million Dollar Highway to Silverton.

A two-lane twisting, but well-maintained scenic byway, Highway 550 between Ouray and Silverton through the San Juan Mountains along the Uncompahgre River Gorge and over the Red Mountain Pass is one of the nation’s most beautiful highways. Numerous old mines are along the

25-mile route, and the road is replete with spectacular waterfalls, deep gorges, and towering mountains.

As Mark drove along, giving plenty of room to large RVs heading north around the sharp curves, Martin pointed out several Jeep trails leading off to the east through the mountain passes. He remarks, “This is where we will be going tomorrow. It should be a fantastic trip. I can hardly wait.” Morya and Mark just nod, not quite as enthusiastic about venturing into this rugged territory in an open Jeep.

In Silverton, they stopped at a café for a cup of coffee and a pastry, and walked around Main Street to get a feel for the old mining town. With only about 500 full-time residents, Silverton is the only town in San Juan County, the other mining towns abandoned, leaving partially collapsed buildings filled with memories of gold and silver rushes during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Martin asked an old-timer waiting to cross the street what people did in Silverton now that the mines were closed. He smiled in a rugged way and said, “Everyone that I know works in the bars.” As the three friends walk on, Mark observes, “This place certainly does have its share of bars.”

At Martin’s suggestion, they drove up County Road 2 along the Animas River. The sides of the mountains on both sides were filled with abandoned mines, and several old structures were alongside the road. The men stopped at a couple of the larger buildings, and Martin scrambled out to see if he could find any forgotten treasure among the tailings. There was nothing except heavily mineralized ore, but Martin did manage to pick up several specimens to add to his basement’s growing collection. Morya and Mark also found a few rocks of interest, and packed those away, too.

At a certain point, when the road started to become a little rougher, Morya suggested they find a nice picnic spot to eat the sandwiches they had prepared. A little tired because of the altitude – Silverton being over 9,000 feet – the other men agreed and Mark soon spotted a good place to turn off.

While enjoying lunch and watching the slow progress of several Jeeps and other 4x4s high up on the mountains, Mark says to Martin, “I guess that is where you will take us tomorrow.”

Martin replies, “Yes, that is the sort of terrain we will be on, although we probably will take a trail up from Highway 550 rather than driving back down here. I wish they had the Jeep ready, but we still have a couple of days to explore around and none of us are hard core off-roaders.”

Mark nods in agreement, and Martin continues, “Anyway, it will be fun and – don’t worry – I will be careful where we go. It’s a good thing my boys aren’t with us. They would want to drive and they would really test our courage.” Everyone laughs at this, secretly aware that their current level of adventurism paled in comparison to their younger days.

With the sun beginning to lower in the sky, Mark suggests they head back to Ouray to pick up the Jeep. Martin checks his watch and agrees. They all get in the SUV, make a quick stop on the outskirts of Silverton to gas up, and turn north up Highway 550 to return to Ouray. As they drove, they remarked several times that they had missed many sights on the way down. The time passed quickly, with the only mishap being a motorcyclist who spun out before them in some gravel on a sharp curve. The driver recovered soon enough, however, and sped down the mountain as if nothing had happened. Martin jokes, “Hey, if you guys would rather rent some motorcycles, let me know.” No one bothered to respond.

In Ouray, Mark dropped Martin off at the Jeep shop and drove with Morya back to the house. Martin got checked out on the Jeep, collected some trail maps, and asked for recommendations from a couple of Jeep tour guides on “a moderately challenging set of trails.” Walking in the house a few minutes later, he found Morya and Mark already preparing dinner and, after saying hello, he grabbed a Foster from the refrigerator and sat out on the porch to enjoy the sunset lighting up the clouds over the summits.

About an hour later, Morya comes to the screen door and invites Martin to come in to dinner. The friends enjoy a meal of roasted chicken, broccoli, white rice, and rolls, with chocolate cake for dessert. After dinner, Mark made chamomile tea with honey, and they settled into their favorite chairs to watch the crackling fire.

#### [The Innate Goodness of Mankind](#)

Morya says, “If you don’t mind, I would like to continue our discussion in regards to the innate goodness of mankind. As I understand it, the will of God is written in the atoms and molecules of all creation. The will of God also is reflected in the forces of evolution. We have described evolution in terms of survival of the fittest, but in reality evolution is a process of experimentation, transformation, and transcendence. Written inside our DNA is the requirement that we strive to improve ourselves, just as we are compelled by nature to propagate our species. We can, by our individual free will, try not to improve or propagate, but that mental state cannot be sustained indefinitely by all members of humanity. Nature requires that we continuously move along in the spirals of evolution.”

Martin starts to interrupt, but Morya holds up his hand and says, “The inner quality that we and countless thousands of others have experienced is but a glimpse into our evolutionary potential. Like our trip today, every vista in life shows new opportunities and new challenges. There is an

infinite opportunity for mankind to improve individually and collectively. The discovery and expression of the inner quality is simply another step on the ladder of mankind's potentially infinite consciousness. The real self is not a static level of self-awareness or some fixed state of being. The real self is an ever-expanding realization of who we really are."

Continuing, Morya says, "Not every person is an adventurer willing to leave the comforts of home to see the other side of the mountain. But there are enough adventurers among humanity at any given time to explore and map new horizons. Others will follow or be educated as to these new realities. This is the way mankind progresses. However, the urge to progress is built into the human system, as it were. No one can turn off the spigot of evolution. To try to do so is foolhardy and doomed to failure. It is also rather dangerous in the sense that one should not attempt to swim against the flow of nature."

He pauses for a moment. "So, Martin, when you say you are pessimistic about positive change in human nature, I would suggest that you perhaps broaden your perspective somewhat. The impossible today is the routine tomorrow. It has always been the case. If you reflect upon the best side of yourself, you will inevitably realize that you can be a better person. The desire to be a better person is your soul's aspiration to be the real self. That is why the ancients always said, 'Go Be,' meaning 'go be your real self.' This is the key to your personal happiness and the key to society's transformation. It is not so much a moral decision on one's part that determines whether one becomes the real self. It is a practical decision to become in truth what you already are in potential. The real self is a pattern into which you grow, as you allow your life's energies to flow."

Morya looks at the fire for a moment and says, "This is what God intends for His creation: to become the fullness of the potential placed within all spirit and substance, energy and matter,

regardless of its form. The will of God is written into the fabric of the universe. Its evolutionary flow is what the Chinese call the Tao. Follow the Tao, and you will be in harmony with the will of God. The will of God is simple and pure, but it is powerful and has infinite varieties of expression.”

Mark and Martin think about this for a moment, and then Mark says, “Morya, that was truly a beautiful description of how the will of God is interwoven throughout every aspect of the cosmos. I had never thought of it quite that way, but the explanation of God’s will being part of our DNA and at the foundation of elements and energy is very profound. It puts discussion of God’s will into an entirely different context.”

He continues, “You know, I have students in my retreat who believe they must ask God where to park their cars and what to wear in the morning before they go to work. They believe that to do God’s will you must continuously ask God what He wants. Are these well-meaning souls wrong?”

Morya replies, “I would not say they are wrong, but I would ask them to consider two things: whether God has the time to prescribe all of these details, and why do they think God gave them free will?”

Mark smiles and responds, “Those are good questions, and I will ask them whenever the opportunity arises. But there is a fundamental issue here. Does an individual have to surrender his free will in order to obey God? Is surrender of free will necessary to become one’s real self?”

### [Man’s Will and God’s Will](#)

As Martin contemplates these questions, Morya offers his understanding: “I believe that it is part of the soul’s evolution to learn to master the use of free will, here in the planes of time and space

and in other dimensions. Having free will is one of the defining characteristics of a son and daughter of God, which is the soul's birthright. Free will is what makes us co-creators with God, in the sense that we can take energy and matter and build things. Being a creator, rather than a robot, requires that we have free will. And having free will gives us considerable influence over our own destiny as individuals and as the human species."

Martin asks, "But what is the proper use of free will? We see examples everyday of free will being used to do horrible things, and also free will being used to do much good. Surely there are some boundaries in a moral sense on how free will is to be used."

Mark says, "Let me address this one. You are right in saying that there are proper and improper uses of free will. Being a human implies that we have a choice in how we use our free will. In fact, when we observe people, we see that individuals rarely choose exactly the same thing: stand in Starbucks and listen to people order their drinks. Part of this is because the circumstances in which free will is used are not the same. Part of this is because no two people are identical, having different genetic codes and having been exposed to different experiences in their lifetimes. We have, then, almost an infinite possibility of free will choices. Morally speaking, some of these choices are better than others. I do not believe there is a divine playbook that God writes each morning for us to follow. Rather, life and nature place boundaries within which we can exercise our free will. We cannot, for example, jump to the top of this roof or walk through these walls or run faster than a cheetah. But we can do a lot of things."

He thoughtfully drinks some tea, and then continues. "It seems to me that the key to whether our decision is better or correct resides mostly inside of our self." He waves for Martin to hold his objection for a moment, then says, "What I mean by that is, really, who is our judge? Are we best judged by our fellowman, by history, by God, or by ourselves?"

Martin says, “OK. I think I follow your logic here. You are implying that the judgment of others is not necessarily more correct than our own judgment. But what God? Isn’t He the ultimate judge of our actions?”

Morya comments, “That is a good summary, Mark, and it contains an important truth. In terms of whether our choices are correct or not, we should first ask ourselves what is right or wrong. We cannot always look to God, because His judgment is sometimes hidden from our view. But there is an important caveat here. Which part of ourselves should be our judge? Should it be the selfish part, the scholarly part, the saintly part? In truth, we are all of these things, even though one or another aspect of our character may predominate at any given time. So, if we are to correctly judge ourselves, we should make every effort to ensure that our judgment is based on our very best standard – what Martin has called the inner quality.”

Mark picks up the conversation. “You see, the best judge of whether you are properly using your free will is your own understanding of your inner quality. The last few years, you have identified your inner quality as honor and integrity. Twenty years from now, your understanding of your inner quality may be somewhat refined. It matters not. What counts is whether you are – today and tomorrow – acting, thinking, and feeling as your real self. What did First Corinthians say: ‘When I was a child, I thought and acted as a child. When I became a man, I thought and acted like a man’? We are all children at one stage of our spiritual evolution and we all become adults at a later stage. It is the nature of things. Our use of free will changes over time and our standard of appropriate behavior changes over time as well. That is true for us as individuals in this room, and that is true for the several billion other souls evolving on this planet at any given time.”

Martin observes, “There still appears to be the issue of how do you determine the correctness of a given choice, when we often do not know the outcome of our decisions?”

Morya laughs and says, “That is a good question. But the hour is late, so why don’t we take it up tomorrow and get a good night’s sleep for what, I am sure, will be a harrowing ride up the mountains in the morning.” Martin smiles and nods his agreement, and Mark gets up and takes the cups into the kitchen to wash them. The men then say goodnight and retire for the evening.

### Day Three: Jeep Trails

After a full breakfast, the three friends piled into the rented Jeep with Martin behind the wheel and Mark as copilot. The sky was bright and clear, so Martin took off the top and encouraged everyone to put on jackets, hats, and sunscreen for a full day’s sun at high altitude. When all was secured, they proceeded south down Highway 550 for the turnoff toward Engineer Pass.

Unfortunately, there was a long line of Jeeps and other 4x4s waiting at the beginning of the trail – apparently, there was some problem up the hill – so Martin continued driving down to the Corkscrew Gulch trail. He told Mark and Morya that the guys in the Jeep shop had assured him the trail was both exciting and ‘doable,’ as they plunged into the muddy, rocky, and rough road as it moved past a nice campground and then became a very steep, winding, and narrow incline far above the tree line. Near the top, there was junction with signs pointing to Silverton or toward the California Gulch. Close by were the towering peaks of Red Mountain, so named because of the volcanic minerals exposed near the top. It was a breathtaking sight, and the men got out numerous times to take pictures. Martin walked to a few abandoned mines along the road, and came back with several large specimens coated with what appeared to be silver and gold flakes. Martin said, “We’re gonna be rich!” and Mark, laughing, said, “You will never get me up here again.” Morya just chuckled and watched a couple of eagles riding high on the air currents overhead.

At the junction near Poughkeepsie Gulch, they stopped to eat lunch, grateful that the sun was fairly warm – when you could get out of the wind. Martin pointed to an overturned 4x4 at the bottom of a steep trail and decided not to take that route. He had been warned at the shop that this particular trail could be dangerous. Instead, after they ate the sandwiches, he drove down the California Gulch Road towards Animas Forks. Along the way, they found some more old mines and explored around a bit, wondering why kind of life the old miners must have lived up there.

By then, it was mid-afternoon and they had a choice: either go up another trail toward Engineer Pass, return the way they came, or drive out along the Animas toward Silverton. After some discussion, they elected to go back to Silverton. On the way down, they encountered a sudden and heavy thunderstorm, which confirmed they had made the right choice. They stopped in Silverton to warm up with a cup of coffee and piece of pie, and then returned to Ouray around 6:30 pm.

Everyone was tired and agreed to Mark's suggestion that they just eat a light meal that evening. He and Morya scrambled some eggs with onions and green peppers, while Martin got a fire going. Exhausted, but happy with their adventure, the three friends traded stories about their experiences and relaxed around the table. They all remarked how sore they were after a day of holding on for dear life as they bounced along precipices and navigated impossibly tight turns. Mark and Morya congratulated Martin on his driving, but Mark confessed that he had whispered more than one prayer to be delivered home safely. Martin confided with a serious expression that they were indeed lucky because he had driven most of the way with his eyes closed.

After eating, the men settled into their favorite chairs, cup of hot Darjeeling tea in hand, and began their evening's conversation in the warmth of the fire.

## The Validity of Moral Judgment

Morya says, “Martin, your questions from last night were thought provoking, but I am not entirely sure what point you were trying to make. Could you possibly restate your questions and give us a bit more context?”

Martin replies, “Sure, I’d be happy to. Basically, I am still puzzled about whether free will, by definition, is always accompanied by a judgment of its moral correctness. It seems from observation there is no absolute judgment of morality in the universe that we can comprehend. For example, is it moral for a lion to kill a zebra? Is it moral for a male great ape to have several females as mates? Is it moral to kill innocents in strikes against terrorists? If you look at the evolution of civilizations, you see a wide range of behavior that today would be judged as being moral or immoral. What does that tell us? It tells us that morality is not absolute and that it is largely culturally and circumstantially determined. That is not to say that morality is a wrong concept. It tells us that a certain set of moral rules are relevant to a given person, a given culture, a given time and space. And if we acknowledge that our moral codes are meaningful only in a certain context, then why do we try to judge the moral behavior of people living in different circumstances than our own?”

Mark nods and says, “What is moral to one person at one stage of his soul’s evolution may be different from that soul’s morality when it is embodied as another person in another place and time. If you were a pharaoh in ancient Egypt, the moral standard you would hold for yourself might be different from the moral standards you live by today. Isn’t that correct?”

Martin smiles and replies, “That is probably true. But come to think of it, there might be some advantages in being a pharaoh.”

Mark says, "I'm sure there would be. However, the point is that the soul evolves and the moral standards it is subject to change over time and place and circumstances. This relates to our discussion of the real self. The real self is not a static being. It is an evolution in the consciousness of the individual soul as it embodies time and time again. Our task, our lesson, in this lifetime is to try to become the real self as we now understand it to be. A thousand years ago, our conception of our real self would have been somewhat different. A thousand years from now, if we are in embodiment, our conception of our real self will probably be different from what it is today."

Martin objects, "But if that is true, then how does the human soul graduate from this planetary home? It sounds as if the lessons we must learn as human beings keep retreating: the more we learn, the more we have to learn. Where, if ever, does it end?"

Morya comments, "The lessons we are intended to learn on this planet have nothing to do with technology or scientific discovery. It is all about mastering free will, so that one's choices are always striving to become the real self. Let me repeat that. What is important from the soul's point of view is that we strive to become the real self. Perfection in the world of form means always acting as one's true self. Perfection does not mean never making a mistake in one's decision. When you achieve the level of self-control and self-mastery necessary such that your choices are always based on your inner quality as you understand it at the time, when your goal is always to be the very best you can be – then you have learned your lesson in this earthly environment. It doesn't matter whether you learn this lesson as a farmer, merchant, soldier, priest, scientist, or pharaoh."

Seeing Martin's puzzled look, he adds, "In other words, the soul's sojourn on earth is to learn to be an excellent decision maker and competent creator, based on God's quality given to the soul

at the time of its creation. When the soul learns that lesson, the soul is ready to graduate from this schoolroom and prepare for the next. Of course, to graduate from this schoolroom one also has to balance a certain percentage of karma from mistakes made in the past. But the balancing of that karma can occur rather quickly once your will is set on becoming your real self.”

Martin sighs, “Well, that is a lot to think about. It puts a different light on what we should be striving for here on earth. I had always thought God wants us to be perfect in choices, in the sense that they were always correct and valid in an abstract, universal sense. I never could see how that would be possible.” He brightens and says, “Returning to the immediate future: tomorrow I thought we might go out to Telluride, a famous ski resort an hour or so from Ouray. How does that sound?”

Mark and Morya agree it could be fun and, after washing their cups, everyone retires for the night.

#### Day Four: Telluride

The next day arrived chilly and rainy, with what seemed to be snow falling in the higher elevations. The men ate a warm breakfast of oatmeal and toast and talked about what they should do. Martin said he had planned on driving the Jeep to Telluride out County Road 361, but he was not sure of the road conditions, so he suggested instead that everyone go in Mark’s SUV on a more indirect but reliable route, up north on Highway 50 to Highway 62 out of Ridgway and then Highway 145 which would take them into Telluride. Mark and Morya thought the idea was fine and everyone got ready to go. They would eat lunch in Telluride and make further plans when they got there.

About an hour and a half later, they drove into Telluride and immediately got caught up in a traffic jam on Colorado Avenue. It seemed as if the entire State had descended into the valley town and were now walking down the main street with no traffic control whatsoever. Window shopping as they drove yard-by-yard down the street, the men commented on how commercialized the town was – a fact attributed by Mark to the fact that Telluride, along with a few other famous ski resorts such as Vail and Breckenridge, were visited year-round by hundreds of thousands of people. Martin observed that the mountain scenery was indeed beautiful but wished it were a bit more secluded.

Eventually, Mark found a parking spot and the men walked over to La Cocina de Luz for a light lunch. La Cocina had been recommended to Mark as a place that had pretty good and wholesome food with a Southwestern flavor. By then the rain had stopped, so they ate on the patio, eating their favorite Mexican foods and sharing chips, guacamole, and a quesadilla. Martin wanted to try one of their margaritas, but settled on some horchata in deference to his friends who were drinking freshly squeezed, organic fruit juice. Pleased with their choices, they walked back to the SUV and drove further out Main Street toward Spur 145.

Feeling full and adventurous, Mark contemplated proceeding up the Black Bear Pass Road, but some Jeep enthusiasts stopped to inform them that the road would be rather gnarly for a large SUV. Mark reluctantly turned around and drove back through town, eventually turning off on Last Dollar Road, which locals said would be a nice alternate route, eventually intersecting with Highway 62 back to Ridgway. The men thoroughly enjoyed this journey, stopping frequently to take pictures of the surrounding mountains and the beautiful valley vistas along the way and promising someday to return here for a camping trip.

### Is It Better to Make Moral Decisions Oneself or Listen to a Spiritual Teacher?

At a particularly scenic spot, Mark suggested they get out and walk around a bit. After about a half-hour, they got back in the SUV and continued toward the Highway 62 intersection. At some point, Morya asked Martin whether he would trust his own interpretation of what was morally correct or trust the guidance of a spiritual master.

Martin replies, “I actually have given this quite a bit of thought over the years, since my experience has been both good and bad with the two approaches. More often than not, decisions that I made which were different from suggestions offered by spiritual teachers have not always turned out so well. There have been occasions when my decisions were more correct, however.”

Morya asks, “What do you think made the difference between a right choice and a lesser choice?”

Martin says, “Well, that is difficult to say. But if I think about it, it seems that decisions related to my professional career can be made by me with greater confidence than decisions that have long-term consequences which are not clear. Let me give an example. On one occasion, a spiritual teacher suggested that I move my family into a secure location because of the looming prospects for nuclear war. I did not take this advice and instead pointed out that retreat to a shelter was not a good idea at all. I made this decision with a high degree of confidence because, at the time, I was in a position affording some insight in the possibilities of war. In this case, I was correct. In another case, I was spiritually inspired to do something which I did not believe was proper. I decided not to do what was suggested. What occurred over time, however, was a sequence of events which I could not foresee. As these unfolded, I realized that I should have followed the spiritual guidance. In both cases, I did what I thought was correct at the time. In the first case I was right. In the second, I was wrong.”

Mark asks, "Have you drawn any conclusions from this?"

Martin thinks for a moment and says, "I guess it has been twofold. First, I need to cultivate my attunement with my real self and pray daily to have my will better aligned with the will of God. I believe the will of my real self and the will of God are fairly closely aligned. I have both free will and an inner quality. My higher mind can help guide my free will toward more correct decisions. Secondly, I have decided that, if I do receive clear spiritual guidance, I probably should follow that guidance in most circumstances. It's kind of like the common advice to always trust your instincts. I know in my heart that I need to listen to spiritual guidance when it is offered. In short, I believe the combination of working to become more of my real self, plus being willing to listen to higher guidance if and when it comes, are probably my best choices."

Morya nods and comments, "That sounds reasonable. And don't forget, even the greatest among humanity have often asked for guidance from those more spiritually advanced than themselves. None of us are completely self-sufficient; none are truly independent; we all need help climbing the ladder of life."

Mark adds, "Yes, that is true. I myself learned this lesson when my ego had been battered by repeated failures. It was only when I learned the limits of egotism and independence that the masters helped me to crawl out of the hole which I had dug for myself. Even today, I still sometimes struggle with decisions that I want to make versus the guidance the masters give me. I believe I have learned to make better choices on my own, but I am mindful always to keep my ears open in case some master wants to correct my course. And I have to tell you in all honesty that those course-correcting instructions have not been few in number."

Everyone laughs and Morya says, “I remember, my friend, some of those episodes. As I recall, you were always someone who could rise and fall in consciousness like an elevator. Gradually, however, I can attest to you spending more time on the higher floors than you did in the past.”

Mark says, “Thank you, Morya. You have my enduring gratitude for the patience and kindness you have shown me over the years. Now, we both have to work on our young colleague here, who seems to be making our mistakes – many times over – on his own path forward.”

Morya adds, “And a frustrating and thankless job it has been at times, I must say.”

Martin, acknowledging both the joke as well as the truth, replies, “Yes, I know I am a hard case sometimes. But that is because I am hungry for dinner. Can’t you speed up a little, Mark?” Mark shortly thereafter turned right onto Highway 62 and soon they were on the outskirts of Ouray.

Having decided to have steak that night, Mark parked near the Outlaw Restaurant and the three friends settled into seats at a wall-side table where they ordered a fine dinner in celebration of a good day’s journey.

### [Balancing Free Will and Spiritual Guidance](#)

Later that evening, the men gathered around the fireplace in their rented house and traded stories in a relaxed atmosphere with a cup of warm, strongly spiced yogi tea in hand. After a bit, Morya says in a more serious tone, “Martin, I have been thinking about your comments today in regards to following one’s own or a spiritual teacher’s guidance. I think you are right in noting that humanity in general face a two-pronged dilemma. First, they must master the proper use of free will. That is the challenge and opportunity afforded all of mankind as individual souls. Second, in order to transcend the baser human consciousness, almost all individuals require some spiritual assistance. Usually this comes in the form of a great teacher, such as Jesus or the

Buddha or many others, who explain the relationship of things spiritual and material. These explanations are often in the form of allegories, parables, physical demonstrations by the teachers, and sometimes highly logical argument. The teacher chooses the method of his or her instruction, but the message is very similar because it is a simple truth: God and man have a special relationship; men and women need to rekindle the closeness of that relationship; every individual soul is precious to God; and every person has an inner quality, which – when discovered and expressed – brings them into harmony with God and nature. It is in expressing one’s inner quality that one becomes the real self. And, of course, we should always keep in mind that the words we are using – inner quality, real self, the soul, and so on – are only expressions of the real thing. Countless other terms have been used through the ages to describe the same concepts.”

He sips his tea, and continues: “For people to become their real self requires an act of free will determination to do so. Theoretically, it is easy to become the real self because a person’s real identity is written into his or her spiritual DNA. Yet, in practice, it seems hard for individuals to choose to become their real self because of their lack of understanding and because of their bad habits. Spiritual masters can help one gain greater understanding, but individuals themselves must work hard to overcome the bad habits. It takes time for the soul to evolve from a childlike consciousness of innocence to a consciousness of self-mastery over thoughts, feelings, and actions. But, all along, the soul is in the process of becoming the real self. For human beings, becoming the real self is a process of understanding and committing to the expression of one’s highest potential in an ever-expanding cycle of self-fulfillment. Becoming one’s real self is fulfilling God’s will for the individual. And, collectively, mankind’s expression of their real selves is fulfilling the will of God for humanity as a whole.”

Both Mark and Martin reflect on Morya's observation. After watching the flames flicker in the fireplace for a while and not quite knowing what to add, they thank Morya and quietly retire to their rooms. Morya sits a few minutes longer, meditating on the flow of God's will from its Source through multiple layers of consciousness to the mind of man and other creatures. He marvels at the beauty of how life is so interconnected, intones a mantra of thanksgiving for opportunities provided, and goes to bed.

### Day Five: Ouray and Yankee Boy Basin

#### Dimensions of Reality

Over breakfast the next day, Martin asked Morya, seeming out of the blue, about the 'diamond shining mind of God' that he had heard someone refer to.

Morya finished spreading some jam on his toast, thoughtfully took a bite, and replies: "The diamond shining mind of God is a symbol – actually, a reality in certain dimensions – of the purity and strength of God's will. God's will is all powerful and all encompassing. The diamond shining mind of God holds a vision of the potential of what life could achieve during this singular opportunity for self-expression. You see, God is not standing still. God grows as His creation grows. You might say that God grows through His creation. But God also filters the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. Not all use of energy is proper. God only harvests the good and He discards the rest. Misused energy is repolarized or transmuted, a process people can use themselves through certain spiritual techniques to free their minds and emotions from mistakes of the past. Thus, the diamond shining mind of God represents the focused will of the Creator, the propelling force behind the unfolding of the creation in all of its expressions."

Martin, not entirely understanding, then asks, "Do we know how many dimensions there actually are?"

Morya replies, “I personally do not know. Maybe there is not a finite number. Normally, we consider this planet to be bounded by three dimensions, four if you count time. But, from what the ancients have told us, there are individuals who can use their consciousness to explore several other dimensions, even here on earth. The existence of multi-dimensions in the universe is something quantum physics is exploring.”

Mark adds, “I explain this to my students in terms of squids and humans.” Martin and Morya smile broadly. “Squids are intelligent animals but they do not know a thing about Shakespeare. Humans are intelligent but they don’t know a thing about changing their skin color to match their surroundings. The idea is that all creatures, to some extent, live in their own dimensions. They sense different things and understand a different facet of the universe.”

Martin then asks, “But what squids and humans are doing is perceiving and interacting with reality in different ways. To me, dimensions have something to do with reality itself, rather than with how reality is interacted with.”

Mark shrugs his shoulders, “Who is to say if the squid and human see the same reality but in different ways, or a different reality altogether. I tend to think it is the latter.”

Martin pours himself another cup of coffee, and refills the hot water in Mark and Morya’s breakfast tea. Martin then says, “I asked those questions in the context of becoming the real self. It seems, from my limited experience, that as I gradually mold my outer habits and consciousness to align with my inner quality, that my perceptions of reality change a bit. For example, I can sense the inner quality of others. I can process information faster. I can work with a broader perspective of interdependent factors. I know that much of this has to do with gaining

greater use of my higher mind, but it seems that as you become more of your real self, you in fact expand the dimensions in which you function – at least cognitively.”

Mark nods and replies, “Yes, that is what happens. And it is not always your decision, nor pleasant. For example, I have been called a clairvoyant by some. But in truth, that is a gift that is sometimes a burden to me. On various planes of existence parallel to our own – the astral, for example – there are some pretty awful things that I would prefer not to see. On the other hand, the ability to see beyond the physical affords me the opportunity to see magnificent beings of light. The beauty of an angel is unbelievable. Many of these experiences are truly humbling, because you realize just how limited are your own capabilities. There are many dimensions that exist all around us. As we develop our real self, the borders between these dimensions are thinned somewhat. So I think that part of becoming one’s real self is acquiring a greater appreciation and understanding of the multidimensional universe in which we live. Of course, as long as we are in our physical bodies, we have our own activities to attend to.” He raises his eyebrows and sips his tea as if to emphasize the point.

Morya comments, “Mastery of free will – that is the challenge and the opportunity of mankind. Unfortunately, the number of graduates from the schoolroom of earth is somewhat smaller than it could be. If people would follow the will of God and simply become their real self, it would be so much easier.”

After a moment, Martin says, “Well, today is our last full day and we have to return the Jeep by 5:00 this afternoon. How about we scout around a bit and maybe take a short side trip or two before the day is over. Are you guys up for a picnic in the mountains? It’s clearing and looks like a bright, sunny day.”

Mark and Morya wholeheartedly agree. Everyone clears the dishes and prepares sandwiches and snacks for the picnic.

As everyone loaded into the Jeep, Martin explained that he would first be driving over to see the Box Canyon Falls just south of town, and then go out the nearby Camp Bird Road to the Yankee Boy Basin at the foot of Mount Sneffels. He had heard it should be a beautiful trip this time of year and not too difficult a drive.

After parking near the Falls, the three friends walked a short distance to Canyon Creek and were amazed by the powerful rush of the river down the extremely steep and narrow channel cut deep into the rocks. Everything was slippery because of the mist, and Martin caught Mark by the elbow as he nearly fell when stepping on a moss-covered rock. After about 30 minutes of looking down the crevice and marveling at the flow of water, they went back to the Jeep and drove out County Road 361 to the large mine tailings near Camp Bird. There, they turned right up County Road 26 to the tailings at Sneffels. As they moved up the mountain, the road became progressively more rough and steep. Martin was inclined to continue as far as he could, but he could tell that Mark and Morya were ready for a break, so they stopped at a nice parking area surrounded by wildflowers and found a place to set out their picnic. The sun was intense at this altitude, so everyone wore a hat and long sleeved shirt, despite the comfortable temperature at mid-day. The sky was incredibly blue and the clouds fantastically white, although they could hear rumbling of thunder somewhere up on the peaks. The surrounding mountains were enormous, and they half expected a bear to come join their picnic. They only saw some inquisitive ground squirrels, however, along with a few hawks riding the uplifts as they surveyed their kingdom.

After lunch, the men commented on how wonderful the trip had been and Mark and Morya expressed appreciation for Martin's driving them around in the Jeep, something they said they would never do on their own. Martin replied that he very much enjoyed these vacations and hoped they would continue in the future.

### [Karma and Reincarnation](#)

Mark then says to Morya, "You said you wanted to talk about finding the real self on this trip.

Do you think we have discussed the subject sufficiently for this go-around?"

Morya, watching a hawk dive down to more closely inspect some bushes several hundred yards away, replies: "Yes, and no. I think we have talked about what the real self is, but I feel more could be said about how the existence of the real self can be communicated to others. Each of us discovered our real self in part because of painful experiences in our lives. I often wonder if that is the only way mankind can become aware of their more spiritual side."

Mark comments, "I have often thought about that myself, and I am sure the great teachers of the past pondered that question, too. It seems peculiar in one way: the will of God, the existence of the inner quality, the incredible potential of each person when they become their real self – all of these things are both good and natural for men to realize. Yet, in so many cases, people discover their inner quality and real self only after experiencing some personal crisis. And only after, sadly enough, they have caused considerable harm to others, including those they love. These unfortunate events set into motion ripples of karma that can take a long, long time to heal. That is why I personally believe that it is only through the mercy of God that an individual is finally able to break the cycle of negative karma and have the freedom to discover and become the real self."

Martin, who has been listening carefully, nods his agreement. "You know, all of my professional career has been devoted to trying to do good things in public service. I have at the same time, too

often to count, failed to act appropriately in my private life. I thought that if I strived to do good things in my public life, my private life would be forgiven and overlooked. But it did not work out that way. Eventually, and in completely unexpected ways, my private misdeeds came back to me in circumstances that detrimentally affected my public career. When I was in the midst of these unsettling events, I would often think that I was being punished for things I did not do. However, after much reflection, I concluded that no good or bad deed goes without recompense. The return of karma is usually not immediate, however. What is that saying from the ancient Greeks: ‘the mills of the Gods grind slowly but they grind exceedingly fine’? I believe that observation is true.”

Mark says, “I find it important to look at karma in terms of the soul’s evolution. A person can be an absolute tyrant in one lifetime and come back as a humble priest in another. We all learn from our experiences, and it is the collective wisdom that we gain that enables us to finally understand that the purpose in life is to become our real self.”

Morya says, “Martin makes a good point, I thought, in recounting how his good intentions on a social level were in some ways undermined by mistakes in his personal life. I have seen this countless times, and our news media thrives on stories of the rich and famous being humiliated by some hidden vice. In truth, this is one of the most difficult characteristics of mankind which the spiritual brotherhood has to deal with. Because individuals do not know their inner potential, they tend to misuse the opportunity and resources given them, even though they sense their internal goodness.”

He drinks some water, looks up at the towering peaks, and continues. “Most, if not all of humanity, are good in their hearts. You see this repeatedly in life. At the same time, most of humanity are also so-called sinners in some way or another. This morally good and morally bad

combination exists in most people's character. Their inner quality is good. Their real self is good. Their soul has good intentions. But their actual behavior is not always up to these higher standards. Why is this?"

### Personal Consciousness

Mark and Martin wait for Morya to continue. Morya then says, "I believe the answer lies in one's own consciousness. The individual must refine his or her own consciousness. No one can do this for them, at least not on a permanent basis. True, you can be inspired by the presence of some great spiritual master. But, when you are alone, your consciousness can drift to where it was before. Something has to happen to the individual to make him or her conclude that they must change their way of looking at things and their ways of behavior. What this catalyst for personal change is varies greatly from person to person. It often seems to come from a personal crisis. But it can come through more gentle ways, such as when students are guided by wise teachers through the various stages of consciousness maturation. As is said, the law always prefers the gentler way. However, the gentler way doesn't always work with people. I have known several cases when an individual's stubbornness has blinded him to the bountiful assistance being offered by spiritual teachers. Eventually, most of those individuals had to leave the shelter of the ashram to learn their lessons outside the retreat of the brotherhood."

Martin shifts a bit uneasily, as Morya continues, "I think there are two basic paths for the individual who wishes to become his real self. The first is to master one's desires, so that the desire for sexual gratification, the desire for power, the desire for wealth, the desire for recognition, and so forth, does not become so strong as to overwhelm one's sense of propriety. We are human beings, so having desires is natural. But to have desires control our lives and to lead us into situations that undermine our good side is not in one's long-term interests. We must,

therefore, overcome insatiable and inappropriate desire in order to become our real self. That is one way.

“The other way is to love God so much that one allows the emanations of God’s will, love, and wisdom to permeate every part of one’s body and consciousness. Eventually, the flow of God’s energy – which often is transmitted through a master or spiritual teacher – purifies the individual sufficiently to allow that individual to experience the real self and begin expressing their inner quality.

“Both of these approaches work, and entire religions have been based on these paths. There are other techniques as well. It matters not which path one takes, as long as one reaches the goal: becoming one’s real self. One always hopes, however, that in choosing one’s path, one does not inadvertently cause harm to others. Our personal path to becoming the real self should not place obstacles in the way of other souls moving through life.”

Martin comments, “It sounds a lot like Buddhism.”

Mark replies, “Actually, what Morya is saying is a familiar theme in spiritual teachings around the world. What people seem to forget is that the teacher and the teaching are but vehicles intended to carry their followers to the realization of their own divine potential. Salvation does not solely come through a single religious figure or spiritual text. Salvation comes from self-realization and self-fulfillment – becoming one’s real self. We are all sons and daughters of God, children of the Most High. How could it be otherwise, since God is the God of the Universe?”

Martin ponders this a while, then says, “I think what you and Morya are saying makes sense. I certainly agree with becoming my real self. That goal parallels my own experience in discovering and trying to express my inner quality. However, I am a human being. I do have

desires, and I like living on earth. What I want is not to escape from the planet in order to live on some spiritual plane of existence, but rather to integrate spirit and matter here on earth to become my real self in the here and now. Do you think that is possible?”

Morya answers, “Yes, that is a goal toward which people can strive. However, one must be practical. Let me ask you, Martin: you work in a consulting company serving the Federal Government. How successful have you been in changing the government, or even your company, into something more noble, honest, and beneficial to mankind?”

Martin smiles and says, “Not very.”

Morya continues, “There is a lesson here. We can and should improve ourselves, become our real self. However, none of us have the right – or the power for that matter – to change others or large social institutions. That is what free will is all about: individuals determining what they wish to become. Every world teacher, every master, even God Himself, would like the earth and its populations to become integrated in spirit and matter. But it has rarely occurred in the history of this planet, although many souls have tried and millions of good people have done their best to leave the world a better place than they found it. So, Martin, while your desire for spiritual and material integration may be good, you need also to be somewhat practical in your aspirations.”

Martin nods, and Morya goes on, “We occupy a certain place in the spectrum of life. We are not angels. We are human beings. And the tests we face as human beings are unique to ourselves. All we can do is master our own consciousness in the environment in which we live. Our job is not to determine the best government for creatures that may be living on Jupiter or Mars. Our job is not to preach to lifeforms that may exist on the other side of the galaxy. We have our own job to do right here and now, where we are at present. If we can take what we have been given – our

inner qualities and the assistance given us by Jesus and other great teachers – and work to become our real self, in the situation and circumstances we find ourselves in, then that is sufficient. Nothing more is expected of us.”

Morya thinks for a moment and then adds, “No matter how you look at it, the initial and most important first step is to gain an understanding of who and what we really are. We are souls evolving on this planet as human beings. Our souls are connected to God – or to nature as some would prefer to say – by an inner quality that is infinite in its potential goodness. Our consciousness is our mechanism for functioning in whatever body or environment we find ourselves in. Here on earth, our task is to focus our consciousness on our inner quality and to become our real self as human beings. Once that is achieved, then other opportunities will no doubt open.”

The men were quiet, enjoying the freshness of the air and the huge expanse of the basin and surrounding mountains. Martin wondered aloud how it was for the original explorers walking through this area, feeling like small pebbles at the base of these majestic peaks. After a while, the friends packed up their picnic supplies, got into the Jeep, and headed back to Ouray.

## Chapter 5: Pursuing the Goal of Integration

The next year, Martin contacted Morya and Mark to invite them and their wives to his and Marcella's new home near Annapolis, Maryland. He suggested that, if convenient for them, they come out in early summer rather than the hot and humid months of late July and August. After consulting with Helen and Elizabeth, Morya and Mark agreed that the third week in June would be ideal. A date was set, and Martin promised to meet them at Baltimore International Airport at the United Airlines baggage claim area.

On the appointed day, Martin picked up his friends in Marcella's van and they drove out to their newly constructed home on Broad Creek, just off Riva Road before it crossed the South River. The home was beautifully situated, and Marcella proudly showed it off with a guided tour of the four-bedroom, two-story brick house set among trees on a bluff overlooking the creek. Martin was especially keen to point out the detached garage, separate work shop, and small dock down by the water. He didn't have a boat yet, he explained half apologetically, but would soon try to get one.

After the brief tour, Mark and Morya and their wives retired to their respective guest rooms to unpack and freshen up before dinner at 7:00. Sitting around a large English dining table, the friends toasted each other with chilled Chardonnay, and then toasted Marcella again for a delicious dinner of local rockfish, fresh corn on the cob, and Indian okra. Strawberry cheesecake and coffee topped everything off perfectly.

As Martin did the dishes, the others retreated to the living room to sip wine and catch up on their families' activities. The ladies were especially engaged in the conversation, not having seen each other since their brief vacation in Arizona two years previously. Mark and Morya listened and

contributed at times, while taking turns to look over the large collection of books Martin had placed on shelves along two of the living room walls.

When Martin joined the group about a half-hour later, Morya asked how they came about selecting this house, and Marcella told them about the adventures (and misadventures) they had with the realtor and the protracted negotiations with the contractor to get everything just right. Everyone shared similar experiences, concluding that buying a house was one of life's greater challenges. By then, it was nearly 11:00 in the evening and a few yawns were beginning to appear in between the laughter and smiles. Martin suggested they all turn in for a good night's sleep, and Marcella promised to have breakfast ready at 9:00 the next morning. Everyone said good night and retired for the evening.

#### Day One: Crabbing

In the morning, everyone headed to the kitchen to grab a cup of coffee or tea and to see if they could help Marcella with breakfast. Finding they were more in the way than helpful, the men went out to the front porch to sit in the sun and discuss their day's plans. Martin thought it would be interesting to go crabbing, something that Mark and Morya never had done. Martin said one of the best spots was less than a half-mile away, across the South River Bridge down Riva Road. It sounded good, so they sat back in their chairs and listened to the birds and watched the squirrels chase each other in the tall oak trees along the driveway.

After breakfast, Martin asked the ladies whether they would like to go crabbing that morning. Marcella thanked him for the invitation, but said they had planned to go downtown and shop around the historic district to see what they might find of interest. Everyone seemed to like these

separate plans, and they agreed to meet back at the house in the late afternoon. Within the hour, the ladies left in the van to go shopping and the men got into Martin's pickup to go crabbing.

Martin stopped at a small grocery store to pick up a dozen chicken necks and a ball of string, and then at a nearby bait shop to get non-resident crabbing licenses for Mark and Morya, along with a few extra fishing weights. In the truck, he already had a long-handled fish net and a cooler filled with ice for the crabs, along with some bottled water and crackers for a snack. All prepared, he drove the few minutes to a parking lot near the bridge. They got out, carried their supplies under the bridge, and set up on the concrete embankment on the other side where Martin said the crabs were best caught on the incoming tide.

The timing seemed excellent, so Martin hurried with cutting lengths of twin and tying on each a chicken neck and a small weight. He tossed the baited lines out about ten feet into the water and secured them to nails previously driven into the wooden decking. Morya and Mark watched, and Mark asked after the last line was attached, "Now what?" Martin just smiled, opened a bottle of water, and sat in one of the folding chairs he had brought from the house. "Now we just wait and watch the lines. If you see one of them start to straighten out, that means a crab has latched onto the bait and is pulling it into deeper water to eat. When that happens, I'll show you how to bring them in."

As Mark and Martin talked about the colonial history of the area, Morya walked along the embankment to peer into the water. He exclaimed at one point, "Hey, I just saw a large fish swim by!" Martin replies, "Yes, there are lots of fish out there. If you look across the water, you can see them jump once in a while to catch a smaller fish." Morya came back and sat down with them to continue watching the lines. Mark retrieved two bottles of water and passed one to Morya.

There was no immediate activity, so Mark asked Martin what he had been up to recently in his job. Martin explained that recent federal budget cuts had made it difficult for contractors but that his work seemed secure, at least for the time being. Mark then talked about his new Center for the Study of Human Excellence and how, the older he got and the younger the students seemed to be, the more challenging it became to connect with them in terms they could understand. Morya commented that, in his lectures, he always started with something everyone was familiar with: themselves.

Martin says, "Oh, that's interesting." But before he could pursue the issue, he pointed to two lines being pulled straight into the river. "Now watch this," he says as he stands. He carefully lifts the line and begins to slowly pull it in. He explains, "The crabs don't like to let go of their meal, but they will if they feel threatened. So the key is to pull slowly so they hang on. If you are careful, you can pull them up close to the surface where we are standing. Then, we use that net over there to scoop them up. If they are larger than your hand span, that's a keeper and into the cooler it goes. If it is smaller, just toss it back in the river to grow up for next year."

Mark and Morya listened attentively and then smiled broadly when Martin scooped one up that seemed big enough for the cooler. Both men then reached for stretching lines themselves and began the slow, hand over hand, process of gradually bringing in the line. They lost more than a few crabs before getting the feel of it, but then, before long, all three men were hauling crabs in, helping each other with the netting. Most were too small, but several large blue crabs were caught and put on ice. On one occasion, a feisty one got out of the cooler and scrambled across the embankment to get to the water. Mark managed to capture it with the net and Morya almost got pinched as he tried to free the crab from the webbing and drop it back into the cooler. Martin cautioned his friends to be careful because those pinchers hurt and could draw blood. After more

than an hour on the embankment, they had 15 good-sized crabs and were getting a little tired running back and forth between the lines.

### Introducing Students to the Real Self

As they sat down to rest for a moment, Martin asks Morya, “How do you introduce the students to themselves in your lectures?”

Morya takes a long drink from his bottled water, and says, “I start out by showing them a slide that illustrates the individual soul in three levels of consciousness: the human, the divine self, and a middle figure some call the Christ Self. I use this diagram to explain the relationship between the outer human awareness and the reality of the individual as a part of God.”

Pausing to watch a jet ski skip across the water, he continues, “These levels of human consciousness are very similar to what we have discussed over the years: the human self, the soul, and the real self. Many teachers use this trilogy to explain how the soul embodies in human form in its quest to become the real self. The explanations are as old as when the psalmist asked: ‘what is man that Thou art mindful of him?’ It’s a universal question, since most individuals sense their internal goodness and want to know from whence it came. Anyway, that is where I start and then I let the Holy Spirit guide me in the rest of the presentation.”

Mark says, “I have always admired the way you explain things, Morya. It’s like you are sitting on a mountaintop and describing the vistas that you see. Each view is different; each path to the summit has its own challenges; but all routes eventually lead to the top where you are sitting.”

Morya laughs and replies, “It’s all a matter of perspective. I do, however, caution my students to be careful on the trek up the mountain.”

Martin observes, “What is it that Churchill said: ‘the only thing we have to fear is fear itself?’”

Morya says, “Fear is a factor, and so is trust. As a close friend once said, it is the sense of struggle that makes the struggle. Trust, or lack thereof, are keys to how one looks at life as a struggle or opportunity. But the main point is that ascending to the summit of consciousness requires commitment and effort. There are many paths upward, and most have been well trodden and even documented by now. I also remind my students that the journey is not a solitary one. Guides can be found along the way to assist you. For a human being to become his or her real self is a natural process. It is our nature to ascend the ladder of our own consciousness. To become our real self. As you would say, Martin, this instinct for self-realization is built into the human system.”

#### Importance of Trust

Mark asks, “I’m intrigued by this issue of trust. Many of my students confess they have a problem trusting other people, even their teachers who have nothing in mind but to help them understand themselves a little better.”

Martin adds, “Yes, trust is a big issue. In my work, complete trust is a rare commodity. In a spiritual sense, it would seem self-evident that one should trust God, but there remains a lingering conviction that no human being should ever be completely trusted.”

Mark comments, “From my experience, I have found there is a vicious cycle here: one does not trust others, because one does not trust oneself. One does not trust oneself, because one does not trust others.”

Morya gestures towards a small sailboat being pushed steadily along by the breeze, then says, “Trust is an interesting issue in the context of spiritual development. Think about it. In order for the soul to surrender its all to God, the soul has to trust God. The very act of surrendering to God

requires the soul to take a giant leap of faith. The integration of man's free will with the will of God requires one to trust in God.”

He drinks some water and continues, “I suppose the final merging of the soul with the Creator is the greatest integration of all: the point where the individualization of God once again becomes one with God. The point at which the creation returns to the Creator. In more immediate terms, a human being cannot become his or her real self unless the person first trusts himself. A person who distrusts himself cannot become his real self.”

Martin objects, “But, Morya, there is nothing that would indicate that complete trust is a good thing. Even in the animal kingdom, there is no trust. If you observe animals, there is always a wariness of the intentions of others. And, for people, who can you completely trust? We all want to trust someone, but how often has that trust been misplaced? Not because people are necessarily bad, but because people are imperfect by their nature. Imperfect people cannot be perfectly trusted. It is as simple as that.

He pauses, then say, “Perhaps I have overstated this. Let me rephrase: Because mankind is imperfect, he cannot be trusted completely. However, all men merit some trust, depending on the circumstances. Hence, trust between people ought to be on a sliding scale, with trust being bestowed on each individual depending on the person's character as well as the situation in which trust is being considered. I think that would cover it.”

Mark comments, “But the imperfection of man is something the individual is constantly striving to overcome. The inability to trust God is one of those imperfections. Just as we need to control our anger, we need to overcome our inability to trust God.”

Martin replies, "I understand what you are saying. But distrust is woven into our DNA as part of the instinct to survive. To survive, all lifeforms need to be distrustful to some extent. Experience teaches us that a perfectly trusting person is going to get hurt, just like a perfectly trusting animal is bound to be harmed by something in nature. When I worked on the Hill, I observed that the Congressmen who were the best people, the nicest people, the people we would immediately recognize as being truly good, almost never succeeded in office or won reelection."

Mark says, "What that says to me is that politics is not always the best profession for one who is seeking to advance himself spiritually. On the other hand, I can respect someone who, having won an office in government, refuses to compromise their higher nature simply to retain their position of power. That person, in my view, is a true leader, even if his fellowmen are unable to recognize it."

Martin starts to argue, but Morya speaks first, "Let's look at this from a slightly different perspective. In the spiritual world of saints, angels, and representatives of God, there is no such thing as distrusting God. There is no such thing as distrusting other spiritual beings serving God's will. Why is there trust in these spiritual planes but distrust in man's world?"

Hearing no response, he continues. "The difference between a spiritual being such as Jesus and a human being is that the former is completely integrated with the will of God, whereas the latter is still trying to balance God's will and human will in his own mind. You cannot be a spiritual being, completely trusting God, as long as you hold on to the lesser image of yourself. On the other hand, surrendering human will is almost impossible until you recognize yourself as a child of God. There is a transformative process that occurs when an individual recognizes his real self and then strives with his free will to gradually become that real self in outer expression. In this striving, the individual begins to understand that the will of his real self is nearly identical with

the will of God. It is God's will that mankind come to understand and reflect their real selves. There is, however, a difference between wanting to be one's real self, and becoming one's real self, just as there is a difference between a child wanting to grow up and a child who actually becomes a mature adult. There are cycles of time and development of character that have to occur before an individual can become his or her real or true self.

“What is important is that we want to become our real self and try daily to move in that direction. Sometimes our steps will make us more kind to our spouses and children. Sometimes our steps will require that we be more diligent in our workplace. Sometimes our steps will take us to the feet of the master. Sometimes our steps will ask us to sacrifice something for others. These are all steps on the path.”

He looks out across the river in reflection, then says, “In this process of becoming our real self, we will naturally face the dilemma of whom to trust. To say you trust somebody, even God, is not to truly trust them. To trust someone you must first be able to trust yourself. And to trust yourself, you have to know your inner quality and to be aware of your real self – as a goal toward which you are striving. None of us can completely trust our human self to always do the right thing. But all of us can completely trust our true self. As you recognize your inner quality and sense its potential, as you begin to understand that you can move toward becoming your real self, then your trust in yourself begins to grow and you find that your trust in God grows as well.

“At some point in the evolution of your consciousness, you realize that your trust in God is absolute. Faith in God and trust in God are nearly identical at this point. This trust or faith opens one's consciousness to streams of blessing from On High, because there is increasing alignment between what the person wants for himself and what God wants for the person. This alignment of wills – man's will and God's will – is the mechanism through which a human being can

eventually become a spiritual being. This is how the evolution of souls takes place. And the role of trust is essential to the completion of that evolution. At our stage of human evolution, an individual does not need to be perfect. However, the individual needs to know the existence of his real self and to trust his desire to become his real self. When that desire is firmly anchored in the individual's consciousness, then the individual can trust himself and he can trust God. The link between heaven and earth is thereby established, and much can be done to integrate the two dimensions of life.”

### Forgiving Oneself

After a moment, Martin says, “You know, having trust in God and in oneself are important keys to making the connection between man and his Creator. However, before you can fully trust yourself, you must first be able to forgive yourself. It is often our lapses in life that stand in the way of our realizing our full potential as a son or daughter of God. How can we be friends with God or with the saints if we cannot look them in the eye and feel, not equal in terms of their achievements, but equal in terms of our worthiness?”

Mark answers, “That, my friend, is a key issue on the path of becoming one's true self. That is why one of the major steps on the path of spiritual initiation is the purification of the cause, effect, record, and memory of all of our misuse of free will. Our souls must be unburdened from the weight of our mistakes in the past, else our souls cannot – like Gautama – touch the earth and be found to have the right to ascend to higher levels of consciousness.”

Martin replies, “Mark, I know intuitively that what you are saying is correct. But it is difficult for me to see how this transmutation occurs in reality.”

Morya contributes, “This is where the great mercy and forgiveness of God comes into play. The Catholic Church has a ritual of confessing sins and thereby seeking forgiveness. This reflects a

larger spiritual process whereby God and God's Representatives – the hierarchy of heaven, if you will – use their spiritual powers to purify the misqualified energy mankind has used in their various misdeeds. It is possible for a person to balance all of his or her karma through service, sacrifice, or spiritual rituals. But most people have a lot of accumulated negative karma built up from many lifetimes on this planet. Most of us need God's help to transmute enough of this negative karma so as to be able to move on in our spiritual development. This help can be gained if the person desires to be purified of this negative energy, if the person asks for heaven's intervention in their life, and if the great laws of karmic justice allow for such intervention at that stage of the person's life. All of these factors need to align for mercy and forgiveness to be given to the individual. However, sometimes God or the heavenly hosts make an exception and reach out to render aid even when the person may not fully have warranted it. God is mysterious in His ways.”

Martin observes, “For me, it seems appropriate that a person balance his own karma, since he or she made the mistakes in the first place.”

Morya smiles and says, “You can say that and it may be true. But the lessons of life can indeed be humbling and it is best for mankind not to close the door to heaven's aid if it is offered.”

Mark adds, “And we can also observe that, sometimes, the human will refuse the aid offered by heaven because of the lesser ego. The self-love of the lesser human consciousness causes it to prefer a state of suffering to an act of surrendering to the will of God. Accepting the gift of mercy and forgiveness from God can be a humbling experience to a big human ego, even while it can also be amazingly uplifting.”

The men sit for a while, enjoying the hot sun and cool breeze off the water. The gulls were gliding close overhead to see if any scraps could be found. For fun, Martin tosses a cracker up into the air, and a gull sweeps down to catch it before it hits the ground.

Mark laughs. “Everything’s got to eat. Where should we go for lunch?”

Martin motions toward the road alongside them. “There is a pretty good restaurant just across the road, near where we parked. Let’s pack up and check out their menu.”

Martin untied the lines and tossed the remaining chicken necks into the water, while his two companions collected the ice chest and chairs and walked under the bridge to the parking lot. After putting things away in the truck and securing the cooler to prevent any crabs from escaping, the three friends went over to Mike’s Crab House and enjoyed a sandwich and a cup of clam chowder at a table looking out at the river. About a half-hour later, they went back to the house, unpacked, made sure the crabs were cool and secure, and settled on the back porch to sit in the shade. Their wives returned a short time later, each with one or two shopping bags, which they opened for their husbands with excited explanations of how the purchases were an exceptional value and unique besides.

Hearing from Marcella that she planned on having a cook-out for dinner that evening, Martin went to the kitchen around 5:30 to prepare the crabs. When they were finished, he laid them out on newspapers on the back yard picnic table and invited his guests to come out and enjoy. Martin spent a few minutes showing them how to use the crab utensils, but everyone got the hang of it pretty quickly.

While their friends were enjoying the appetizer, Martin helped his wife prepare some rib eye steaks for grilling. Soon, the guests had finished with the crabs and Mark and Morya had

removed the newspapers and replaced them with a tablecloth. Marcella brought out the food, while Helen and Elizabeth set the table. Everyone took their places with a glass of ice tea as Martin put down a tray of steaks and invited his guests to choose their own.

The friends ate leisurely, with much conversation on the day's activities while admiring the beautiful view of Broad Creek through the trees in late June. For dessert, Marcella brought out some fresh brownies and coffee. Afterwards, the men helped clear the table and Martin put the dishes into the dishwasher before joining the others in the living room.

### Levels of Consciousness and Integration

When Martin sat down, Elizabeth said to him, "Thank you and your dear wife for a delightful meal. I have never eaten so much – or so well – in my life." Everyone nods at this and the men were especially appreciative of Marcella in their compliments. Elizabeth then says, "My husband told me that you were interested in Morya's approach to the real self in his lectures." Looking at Morya, she asks, "Can you tell us what your experience has been with your audience?"

Morya answers, "There are always a few souls who seem to understand exactly what I am saying. Most people, however, seem to be listening to further their understanding of themselves. I almost never hear protests of my message. Perhaps it has to do with my black beard."

Everyone laughs, and Elizabeth continues. "The reason I am interested in their reaction is because Mark and I sometimes lecture on similar subjects. We find it fairly easy to explain the different levels of human consciousness, but more difficult to explain their interaction in the same human being. How do you present the integration of consciousness?"

Morya replies, "That can be a subtle point to convey. How it is that a human being, with our many flaws, can in fact be a son or daughter of God is inconceivable to many. It takes a

paradigm shift in one's perception, seeing the present as but one moment in an infinitely long cycle of the soul's evolution and self-realization."

Martin adds, "I think you are saying, Morya, that our present existence as a human being is but a temporary phase of our existence as a soul. The soul, in reality, is a seed of God's own consciousness. Our goal in life, therefore, should be to identify with and to express as much as possible the fruition of that seed. In other words, to maximize our God-given potential. Is that pretty much correct?"

Morya responds, "Yes, that is fairly close to what I am saying. Our real self is an individualization of an aspect of God. You identify this with the inner quality of honor and integrity. Others identify this with God's will, wisdom, love, mercy, healing, opportunity, perfection, and so on. God is all of these things and much more. God is the core of all existence. God expands the universe not only by the expansion of matter and energy, time and space, but also by the material and spiritual evolution of life. The scale of God is quite beyond human comprehension. But what is perhaps most important from a human perspective is that happiness and self-fulfillment can only occur when the individual aligns his will with the will of God."

Mark comments, "It appears to me that the issue is this: How does mankind integrate all aspects of his consciousness? Martin, here, expressed on our trip out to Ouray last year a desire to become integrated while in human embodiment. To bring heaven to earth, so to speak. Morya and I expressed the view that, while this may be theoretically possible, it is easier and more practical to elevate the human to the divine: to bring earth to heaven. Those are two different approaches, but I am not sure, in the end, whether there is much of a difference."

Helen asks, "And what exactly is that end, in your view?"

Mark answers, “As I understand it – and I would ask Morya to correct me if I am wrong – the end result is the transmutation of the mistakes and baser consciousness of a human being so that he or she may become, permanently, a spiritual being.”

Mark looks over to Morya for assistance, and Morya takes up the explanation. “Think of it this way: the complete mastery of some quality of God – take honor and integrity, for example – is a pathway for the individual to become increasingly integrated with the Godhead. You need to think multi-dimensionally here. Suppose we have an enormous multi-layered sphere. The outer layers are where we are at present. As we become more of our real self, we move closer to the center where the elements of God are more concentrated. At the outer layer, we are highly individualized. At the inner-most layer, our consciousness merges within the unity of God. We progressively move, in a spiritual sense, from being completely independent and separate in consciousness, to a point of complete oneness with all of life. On earth, we may have glimpses of oneness with God and all of life in our deepest meditation, but the permanence of oneness can only occur after we transition from this plane of existence into higher levels of spiritual existence. Life on earth is not the end point of the human soul; nor is it the beginning. It is somewhere in the middle, at a point of transition from one plane of existence to another.”

#### [Spiritual Integration and Worldly Responsibilities](#)

Martin comments, “I think I understand a little of what you are saying, but I am still puzzled over whether – and to what degree – it is possible to integrate one’s higher consciousness with one’s outer consciousness here on earth. It seems to me that this integration should be – or could be – one of the purposes of our life as a human being. To achieve this integration appears to be one of our responsibilities on this planet. To me, the earth is our sphere of responsibility and its fate

rests largely in our hands. I do not want to escape the earth. I want to see it realize its full potential – or at least far more of its potential than is currently being realized.”

Marcella adds, “This is a conversation Martin and I have had many times over the years. I keep telling him to concentrate on doing what is practical in the here and now, and not to think too much about things he can do nothing about.”

Helen says, “I think all husbands and wives have similar discussions. There is always a trade-off between doing what is practical and trying to do what is ideal. I guess all of us have to balance the need for pragmatism with the need for pursuing dreams.”

Mark comments, “I am reminded of the great discussion between Arjuna and Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Krishna tells Arjuna that he should just act as his duty requires, with no thought of the fruit of the action. This non-attachment, Krishna said, leads to enlightenment.”

Elizabeth reflects, “I think non-attachment has its place on the spiritual path. But I also believe that the Divine Feminine in us all is concerned about pain and suffering brought about by thoughtlessness or inappropriate action. That kind of concern must come from a sense of deep attachment to the preciousness of life.”

Morya says, “This leads to a great truth. Being practical, being filled with idealism, being non-attached, being concerned about the fruit of one’s action and all things living – all of these are concepts, feelings, characteristics, and attitudes that can be spiritually correct – at their appropriate time. We have to remember that God and His creation are not single points of light in this era of great outbreath and expansion of the cosmos. This is the time of differentiation, when individual human beings learn who and what they are, and then express their inner qualities in outer activities. In other words, in this cycle of growth and maturation, different circumstances

may require different types of action by the individual soul. Daily we are learning the connections between the consciousness of man, his outer environment, and the will of God.

Perhaps a better way to express it is this: God has many characteristics of which we share a few. Individuals need to learn to appropriately reflect the characteristics they possess at various times in their spiritual evolution. Gradually, a merging of the soul's consciousness and God's consciousness will occur."

Marcella asks, "Are you implying that a mother's love is not always appropriate?"

Morya smiles and says, "No, I am saying that an individual is not always a mother." He then explains, "Look at it this way. In a given situation, there are a number of options. Some options are better than others. Everyone should help save a drowning man. However, a person who can't swim may choose a different action than a lifeguard. The one screams for help; the other rushes into the water. The same circumstances. Two different people. Two different choices that are both correct."

Marcella nods and says, "OK. That makes sense. But, to return to Martin's point, is it correct for him to want to integrate spirit and matter on this earth, or is it a misguided aspiration?"

Morya shrugs and replies, "Who can say? I have suggested he focus on doing what is practical. But he has free will and his intentions seem correct. Maybe it is his dharma to try to improve conditions on this earth. Maybe he feels from the level of his soul that he must try to do this in order to correct mistakes in the past. Who knows? These are matters between Martin and his God."

Mark quickly picks up that point. "But isn't God the same for everyone?"

Morya replies, “I am not saying there is more than one God. I am saying that the God we individually identify with is not universally the same. Remember the story of the blind men describing the elephant. We can only understand what our senses perceive. This is not to belittle God, nor to criticize man. Is it simply stating the fact that God is greater than any of our understandings. We worship Him as we understand Him to be. There is nothing wrong with that. However, our understanding of what God is will change as we ourselves gain in wisdom and experience. I have heard it said that even the greatest masters are themselves learning more about God as they advance spiritually.”

After a moment of reflection, Marcella asks everyone if they would like more dessert or tea. But the consensus is that the hour is late and it is time for bed. Saying goodnight, all retire for the evening, with Martin helping Marcella wash the remaining dishes before retiring themselves.

### Day Two: National Zoo

The next morning, the friends talked about what they would like to do. Martin offered to drive everyone out to Washington to show them the museums and federal buildings, but everyone had done that before. Finally, after some thought, Marcella suggested they all go to the National Zoo and see Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, the Zoo’s famous giant pandas. Helen and Elizabeth quickly agreed and so it was settled.

Within about two hours, they arrived at the Rock Creek entrance to the Zoo. The ladies wanted to pet the animals in the Kids’ Farm. The group then walked to the Great Cat area and thence to the Asia Trail on the way to the Great Panda Habitat. Fortunately, both Mei Xiang and Tian Tian were in their enclosures, eating huge fruitsicles. It was quite a sight, seeing the giant pandas lick and bite away at their treats, oblivious of the photographers and wide-eyed children, and

thoroughly enjoying a cold, sweet snack on a warm summer day. Tian Tian finished his quickly and, after determining that only scraps remained, walked off down a path to a pile of freshly cut bamboo. Ever the lady, Mei Xiang carefully consumed every bit of the treat, including licking her ample tummy and each of her paws. Mei Xiang then paraded in front of everyone, often making eye contact with her enraptured audience. Even the teenagers were heard to say, “I can’t believe it! I want to hug her!”

After an hour of watching the adult pandas and sleeping cubs, the friends walked around to see the elephants, bears, and sea lions, and eventually returned to their parked van. Martin suggested a late lunch – it was shortly after 2 pm – at the popular Peking Gourmet Inn in nearby Falls Church. None of their guests had eaten there, so Martin and Marcella said they would be in for a real treat.

Once seated at one of the large round tables in the restaurant, Martin ordered three Peking Ducks and several side dishes. When the ducks arrived and the carving began, Martin showed his friends how to place the sliced duck on pancakes, topped with sauce and leeks. At their first bite into the folded pancakes, his friends all had a look of serious deliciousness on their faces. Once they got the knack of how to make their own, nothing could hold them back, and soon Martin was ordering more pancakes and toppings. After countless cups of tea and seemingly endless rounds of pancakes, everyone turned down the waiter’s offer of dessert, although Martin did ask him to bring out some sliced oranges. These topped off the meal perfectly.

After everyone washed their hands, they all got back into the van and returned to Annapolis, very happy with the day. When they got into the house, everyone politely excused themselves and went to their rooms for a little rest.

About 7:30, the friends sat down at the dining room table and enjoyed a light meal of salad and fruit. Marcella said she was thinking about a trip to China sometime in early May of next year to visit Chengdu and its nearby Bifengxia Panda Reserve. She also hoped to travel to some newly opened but remote reserves deeper in the mountains. Helen and Elizabeth immediately expressed interest in travelling with her, and their husbands encouraged their wives to start planning early. None of the men seemed keen on making the trip, however, so the ladies decided to huddle together sometime the next day to discuss details.

After dinner, everyone walked into the living room and Marcella served hot mint tea with local honey. Some light snacks were also offered on a tray in the middle of a wooden coffee table Martin made from an old apple tree he had cut down.

### [Is Earthly Perfection Possible?](#)

Settling into his chair, Martin says, “I wanted to clarify my comments from last night’s conversation. I may have left the impression that I want the earth and human beings to be perfect. But that is not the case. I do not believe that perfection is possible in time and space. I do think, however, that improvement is possible and that personal and social improvement can best be made through attempts at integrating spirit and matter on earth.”

No one comments, so Martin continues in his best academic tone. “What do I mean by the integration of spirit and matter on earth? I think we have to make a distinction between earth with and without people. Without people, the earth and its creatures are in a natural state. Being in harmony with their environment is what animals and other creatures do naturally. To me, that cannot be improved upon. The forces at work on the planet, the shifts in tectonic plates, the volcanoes and earthquakes, hurricanes and droughts – all play out in nature and ensure that the earth’s environment is constantly in a state of change. Some species adjust well and survive;

some cannot and their time is over. These events are not of God's making; they are the result of natural forces. They do not have moral implications. They just happen.

“When you have earth with people, however, you throw a new equation into the natural order of things. People have an incredible impact upon nature, whether it be on the climate, the landscape, the oceans, the atmosphere, or the survival of other species. It is true that all creatures have a degree of free will, but the range of man's free will is much broader and coupled with creative and physical abilities which enable him to develop technology to manipulate nature and its laws to his personal benefit.

“In my view, because mankind has both creative free will and an inner quality, he has unique responsibilities to use his creative power in a positive way. That is where morality comes in. Morality ought not to be defined by a single book or individual. Morality ought to be defined by each and every one of us based on our inner qualities and the degree to which we follow those standards in our daily lives.”

Everyone listens politely, so Martin then says, “The integration of spirit and matter that I am referring to is the responsibility of each person to use his inner quality as a standard for his or her best behavior. If everyone did their best to express their inner quality – because that is what they wanted to do – I am convinced the world would be a better place. When I say a better place, I am talking about a gradual evolution in the affairs of men, whereby increasing numbers of people become aware of their inner quality and seek to externalize it.

“I cannot prove whether the inner quality is a special gift of God given to each soul, or whether the inner quality is some innate characteristic discovered during the course of humanity's evolution. I'm not sure it makes too much difference in terms of the expression of one's inner

quality. In either case, the inner quality is a potential for great good residing in each person. If this potential could be unlocked, if this potential could be acknowledged and worked toward by large numbers of people in their daily activities, then the individual and society would be greatly benefited. When I talk about the integration of spirit and matter, therefore, I am talking about the integration that occurs in people's consciousness when they conclude that to live a full and complete life that they must seek to express the infinite goodness that resides within themselves. Integration in this sense is not perfection. It is not permanence. It is an expression of the potential of mankind – here and now, individual by individual – on this planetary home.

“To me, becoming integrated in spirit and matter boils down to a simple decision to always be and do one's best. That best will change over time and under various circumstances as we mature and experience life. But, as long as we have the ability, we ought to do our best in everything we do. It is such a simple concept. Yet it also is a life-changing precept in that it accepts personal responsibility to do what we can to improve life. This concept is the essence of what I call the ethics and morality of the inner quality.”

He looks at his friends, then picks up a cookie from the tray.

### [What Is Doing One's Best?](#)

Everyone was quiet for a moment, then Elizabeth offers her opinion. “I don't think any of us would disagree with what you are saying, Martin. In fact, I think we all are doing exactly that. We all do our best. I am thinking, ‘who doesn't do their best?’ But you seem to be reaching toward something deeper. Why, for example, do you describe this as an integration of spirit and matter, when it really is a description of what people commonly do all the time?”

Martin starts to respond, but Mark speaks up. “Let me address this issue. It seems to me that Martin is correct in suggesting that if everyone did their best, the earth could be a better place on

which to live. It also seems to me that my wife is correct in suggesting that she always does her best, and that it is the natural thing for her to do. What we have is a slight difference in the meaning of the term 'doing one's best'." He continues, "Martin, let me ask you. From your experience, do you think people always do their best?"

Martin shakes his head. Mark then asks Elizabeth, "Do you think that everyone does their best?"

Elizabeth says, "No, not all the time."

Mark continues, "So we agree that not everyone always does their best. Some do and some don't. And, in truth, since we are human beings, very few people always do their best. What does the phrase 'do one's best' mean to you, Elizabeth?"

Elizabeth answers, "To me, doing one's best is simply that: doing one's best. It is an attitude or standard of behavior. One should always do one's best. It is a simple admonition handed down to us by our mothers, which everybody knows and most try to follow."

Mark nods in the direction of Martin, who answers the question as well. "I agree with that definition. But I do not share Elizabeth's view that nearly everyone does their best. I think very few people live up to their highest expectations. Moreover, a very large number of people do not have the best interests of others in mind. They are looking out for themselves."

Mark smiles and says, "OK. I think we have reached the crux of the matter. We have a disagreement on what one's best actually is, and we have a disagreement on whether people usually do their best. Morya, what has been your observation on these issues?"

Morya says, "I would like to hear first the views of Marcella and Helen."

Marcella defers to Helen, who answers, “Well, I think doing one’s best is a goal that is constantly redefined in a person’s mind. We tend to understand ourselves differently at different times, certainly as a factor of aging but also as a factor of mood and circumstance. When I am healthy and strong, young and vigorous, my sense of what is my best can be quite different from when I am not feeling well or am old. That is one factor to consider. Marcella?”

Marcella picks up the thread. “Another factor is the difference between people’s incentives to do good, or their ‘best’ as we have called it. Some people have very low incentive to do good things, but may have high incentive to be the best thief they can be. The term ‘honor among thieves’ is accurate, from a therapist’s point of view. Other people have an incredible desire to do good things that can lead them to sacrifice everything, even their own lives or – unintentionally, of course – the wellbeing of those they love. The saints are good examples of this willingness to sacrifice all. So we have a wide range of incentives to do one’s best, and one’s best is not always what is good – as in the case of our honor among thieves.”

Mark says, “Very good points. Thank you. Morya, did you want to add something?”

Morya shakes his head. “Not now. I am still gathering my thoughts.”

Mark continues, “From my own experience, it is the motivation for doing good things that determines the effort an individual puts into doing his or her best. Motivation – the desire to do something, or not to do something – is to me the key to this discussion. A person’s deep psychological motivation heavily influences one’s incentives.”

Martin says, “I think motivation is a critical factor, but what is the cause of the motivation? That is the real issue. What is it that determines whether an individual has motivation to do something

good or bad? There is a difference between someone being motivated to be the best safe cracker in the world and someone being motivated to heal all children of cancer.”

Helen says, “Yes, that is true. Marcella, in your experience as a therapist, what have you learned in terms of the causes of one’s motivations?”

Marcella, after thinking a moment, replies, “I have not found there to be a single cause of a person’s motivation. There can be multiple causes and multiple motivations. Let’s take an example of someone who wants to do good things in the world. That person may not understand why they have that impulse to do good things. Therapy can help identify the source, or at least some of the sources. Therapy usually reveals a great complexity in people’s motivations and behaviors. In our theoretical case, for example, the person might come through therapy to understand that they want to do good things because bad things were done to them as a child, or they witnessed bad things being done to those they cared about. Alternatively, the person might discover that his motivation for good comes from the tender care they received as a child from their mother or another loved one. Again, the person might discover that they want to do good because they feel guilt over having harmed someone earlier in their life. Or, they might have the motivation to do good because the painful lessons in life have taught them that they will feel better if they try to do good things. The point is that the source of one’s motivation is not always clear to us, nor always the same. And, as we all know, our motivations can contradict or even work against each other.”

Helen offers her opinion: “I think we are getting to the core of the human condition here. I have known a few people who seem to be good from the time of early childhood. Their family background, their experiences, do not seem to have caused their natural goodness. Perhaps they are advanced souls or there is some other explanation. On the other hand, I have known a few

people who truly seem to be motivated to do harmful things. Again, sometimes there is nothing in their background that I know of that could explain this. Most of us are somewhere in the middle: sometimes motivated to do good, sometimes motivated to do things that are not so good.”

Marcella says, “Yes, I agree with that assessment. I have also found it quite remarkable that the truly good at heart and the truly evil at heart seem to understand themselves quite well and see no need for therapy. We rarely see them in the clinic. The people we mostly see are those who can’t decide whether they are essentially good or bad. These people believe they need help in determining who they are.”

Martin comments, “They need to discover their real self.”

Marcella replies, “You can say that.” She pauses, then continues. “I went into practice with the assumption that all people were innately good. That may still be the case. But at the levels of consciousness I deal with – outer awareness and subconscious – there are people out there who do not fully identify with a core of goodness. These may be in the small minority, but there is more than a few.”

Mark observes, “I think the people we talk to have a lot to do with the community in which we work. Marcella here, being a therapist, interacts with people in need of help, many of whom are driven by unwholesome motivations. I counsel people who are seeking to discover their own spirituality. By and large, their motivations are driven by a sense of good will. I guess what this implies is that humanity has a wide range of individuals, some of whom are good by nature, some bad by nature, some mostly good, some mostly bad, and many not sure whether they are good or bad.”

## The Goal Is to Become One's Real Self

Morya offers his view: "I believe all of you are correct in your observations and your experiences. Humanity is a very complex social organism, and there simply is no single answer as to why people have their motivations and behave the way they do. Remember that the purpose of mankind's sojourn on this planet is to learn to master free will. Every decision has its karmic consequences. Some people make mostly good choices, and their karma is generally good. Good karma usually results in good circumstances in one's life, so their progression through the earth's schoolroom can be relatively smooth. Others make mostly bad choices, and their progression can be quite rough at times. I would say that most people are in the middle, having made both good and bad choices, and therefore they function in a world of mixed circumstances – sometimes rewarding, sometimes challenging, sometimes opaque.

"What the brotherhood is trying to do is to help individuals see themselves as a soul in spiritual evolution. Usually – not always, but usually – when people understand who they really are, they begin to act in a morally better way because their motivation is to be the person they perceive themselves to be. There is an old saying that man cannot see God and remain as man. One meaning of that expression is that no person can see their real or true self and remain the same. When you discover your inner quality and sense the real self as your potential, then most people find within themselves sufficient discipline to improve their behavior. Their motivation is self-generated and they become much more focused on self-discovery and self-expression. Your character improves because you want to do what is right for yourself. It is similar to a student who studies hard because she truly wants to learn. The objective in life is not to do good because it is required of you, but to become your real self which is naturally good and in harmony with God's will. In the evolution of the soul, therefore, the critical transition occurs when the individual becomes motivated from within to do his or her best. And that transition often

happens when the individual comes face to face with his own inner potential as a creation of God. Recognizing the reality of what we truly are is a life-changing experience. It matters not if you explain the experience in spiritual terms or evolutionary terms. What a person sees in this experience is his own infinite potential, a seed of positive contribution to life planted deep within consciousness just waiting to grow if given the opportunity.”

Everyone thinks for a while. Then, after a moment of light conversation, Marcella takes the tray and cups to the kitchen and everyone begins to stand, say goodnight, and retire for the evening.

### Day Three: Ocean City

The next day over breakfast, Marcella suggested a trip out to Ocean City for lunch, and then a visit to Assateague Island National Seashore for a stroll along the beach. This sounded great, and about an hour later the couples carried small travelling bags out to the van. Martin had already loaded up camping chairs and an ice chest with snacks. He had intended to bring some of his surf fishing gear, but Marcella dissuaded him by noting that not everyone would want to fish. Instead, she suggested that he enjoy a day of socializing with his friends. Martin agreed and put away his fishing tackle for another day.

When everyone got into the van, Martin headed out Highway 50 and over the magnificent Chesapeake Bay Bridge, where they were fortunate enough to see a huge car carrier pass under the highest span. The ship seemed close enough to touch the captain’s bridge. Sailboats and power boats, along with a few yachts and several small fishing boats anchored near the pilings, made the 4-mile crossing highly enjoyable. Marcella and Martin pointed out various sights afforded by the view atop the bridge, and then the van passed through Kent Island on the way out to Ocean City, some two and a half hours away on the Atlantic Coast. As they drove along,

Marcella insisted they stop at a couple of her favorite Eastern Shore fruit and vegetable stands, and the ladies had to be encouraged to get back into the van so they would be in time for lunch at their destination.

Around 1:30 they pulled into the parking lot for Embers and enjoyed a wide variety of seafood and other choices from the well-stocked buffet. Afterwards, they strolled along the Boardwalk and window shopped, breathing deeply the cool breeze coming in off the ocean. About an hour later, they headed down Highway 611 to Assateague Island, less than 30 minutes away.

Assateague this time of year, especially on Sunday afternoon, is usually crowded. That day, however, was a little quieter because it was late and most visitors were either heading home or taking part in evening activities in nearby Ocean City.

Martin parked near the ranger headquarters and, after collecting some bottled water and insect repellent, the friends walked down to the beach. The on-shore breeze was fairly strong, so the mosquitoes were not bad at all. As they walked on the hard sand close to where the waves broke upon the shore, the ladies trailed behind to look at the shells, while the men watched the waves and the handful of fishermen casting their bait into the surf. Martin explained that many different kinds of fish could be caught here and that he had brought in sea trout, rockfish, sharks, bluefish, and flounder on various occasions. The most frequently caught fish, however, was skate, which most fishermen just tossed back into the surf, although some folks seemed to like them.

Their wives finally caught up, showing the men the shells they had collected, and together they walked for a mile further before beginning to tire. They sat on the beach for a while, enjoying the sunset at their backs and the gradually calming seas. They pointed to a large school of dolphins passing a couple of hundred yards offshore. Mark said he saw a large shark fin out in the water,

but no one else saw it. As it began to get darker, they could see the lights of Ocean City to the north, and a few bright stars and planets becoming visible in the eastern sky.

Around 8:00, Martin suggested they head back, since it would be a 3-hour return trip to Annapolis. They returned to the parking area, washed the sand off their feet and drove away. Soon after they left the entrance to the Park, they saw a small herd of horses cross the road in front of them. Martin explained their Spanish ancestry and the special place the horses on this island held in the culture of the Eastern Shore. After the horses passed by, they traveled a short distance and then Martin stopped, pointing to an extremely small buck on the side of the road. These were Asian Sika deer, Martin said, although he did not know how they arrived on the island.

When they arrived in Annapolis around 11:45 pm, Marcella prepared a quick meal of scrambled eggs and toast and, after eating, everyone called it a night and went to bed.

### Identifying the Real Self

Martin, however, could not sleep right away – probably from the coffee he had consumed on way back. After a while, he got up and quietly went into the living room, turning on an electric heater to keep warm. Sitting in the darkness, he saw Morya emerge from the hallway and walk over to the chair next to him.

Martin says, “I thought you were asleep. I’m sorry if I awoke you.”

Morya replied, “No. I was just relaxing a bit and thought I might come out here to get a glass of water and enjoy the peace and quiet of the neighborhood. Aren’t you able to sleep?”

Martin answers, “In a few minutes. I was just thinking about why it is that I keep talking about discovering the real self, when I see that you and Helen, Mark and Elizabeth, and Marcella have

no difficulty in knowing who you really are. I seemed to be challenged in identifying with my real self, when you and others have no difficulty at all. I was wondering about that.”

Morya nods and says, “Let me tell you a story I once heard. I don’t know if it is true or not. But it is an interesting story nonetheless.”

He gathers his thoughts and continues, “Long ago there was a man who became a great warrior-king in his society. He was a kind man, an honorable man, and an able general and leader for his people. His kingdom came under attack by a neighboring tribe, and a long, fierce war broke out between the two sides. The man played a key role in leading his forces into battle. But, no matter how hard he fought, he could not win against the considerably larger forces of the enemy. At one point, he prayed to his gods to help his people, because they were a worthy people who worshipped their gods and obeyed the laws given unto them by their forefathers. The enemy was a barbaric and cruel race, which had contributed little to the betterment of mankind. The battles were fought, and despite the best efforts and prayers of the king, his side lost with terrible slaughter. Afterwards, the enemy swept into the towns and villages and farms of the kingdom, killing everything and enslaving those who remained in unspeakable conditions.

“The king escaped to the forests and witnessed all of these things. As he watched the terrible events unfold, he blamed himself for the defeat. But most of all, he blamed the gods for not supporting him in his time of need. The anguish of watching those he loved be killed or enslaved tore at the king’s soul and he determined, in a deep way, never to trust the gods again. He went into forced exile and survived as best he could. And one thing he learned was that, in war and politics, all means to victory should be considered legitimate. To survive, and most importantly to protect your people, a leader has to be completely amoral in his methods. For on this earth, he concluded, one has to remain alive to do good works; and to live, one sometimes must do awful

things. This was especially true for leaders and for generals, in whose hands thousands of lives depend. Deep inside of his consciousness, the achievement of victory became paramount, regardless of whether his actions were moral or not.”

Morya pauses, takes a drink of water and says, “The impact of this conviction carried over into countless other lifetimes for this soul. He became, many times, a great general and a great king, and he finely tuned his philosophy into a high art. Historically, he became a famous figure. But at a spiritual level, there emerged a certain disconnect between the aspirations of his soul to embody the qualities of God, and his human consciousness which acted on the premise that anything was justified in order to avoid defeat. He refused over many lifetimes to adjust this philosophy, because he believed it was necessary to act this way in order to protect those for whom he was responsible. He did not fear death, but he could not accept the premise that moral behavior was more important than the lives of his people.”

He thinks for a moment and continues, “What we have, then, is a classic case in which a well-meaning person disconnects by his free will his outer consciousness from the subtle moral guidance of his soul. His rational mind became dominant, and the soul was in essence exiled from all critical decision making. Gradually, as the amoral actions of the rational mind created more and more karma for the individual in our story, his soul became ‘scattered’ because his outer consciousness was insulated from his higher consciousness. In lifetime after lifetime, the individual – while in embodiment at least – inherited a powerful rational mind and a pattern of ignoring his soul’s guidance. As the individual and his soul become disconnected, the relationship between the individual in embodiment and his real self, his inner quality, became tenuous and weak. It was not lost entirely – the connection was always there – but the outer

consciousness lost awareness of the connection and the individual walked the earth and played his role with little or no integration with his real self.

“Interestingly enough, in the case of our hero here, he remained connected to the spiritual world because of his strong and unshakeable love of God. However, his soul became weak because of the accumulated weight of karma and its inability to communicate with the individual while he was in embodiment. In this particular case, the individual lost awareness of his soul, his real self, and inner quality; yet, his love of God was an anchor that tied him at very deep levels to his true reality. The man always felt he was missing something, but he could not find or identify it. He did not know who or what he really was. So, he went through lifetime after lifetime, being at heart a good person with mostly good intentions, but often acting in questionable ways because it seemed expedient to him to do so.”

Martin comments, “Well, that is some story. What happened to this individual?”

Morya replies, “I do not know the conclusion of the story. I suppose it could go one of two ways. The individual could, at some point, forego entirely his love of God, rebel, and turn toward the left-handed path of rejecting all goodness whatsoever. Or, the individual could somehow reconnect with his real self, gradually draw together the elements of his soul, and begin the process of paying his karma and regaining his equilibrium as a son of God. The choice would be his, although there might be spiritual forces of good and evil trying to influence him one way or the other.”

Martin slowly shakes his head. “Are you saying, Morya, that such a thing has happened to me? Would that explain why finding my real self is so important to me yet not such a big deal to you and the others?”

Morya smiles and holds up his hands, “No, it is just a story. And like all stories, there is some truth and some fiction. It is up to us to discern the difference. Well, Martin, I have enjoyed all of these conversations with you over the years. I have learned much and gained in friendship more than you will ever know. Now, I am afraid I’m getting tired and need to go to bed. Sleep well, my friend.”

Morya walks back to his bedroom. Martin sits for a while, pondering the meaning of this strange story. Eventually, he yawns and goes to bed himself.

#### Day Four: National Aquarium

The next day was cloudy with light rain, so Martin suggested over breakfast that they visit the National Aquarium in Baltimore and eat lunch at McCormick & Schmick’s, a well-known Inner Harbor restaurant specializing in local sea food. Everyone agreed, so about 45 minutes later they got into the van and drove up to the city, arriving at the Aquarium around 11:00. The various exhibits were fascinating, with over 17,000 animals and fish from around the world. They especially enjoyed the Dolphin Discovery exhibit and the various sharks swimming in the gigantic aquariums. Around 2:00, they walked over to the restaurant on Pier 5 where everyone ordered their favorite seafood. The food was delicious and the view beautiful. Since this was the last day of their visit, they talked about going out to Fort McHenry, but thunderstorms were building up the area, so they decided to return to Annapolis and relax for the rest of the day.

#### Spiritual Potential of Mankind

Back home, Martin lit a fire in the fireplace and Helen made everyone her famous yogi tea. As they settled into their favorite chairs and couches, feeling warm and comfortable, Morya asks Martin whether he had a chance to think over their conversation from last night.

Martin nods and says, “Yes, I did, Morya. I think I concluded that finding one’s real self is really just the beginning of the soul’s venture on this planet. Some people – maybe most – have an innate sense of who they are – from a psychological point of view. They generally feel themselves to be complete and whole as a person. On the other hand, knowledge of the inner quality may not be present. A person can be psychologically anchored, but may not know their spirituality. For the individual, it is important not only to be psychologically balanced but also to understand their potential as a human being.”

He adds, “It seems to me that mankind as a whole is not fully aware of their spirituality or inner potential. Just look around. We see so many people suffering needlessly. Our experience proves that things are not going as well as they could be on this planet. The question is why. And the answer, at least in part, seems to be a lack of understanding of the potential goodness residing within each person and – most importantly – that this potential is within reach of us all.”

Mark observes, “But this potential is not always realized. Where is the source of the problem? Is it the individual who is not exerting enough effort to discover his real self, or is the problem with society’s leaders, who seek primarily to further their own interests and thus set a bad example? Or some other cause?”

Marcella comments, “I see both of your explanations occurring. Most people do not push the envelope of their understanding, nor try to improve their behavior on a daily basis. Some do, but a great many do not. I also agree that leaders are often more concerned about their own position and power than they are in people’s wellbeing. Individual complacency and manipulation of the masses seem to be common social phenomena. Why this is, I am not entirely sure. On the other hand, we all know people who are constantly trying to improve themselves, and they often work hard to improve the lives of others as well. So there is a mixed bag here. I guess the bottom line

is that individuals have to determine for themselves what they are going to do with their lives.

That, to me, is the most basic freedom which all mankind have, regardless of where they live or their social status.”

Mark says, “The key to unlocking the potential of man is for the individual to determine to do so. There is nothing secret or mystical about truth. The truth is written in each of us and is reflected in nature all around. We have the reasoning power, the creative ability, the tools and resources to do magnificent things within the scope of our opportunities. It is a matter of people determining what they want to do.”

Elizabeth nods and adds, “We just have to pursue the source of our inner goodness through our thoughts, feelings, prayers, and meditations. If a person would follow the thread of their internal sense of goodness, they would find that it leads to all kinds of insights and opportunities.”

Helen says, “I keep remembering the advice of so many great teachers that seems to boil down to a single point: know yourself, be yourself, do your duty, and always do your best.”

Morya expands upon this theme. “That is why it is so important for individuals to come into contact with the reality of their inner quality. If you can sense the divine seed of God within yourself, then you can realize your oneness with God. The understanding of your place in the great drama of life enables you to see what is most important and what is frivolous. The earth is our schoolroom, and the objective of our lessons is to learn to express our inner quality. When we express our inner quality, we are acting as our real self. This is how integration with God works. The desire to be one’s real self is built into the architecture of life itself.”

Morya then adds, “We should always remember that the soul’s purpose for embodiment on this planet is to learn the proper use of free will in time and space so the soul can fulfill its

responsibilities as a son or daughter of God. Because mankind has free will, only we can decide whether to integrate our will with the will of God. This integration of man's will and God's will is not the end of selfhood. It is the doorway through which our soul must walk in order to fulfill our highest potential."

Martin then comments, "While I understand that the solutions to mankind's problems lie within the consciousness of mankind himself, we still have the basic issue of why it is that people refuse to put forth the effort to improve themselves, their society, and their environment? If goodness is inherent in everyone, then why is goodness on a large scale so difficult to achieve? If a person's real self is so close to the surface of their consciousness, then what stands in the way of that recognition?"

Everyone is quiet for a moment, then Mark says, "I think those are issues we will have to address at another time, because answers to those questions are difficult." Morya adds, "Perhaps this is something you could write about in the future, Martin." Martin responds, "Maybe I will. Maybe I will," thinking about the issue's relationship to inner quality ethics and politics, subjects he wanted to explore at leisure when he had more time.

After a moment, Marcella offers her guests more tea and sweets, and the conversation turns to the more practical issue of planning next year's China trip.

## Chapter 6: Understanding the Brotherhood and Sisterhood of Light

The summer following their reunion in Annapolis, Morya and Martin decided to meet Mark in Denver for a few days while their wives were visiting panda reserves in China. The ladies would leave for Chengdu from the Denver International Airport and would return to the States in about ten days. The plan was for the men to stay at Mark and Elizabeth's home in Lakewood before returning to work the next week. The women would fly to their respective homes directly from Beijing. Martin rented a Jeep Cherokee at the airport upon his arrival, and Mark had his familiar SUV, so the men had plenty of transportation for whatever adventures they might want to undertake.

Later that evening, after seeing their wives off at the airport for their flight to San Francisco, the men ate Chinese food at Pei Wei and discussed their plans for the next few days. It was early June and some of the high mountains were still blanketed by snow, but the temperature was warm in the plains and comfortably cool below the tree line. It seemed a perfect time for visiting the Rockies. Mark suggested they first go to the Rocky Mountain National Park north of Denver and hike up Specimen Mountain. It was an ancient volcano, Mark explained, and the area was well known for its interesting rock formations and plentiful wildlife. Morya asked if the trail was strenuous, and Mark said he did not think so but would inquire at the ranger station in the morning. The men paid their bills and drove back to Mark's home for the evening. By then, it was fairly late, so everyone said goodnight and retired, agreeing to get an early start the next day.

### Day One: Rocky Mountain National Park

After hotcakes and eggs, the three friends got into Mark's SUV for the two-hour drive up I-25 into Estes Park, which serves as the eastern gateway into the National Park. Once in the Park, they drove to the Old Fall River Road, a winding, one-way mountain road ending at the Alpine

Visitor Center. As they drove slowly up the road, the men saw a herd of elk and a family of white mountain goats. They stopped at some of the pullouts to take pictures of the mountain peaks and to acclimate themselves to the 11,000-foot altitude. They briefly went inside the Visitor Center to see the exhibits and grab a cup of coffee, and then continued to the base of Specimen Mountain, which, at nearly 12,500 feet, sits astride the Continental Divide.

The men got out, put on their day packs, and started walking on the Poudre River Trail. After a mile or so, Martin spotted a faint path leading up to the saddle between two peaks on Specimen Mountain. They walked steadily upward for about an hour, breathing ever more deeply and listening to the sounds of a nearby creek cascading down to the river far below. The wind picked up as they broke out of the trees into the tundra landscape just above the tree line. After taking a moment to catch their breath and put on light jackets, Martin led the way to the edge of a blown-out crater. A few hundred yards below, they saw a small herd of elk heading up a trail passing near their location. Moving out of the way so as not to disturb the animals, Mark pointed to several bighorn sheep on a huge boulder higher up the slope. The men then walked around the saddle picking through rocks for about an hour and gazing at the view on all sides. They didn't take anything out of respect for Park policy, but they thoroughly enjoyed the purity of the environment at that high, remote location.

Tired and hungry, they hiked back down the stream to the Poudre River Trail. An hour later, they were in the SUV, drinking water and eating energy bars, feeling spent but invigorated. Mark returned to Denver through Estes Park, stopping at Boulder for an early dinner at one of his favorite Mexican restaurants. By the time they got home, it was about 8:30 in the evening. After washing off a bit, the men poured themselves some ice tea and relaxed on the deck, enjoying the lights of Denver spread out before them.

## Cycles of History

As they sat on the deck, Martin asks his friends, “So, what should we talk about on this trip? Any ideas?”

Morya deferred to Mark, who, after thinking for a moment, says, “I don’t know about you, but I have growing concern about the violence and chaos that seem to be increasing in the world. It would appear that the peace we were accustomed to since the end of the Cold War has given way to another era of instability.”

Martin observes, “This is a cycle that has repeated itself throughout history. There is a period in which a predominant power enforces a system of law and order on much of the world, and then the great power begins to weaken. Multiple centers of influence emerge. This leads to new and old conflicts of interest, which lead to greater instability since no one looks to others for leadership. The world enters a long period of competition and struggle, and peace becomes a scarce commodity. Eventually, some single power or small bloc of states gains sufficient strength to impose its standards on a significant portion of the world. Peace and stability return for a while, and then the cycle begins all over again. As the Chinese observed hundreds of years ago, ‘empires wax and wane’.”

Mark comments, “Still, it is disturbing to see violence increasing all around us. I do not see an early solution to the religious, cultural, political, economic, military, social, and other conflicts now surrounding us. Radicalized militants, the drug lords, heavily armed criminals, corruption, abuse of power – society’s ailments are overwhelming government’s ability to cope with them. I do not see any government that is handling these problems well at this point – democratic or otherwise. That’s a pretty pessimistic assessment, but I believe we are in a cycle of disintegration at this point in our social evolution. Morya, do you see any solution to this?”

Morya, who had been standing at the deck railing looking at the lights below, turns and says, “Change is inevitable. So, to some extent, cycles of instability are natural. Nothing is static in the universe.” He walks to his chair and continues: “There is no escaping the cycles of life and the changes they bring. The only thing we can control is our own consciousness: how we react to change and challenge. Our focus should not be on establishing stability forever in human affairs. Our focus should be on ourselves, strengthening our ability to control our consciousness, control our actions and reactions in the face of change and challenge. That is what self-mastery is all about. However, self-mastery requires an extremely high level of commitment and discipline to achieve. Gaining that self-mastery is the purpose of the soul’s embodiment on the planet.”

Martin responds, “What I hear you saying, Morya, is that individuals should focus more on their reaction to events rather than challenge the events themselves. Is this what you mean? And, if you do mean that, doesn’t that negate in some way the efforts of people who try to improve the world?”

Mark joins in. “I don’t think Morya is implying we should ignore what is going on in the world. Rather, we should seek self-mastery in order to better respond to challenges. The problem is this: none of us are perfect, and very few of us have self-mastery. So we either try to accomplish something good and noble from our imperfect state, or we ignore the pain and suffering all around us and retreat to the mountaintop for meditation. To me, the latter is, while appealing, not a real option.”

Martin replies, “Let me rephrase what I believe Morya is saying: Since we cannot prevent change, our sense of well-being must be based on some internal understanding or reconciliation. We cannot depend on the environment or personal relationships to calm our anxieties about

change in life. Our reactions have to come from within ourselves. Self-mastery is the key for a peaceful, harmonious life.”

He pauses, then continues, “Like Mark, the problem I see with this prescription is that very few of us are ascetics. We are not like Bodhidharma, content to stare at the wall of a cave. We like our pleasures and enjoy our leisure, because they bring spice and comfort to our lives. This makes life in this world – if not perfect – at least tolerable and even enjoyable at times. And why not? This is our world and we can interact with it as we choose. We have free will, and most people use much of their free will in pursuit of pleasure and happiness.”

Mark scoffs, “I always knew you were a hedonist. Surely, life is more than a search for maximum pleasure.”

Martin says, “Well, Epicurean might be a better classification. But, seriously, I can think of several things worse than searching for pleasure, such as searching for pain or, more troubling, searching for ways to inflict pain on others.”

### [What Is of Greatest Value?](#)

Morya holds up his hand and says, “What we are talking about here is a fundamental orientation of the free will of the individual. Each of us faces the question: ‘What is most valuable and important to me?’ Do we seek pleasure, riches, power, and acclaim from others, a happy family, a healthy life, great wisdom, great strength, high spiritual attainment? Men and women have an enormously wide range of free will and, as a result, there are almost endless choices for our goals in life.”

Martin ponders this and adds, “I think you have touched upon a very good point, Morya. What is it that adds to our sense of self-worth in life? To my way of thinking, self-worth can be measured

by degree of commitment to and realization of our inner quality. What we should be looking for is not a fatter wallet but a firmer sense of our real self. The inner quality is the essence of our individuality. No two individuals have identical inner qualities. Yet, the inner quality of each person is precious, because it is a seed of infinite potential that can benefit all of life.”

Mark says, “I remember hearing long ago a story about a master who would point to the stars in the heavens and tell his followers that these points of light represent the perfected qualities of God, embodied by great souls throughout cosmos and all of history.”

Martin comments, “That is a comforting thought, although I believe science tells us these points of light are in fact nuclear furnaces, burning intensely and completely uninhabitable.”

Morya smiles and says, “But there is some truth behind Mark’s analogy. Let me ask you, Martin. Is the inner quality with which you identify – honor and integrity – something that exists whether you recognize it or not?”

Martin replies, “Sure, honor and integrity exist whether I know about them or not.”

Morya then asks, “Then why do you say that honor and integrity are your inner qualities?”

Martin explains, “I say this because of an experience I had, which I discussed before. I discovered in meditation an inner light within my consciousness that radiated the qualities of honor and integrity. Because it deeply within my consciousness and because it seemed so pervasive and powerful and filled with infinite potential, and because it seemed so natural to me, I called it my ‘inner quality.’ I am sure there are other names for it.”

Morya continues, “What do you think happens to honor and integrity when you pass from the screen of life?”

Martin says, “When I pass from this embodiment the qualities of honor and integrity will continue to exist, just as they existed before my discovery of them and even before my birth. Honor and integrity are like love and wisdom, beauty and health – they are good things that exist independently of any person or any given period of time. I would say, however, that my life can expand honor and integrity in ways that might not be expressed had I not acted with honor and integrity. That is an act of my free will, my contribution to goodness on earth.”

Morya asks, “Do you think honor and integrity existed before men walked the face of the earth?”

Martin thinks about this and replies, “Well, I am not sure. Honor and integrity are pretty well defined by the human mind. Perhaps they existed as a potential or in some pseudo-form in the animal world before the arrival of humans. We know that maternal love exists in the animal kingdom. While the human mind enables us to define the characteristics of love, the quality itself existed before mankind defined it. That is how I would describe it. Not a very good answer, I’m afraid.”

Morya goes on, “So honor and integrity are not solely creations of the minds of men?”

Martin answers, “I believe that certain qualities exist independently of the mind of men. I am not sure that honor and integrity exist among earthworms or fungus, or on some asteroid hurtling through outer space. But somehow, mankind is able to perceive, define, and deliberately express what already exists as honor and integrity in potential – almost like an embryonic seed. To me, and perhaps me alone, honor and integrity are the highest values in my life.”

[Does the Inner Quality Prove the Existence of God?](#)

Morya persists, “Is there any common element between these inner qualities that perhaps links them to each other?”

Martin replies, “All inner qualities seem to be good qualities, not harmful. And, as far as I can see, expressing them improves one’s own life as well as the lives of others. So they are beneficial to life rather than cruel or destructive. I suppose that is one common thread among these qualities.”

Morya smiles and says, “And that is precisely the point. All of these qualities are by their nature good and beneficial, rather than evil and destructive. If, as you say, Martin, there is an infinite number of these inner qualities, and if they are by their nature good, and if they exist independently of the human mind, what does that tell you about their origin?”

Martin shrugs his shoulders and replies, “To me, it implies the existence of a force of good in life, a force that exists everywhere as a potential that men and women can tap into...if they wish, or if they are fortunate enough to discover it.”

Mark, who has been listening carefully, says, “To me, it proves the existence of God.”

Martin comments, “I think this can be taken as evidence of the existence of God, but it does not prove the existence of God. Some could argue that this force of good is a genetic trait found only on Earth, a place where human beings have evolved. Just because a force of good exists among human beings does not prove that a force of good exists on other systems of worlds. At least, I don’t think it does. Maybe concepts of good and evil are just characteristics of humans. It could be a fluke of nature explained by our DNA.”

Morya says, “This is where we get into the nexus between spiritual existence and material existence. If God exists, as I believe He does, then the spiritual qualities of God exist whether or not the material universe exists. In other words, the Creator contains within Himself (or Herself) the seeds of the Creation. A tree does not bear fruit the moment its seed is planted in the ground.

So, too, the seeds of the Creator take time to grow and mature. Before the fruit can be produced, the plant must reach maturity. In other words, it is natural that God's qualities take time to reach fruition in the consciousness of mankind."

Mark comments, "I like that explanation, Morya, but it still begs the question of whether the force of good can exist if no life exists through which the goodness can be expressed."

Martin answers, "Just because human beings did not walk the face of the earth 5 billion years ago, does not mean that cities cannot be built or books written. The inner quality is something like that. It requires a human being with some degree of higher self-awareness to perceive the inner quality and to act upon its potential. We cannot ask a slug to go forth and do good things."

Morya laughs and says, "Still, even the slug does its part to sustain and nourish life on the planet. In fact, usually it is not the slug that is the problem with peace and harmony on earth. It is man with his advanced capabilities and free will."

Martin acknowledges that observation and says, "All of this is interesting, guys, but what does it have to do with our vacation? We need to decide what to do tomorrow."

Mark and Morya agree with a smile, and the talk turns to planning the next day's activities.

### Day Two: Kremmling

The following morning, the three friends got into Martin's rented Jeep for a trip near Kremmling, where Martin said there were some interesting fossilized trees back in the hills. Knowing Martin's hobby of rock collecting, Mark and Morya agreed and packed a lunch of sandwiches and assorted drinks for the day. They drove from I-70 up Highway 40, over the pass and down into Winter Park. There they stopped for some coffee and then proceeded through Granby and

west along the Colorado River to just past Troublesome, where they turned onto a forest road heading up the Troublesome Creek valley.

After a few miles, they stopped, climbed over an old barbed wire fence, and walked several hundred yards into some ancient pyroclastic flows. Sure enough, as Martin had promised, they soon came across first small pieces and then progressively larger chunks of black petrified wood. Much to everyone's surprise, they eventually discovered what appeared to be a small canyon into which the pyroclastic flow had pushed several huge trees. Over the course of an hour, the men picked up a few large and well defined specimens, and then walked slowly back to the Jeep. They put the specimens into a couple of plastic bins, and spent the next 15 minutes carefully examining their clothes for ticks. Several were found, and Mark and Morya thanked Martin for warning them to de-tick before getting back into the vehicle. Martin nodded as he liberally applied Outdoors spray to his boots, socks, and cuffs.

Getting underway again, Martin drove a few miles before coming to the Black Mountain forest road, where he turned off and began driving higher up the side of an ancient volcano. Eventually, they came to the crater, half of which had collapsed into the valley below. After taking a few pictures and driving a bit further into the forest, they stopped at a clearing and ate a pleasant lunch. Martin then turned the Jeep around and headed back to Denver. This time, they drove through Kremmling and down Highway 9. On the way, Martin stopped beside the Green Mountain Reservoir and pointed to the extensive oil shale deposits in cuts along the road. Picking up a piece, the thick oil coated his fingers. After wiping his hands, he proceeded to Silverthorne where they turned on to I-70 heading east to Denver.

When they arrived in Denver around 7:30 pm, Mark suggested they go to a Chinese carry-out that he frequented. There they ordered several helpings of fried dumplings and side dishes,

amused by the owner of the establishment yelling out instructions in Cantonese to two older male cooks, who seemed reluctant to move as fast as she demanded. As they left, Martin received a broad smile from the owner as she picked up his generous tip on the table.

Returning to Mark's home a little after 9 pm, they retired to their rooms to wash before relaxing in the living room with a glass of iced tea. Everyone said they enjoyed the trip and promised to display their pieces of petrified wood in their homes. After passing around a bowl of chips, Mark picked up the conversation from the previous night.

#### [Link between Life and Consciousness](#)

Mark asks Morya: "For a long time, I have been thinking about an issue that may have relevance here. And that is the connection between consciousness and life. Do you have any insights into this that you could share with us?"

Morya thinks for a moment and then replies, "I think that life and consciousness are like twin flames – they co-exist forever. Life is not confined to the physical form; life exists in many dimensions: God is not physical, yet He lives. Consciousness has many levels as well, each corresponding not only to a specific life but also to the dimensions in which that life exists in a particular form. For example, for human beings, we often talk of sub-consciousness, super consciousness, and the normal consciousness of awareness we have when we are awake. This is a simple model even for humans, for in reality we have many levels of consciousness – all intertwined with the complexity of the life associated with our existence as a soul and as a creation of the Most High. Like an elevator, our higher mind can plunge to the depths or rise to the heights of consciousness almost instantaneously. Especially if it is trained to do so."

Martin comments, "While I can accept that explanation, I cannot prove it to myself because I lack the perception of these life-consciousness interconnections. There are some things, like

understanding God, that seem impossible for human beings to comprehend. This is one reason modern folks question religion and spirituality. They don't see proof of that reality."

Mark says, "Simply because we don't understand something does not mean we should not explore those issues. It is the constant questioning and probing for answers that enable mankind to expand their knowledge both philosophically as well as scientifically."

### [Does the Inner Quality Imply a Spiritual Brotherhood?](#)

Morya comments, "I don't think we have to understand God before we discuss God. I like Martin's explanation of the inner quality. He doesn't know if its origin is in God or if its origin is in the evolution of life. And, in a practical sense, it shouldn't make too much difference to an individual who wants to discover and express his inner quality. The inner quality exists within the deep recesses of the consciousness of the individual. How it got there is another question entirely. But, regardless of its origin, finding and expressing the inner quality can greatly improve a person's outlook on life. On a social scale, the existence of the inner quality as a core of potential goodness within every individual has enormous implications in the way society is organized and governed, and how culture is expressed."

Morya pauses, then continues, "Which brings me to an observation. If the inner quality resides within all of mankind and if the inner quality is a source of almost infinite goodness, then does not that imply that a certain community of goodwill exists among human beings – at least on a spiritual level? It seems to me that goodness is a force in the universe. I sense goodness as a presence in life all around us. We see demonstrations of goodness in the lives of others all the time. If goodness is so widespread, does that not imply a community of goodness among all likeminded souls, at least at some level of consciousness?"

Mark says, “That makes sense to me. I have often felt part of some kind of spiritual community of goodwill, and I frequently meet people who share that feeling. I attribute this to the fact that we are all sons and daughters of God, in the sense that God is the Creator of us all. And if our origin is with God, who is all good, then mustn’t goodness be a part of ourselves as well?”

Martin observes, “Well, theoretically speaking, communities are generally formed because of some commonality. It could be racial, ethnic, geographic, economic, occupational, cultural, and so on. Can a community be formed because of a common sense of goodwill? I suppose it could. Goodwill, after all, is an attitude toward life, a respect for the rights and opportunities of others, a desire not to harm but to improve the quality of life for all. In that sense, everyone who shares the value of goodwill could be considered a member of a community of goodwill. However, I am not sure that all of those who have goodwill actually identify themselves part of a community of kindred souls. And self-identification with a community is an important characteristic of what defines a community. We should ask ourselves: if no one considers themselves to be part of a community, does the community exist? I am not sure it does, other than in some abstract sense. What we are talking about in a community of goodwill is a community of like-minded souls linked at some spiritual or psychological level, which may or may not be part of the individual’s self-awareness. However, throughout history, the belief of there being a spiritual brotherhood or sisterhood of goodness seems to be common. So, I can accept – in principle – the idea of there being such a spiritual community. If it exists, however, then where is it and what kind of communications exist between its members? What difference does it make to our lives in a practical sense?”

Morya responds, “If by practical, you mean an immediate impact on your wallet, then perhaps it is not practical to be a member of a community of goodwill, which I call the brotherhood and

sisterhood of light. If, however, by practical you mean the long-term impact on the soul, then being a member of the brotherhood or sisterhood of light is highly important. Which level of practicality are you referring to, Martin?”

Martin answers, “Let’s look at both.”

Morya nods and continues, “People generally do not understand the multidimensional aspects of themselves. Most people have moments of quiet reflection on spiritual things, but they do not always keep those reflections in mind as they go grocery shopping or watch TV. But the mind can go between channels of consciousness in an instance. A person is all things at once, spiritual and practical, instinctual and deliberate. However, a person’s mind generally focuses only on one or two aspects of consciousness at a time. And that is probably a good thing, because different dimensions hold different kinds of experiences. It could be rather distracting to be driving a car while having simultaneous experiences in another dimensions. Even the most advanced spiritual teachers have to learn to tune in what they want to perceive and to tune out what they don’t want to perceive at any given moment.”

He pauses to drink some tea, then says, “The main point here is that most people have an innate sense of goodness that flows to the outer mind from the level of their soul consciousness. The origin of that goodness is not something taught to them by their parents or in school. The origin is within themselves. Goodness is part of their character. Their actions, feelings, thoughts, and memories may not always be good, but their higher-level motivations and intentions are good. It is this sense of inner goodness – shared by millions of souls on this planet – that binds them into a spiritual community of goodwill.”

Mark asks, “But awareness of this goodness varies between people. Why is that?”

Morya answers, “True. People do vary in their sensitivity to their inner goodness, just as they vary in their musical talent or way with words.”

Martin says, “I think there is an important lesson here. People do vary in their perception and expression of goodness. I have seen how some people just act naturally with a good heart. I have asked a few of them why they act with goodwill toward others, and they almost always say it is just the right thing to do. There are others, like me I confess, who sometimes struggle to be good. I often wonder why that is.”

Morya replies, “That is indeed the case. There are some people – we sometimes call them saints – who are almost perfectly good. Somehow, their varied paths led them to the point where the goodness within became the goodness without. They are fully integrated with their soul. And this is really the goal of the human soul on earth: to become in the outer world the fullness of the inner quality within. These fully integrated individuals truly are the brothers and sisters of the light.”

Martin asks, “But are the saints real, or just the honored memories of great men and women of the past?”

Mark says, “Oh, they are real all right. They are the ones we pray to for all kinds of spiritual assistance.”

Morya adds, “The brotherhood and sisterhood of light is composed of saints. Yet, the saints are individuals just like ourselves – just a bit more spiritually advanced. In reality, therefore, we are all members of the spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood of light and goodness. The difference between the saints and ourselves is the degree of integration with the godflame within.”

Martin asks, “By godflame, do you mean the inner quality?”

Morya answers, “Not exactly. The godflame is the spark of individuality. The unique character of that individual spark is the inner quality. The godflame exists in a spiritual dimension and remains as God created it. The inner quality is the potential expression of that godflame. The inner quality has both a spiritual as well as a material dimension, in that the inner quality gradually emerges into outer human consciousness through a process of evolution – or spiritual maturation, if you will. As the individual expresses more of the inner quality, his outer consciousness takes on more attributes of the soul. At a certain point, the individual in embodiment fully expresses the character of the soul, thus making congruent the outer consciousness with the godflame within. That is what occurs in a saint.”

Martin says, “That may be true, Morya, but if one thinks the inner quality is only an evolutionary phenomenon, then one is not likely to believe in the saints or in a spiritual world.”

Morya continues, “Human belief is not too important in this process. What is important is for the individual to live with goodness in his heart. Faith is important for one’s spiritual growth, but God does not require that we worship Him. Besides, all paths of goodwill lead to God, regardless of whether we start on the path of believing goodness is an evolutionary trait or on the path of believing goodness has its origins in God. God only requires that we seek to live in peace and harmony with our fellow man. The end point of integration remains the same. Eventually, we find ourselves in a proper relationship with our Creator.”

Mark says, “The concept of there being an actual brotherhood and sisterhood of light is intriguing and one that we should explore further. However, as the hour is late, I suggest we call it a night and get some rest for a new adventure tomorrow.”

As everyone starts to take their glasses to the kitchen, Martin can't resist a final question: "Guys, I am confused about one thing. Why is there a separate brotherhood and sisterhood of light? Isn't that kind of sexist?"

Morya and Mark laugh, and Mark explains: "The term 'brotherhood and sisterhood' of light is an old term used in spiritual teachings for centuries. In reality, there is only a single 'community of light' in which both male and female souls and saints are members. God is not a 'He' or a 'She' or even an 'It'. These are just human terms that reflect our habits of language. There is no sexism in heaven, only good souls working together to improve the quality of life for all of God's creation."

Martin says, "Thank you, Mark, for that explanation. I can rest easier tonight." They all smile and retire for the evening.

### Day Three: Denver and Breckenridge

#### Can the Existence of the Spiritual World Be Proven?

The next morning over a breakfast of eggs and toast, bacon and coffee, Martin asks, "One thing that has always concerned me, Morya, is the difficulty of proving the existence of a spiritual world. You would think, if there were both a spiritual world and a material world, that such a dual world would be widely perceived and even scientifically verified. If it cannot be proved, then dimensions beyond the here and now may be pure speculation. Why should people try to improve themselves, if there is no proof of a spiritual realm in which the unfairness of our world is somehow balanced and justice served?"

Morya replies, "There is not a dual universe of spirit and matter. There are an infinite number of universes that various species perceive they live in. The universe you think of as reality, Martin,

is different from the universe I perceive of as reality. And the same is true with Mark and every other human being on this planet, and in fact with every other form of life anywhere in existence. Is there a single reality which encompasses it all? I presume so at the very highest levels of awareness, but here on earth we lack the instruments to perceive and measure the singularity of existence. Even the idea of existence does not encompass the totality of reality, because there are stages of pre-existence and post-existence which reside outside the boundaries of what we normally would consider as existence.”

Martin asks, “But if reality is unknowable, then how can there be reality – at least insofar as everyday human life is concerned? Why bother to speculate on these things? Why use the unknowable as a moral guide to our behavior? Why not just live in the here and now as comfortably as we can and forget about hypothetical plans for the universe?”

Mark chuckles and says, “We are concerned with things outside of our normal sphere of perception and understanding because all dimensions are interconnected. We cannot live in isolation from the rest of life or the rest of the universe. So, to the extent that we can, we must seek to understand what lies beyond our immediate senses: to probe the depths of the ocean, to explore the far reaches of the galaxy. Human beings are by their nature explorers and adventurers. This quest for pushing back the boundaries of human understanding is written in our DNA. We cannot ignore it. We must follow our instincts to question and theorize. It is this internal impulse to transcend life as it currently exists that ultimately leads all souls back to God – the origin and ending of everything.”

Martin responds, “Some people are convinced that Jesus will one day return and establish a kingdom on earth in which the faithful will live forever and perhaps enjoy a good suburban lifestyle. Some people believe that if they blow themselves up along with a busload of children

they will be welcomed into heaven by beautiful women waiting to please them. I have heard many preachers say that their way is the only way, and that all other paths lead to damnation. I have seen the faithful pray to Jesus, to the Buddha, to gods and goddesses of all descriptions, and they firmly believe that their prayers can bring intervention and miracles. I have listened to those who say that God only talks to the hierarchs of the church, and others who say that God will talk to anyone with an open heart. I have heard people speaking in tongues, and listened to those who dismiss this as superstition. What I am trying to say, Mark, is that, while religiosity is nearly universal among mankind, there are dozens of religions, hundreds of rituals, and thousands of beliefs among the faithful. Many of these are contradictory. So where does that leave us?"

Mark replies, "It is better to be spiritual and a little wrong in one's beliefs than to have no spiritual ideals and no religion. If for no other reason, having a religion is good in that it helps a person know the difference between moral and immoral behavior. As individuals, we are better off believing in God than not believing in God."

Martin comments, "You may be right. I have often thought that, if God did not exist, then someone would invent Him. Human beings seem to need something more noble and honorable than themselves. In that sense, belief in God is one of the most important evolutionary advances of all time. However, I am concerned not with the utility of belief in God but in the factualness of God. How do we know that there is such a thing as a brotherhood and sisterhood of light? How do we know there really are saints and souls, and heaven and hell?"

Morya says, "Let's back up a moment and consider how we know truth. Can we know the totality of truth? Absolutely not. Can we know the truth as it applies to us? Yes, in part. Knowing the reality of ourselves and the truth as we can comprehend it are the very first steps we take before we begin to understand the wider realities of life."

He continues, “Self-knowledge is the essential foundation for understanding the multiple dimensions of life. Each of us live within a vast network of dimensions; we are like hubs, linked to other hubs through myriad channels of energy. Our conscious mind and outer awareness are not the sum total of who we are. Our understanding of ourselves is the doorway through which we can learn more about life. Without this internal knowing, we can be taught all kinds of things; but unless our perceptions be sharpened, the lessons taught to us by others will have very little impact on our daily lives. If we do not have an experience that teaches us the existence of things spiritual, then listening to the spiritual experiences of others may be interesting but not informative of truth. This is why the brotherhood and sisterhood of light (or community of light, if you prefer) emphasize that we improve our self-understanding, and not be content to merely sit at the foot of the master. We need to actively engage our minds in self-discovery.”

At this point Mark nods toward the clock on the wall and says, “As enlightening as this conversation is, I suggest we head out to the mountains before lunch so we can clear our minds and whet our appetites. I want to drive out to Breckenridge and take a gondola ride.”

Martin and Morya set about preparing snacks while Mark puts the dishes into the dishwasher. A half hour later they were in Mark’s SUV driving west out I-70 toward Highway 9 and the famous ski resort of Breckenridge.

The drive was beautiful, although they encountered several delays on I-70, the first being just east of Idaho Springs, as blasting continued on the Twin Tunnels area. The second occurred on the eastern approaches to Eisenhower Tunnel, where a semi had overheated and stopped in the right-hand lane of traffic. And, closer to Breckenridge on Highway 9, there was bridge work on the Blue River. During these delays, the three friends relaxed and continued their conversation from the morning.

### Self-Knowledge Is the Foundation for Knowing Reality

Mark says, “I apologize for the delays. It seems this summer all major roads in the state are in need of repair.” Morya nods from the passenger seat and looks out the window. Martin observes that road construction is in high gear everywhere across the nation.

Martin then asks, “Morya, you mentioned this morning that self-knowledge was the best place to begin to understand reality. What did you mean by that?”

Morya says, “As human beings we have similar sensory instruments: we see, hear, taste, smell, and feel pretty much the same. Because we are human beings, we have a common sense of the general reality in which we live. However, no two persons’ sensory apparatuses are the same. This is part of what makes us individuals. Our sense of individuality is closely related to how we perceive the world. In other words, each of us lives in a slightly different reality. What is real to you is not necessarily what is real to me, and vice versa.”

Mark adds, “And it is impossible for two people to share their reality. I cannot transfer my perception of reality to you and you cannot transfer your perception of reality to me. That is why we do not always agree with our wives or even between ourselves.”

Morya smiles and continues, “That said, our self-awareness and consciousness are constantly adjusting to new perceptions and new understanding as we experience new things and digest what these experiences might mean to us. Some people recalibrate their reality deliberately and often; others change their views more slowly. But we all adjust our sense of reality over time, usually unconsciously. Think about what you knew of the world as an infant and what you know today. Your soul is the same whether you are in a child’s body or an adult’s body. But your understanding of reality has changed considerably. It will continue to change throughout your entire life...and lifetimes.”

Morya takes a drink of water, then says, “So we are a single individual, and we have an understanding of reality that constantly changes. We are a single grain of sand among trillions of other grains of sand. We are not alone, but we cannot share our reality with others. What I can do is explore reality from my own perspective. And, remarkably, there is no limit to the expansion of my understanding of my own reality.”

Martin reflects upon this and comments, “I think what you are saying, Morya, is that people should seek to understand and expand their own sense of reality. That exploration is key to broadening one’s comprehension of life and its many mysteries. But if that is the case, then why read books or listen to lectures?”

Mark answers, “When you read or listen you need to internalize what you are seeing and hearing in order to learn. Otherwise, the words are just data that have no meaningful connection in your mind. To understand what others are saying, you need to digest its meaning in the context of your own experience. In this way, your own sense of reality expands. Your mind has to process the outside information in the same way it processes other experiences in your life. This occurs naturally, but the pace of understanding can be increased if you draw upon the experiences of others and internalize their meaning to you.”

Martin observes, “This must be one of the reasons why personal freedom is so important. It is natural for people to expand their understanding. This attribute of self-awareness is inherent in human life, and nothing can stop it. If governments try to restrict the personal development of their citizens, there inevitably will be social upheaval. In today’s age, when understanding and education are expanding exponentially, we need to develop new models of governance that allow and protect individual growth and self-expression, while also encourage the interaction and cooperation between diverse elements of society. All while ensuring the proper and efficient

functioning of government, including providing security. This is not easy to accomplish, especially when many government officials often try to control their populations. Instead, their focus should be on enabling citizens to become the best individuals possible.”

Mark says, “Hey, guys. We’re arriving at Breckenridge. Do we want to eat lunch down here – probably a better selection for the money – or do we want to go up the gondola to the ski lodge and eat there – less of a selection and more expensive, but a good view?”

After a moment of discussion, the three friends decided to park at the Breckenridge Station and take the Breck Connect Gondola up the mountain to the ski lodge far above town.

The gondola offered a spectacular view of the surrounding mountains, town, and countryside. For about 15 minutes, the friends swayed back and forth over the construction of winter homes on the slope and bogs populated by beaver. Mark commented on how much the area had built up since he was last here, and Martin openly marveled at the huge lift towers.

At the ski lodge, the men walked around a bit and then went inside to order a pizza and soft drinks. After getting their order, they went outside to the large patio and sat down, watching the young and adventurous travel up the lifts and come flying down the zipline or Alpine Slide. Mark asked if either of his friends wanted to try the rides, but both shook their head. Martin remembered the days, not long past, when he would have leaped at these opportunities.

After about an hour, the men returned to the gondola for the ride down. Mark said that most of the pricey homes were vacant during the summer, but completely filled with the rich and famous during the ski season. They grabbed some coffee in town, and then drove back to Denver, with a short stop at Tommyknocker, the famous Idaho Springs brewery. Mark bought some root beer and Martin got a six-pack of various crafted beers. Morya was amused by the large copper vats

rising from the basement to high above the patrons on the main floor. “Quite an operation,” he was heard to say.

Forty minutes later, they were pulling into Mark’s driveway. After freshening up, they prepared a light dinner of pasta, French bread, and salad, which they leisurely ate while discussing the day’s trip. They then cleared the dishes and sat down in the living room to enjoy the evening’s cool air and friendly conversation.

### Balancing Personal Freedom and Social Order

Martin says, “Earlier today, we agreed that personal freedom is necessary for an individual to grow spiritually. This is because every individual has a different set of perceptions, based on their senses, values, level of rationality, intuitive skills, mental capacity, life experiences, and so on. We have many things in common as human beings, but we have significant differences in the details. We see God differently; we sense our soul – if we sense it at all – differently; we have different aspirations of the way life ought to be and how to get there. So, the question I have is this: how can mankind be governed if, under the principle of freedom, all of these differences need to be respected? To me, there is something of a contradiction between freedom of the individual and the maintenance of social order.”

Mark tries to answer, “It would seem obvious that all governments must balance personal freedom and social order, as well as other hard choices, such as which social programs should receive higher priority when resources are limited. Government is a practical art, certainly not a science. What was good governance yesterday may not be good governance today or in the future. There were good and bad kings and there are good and bad presidents. Unlike gravity, which applies to all humans living on earth at all times, governance changes constantly, depending upon variables such as history, philosophy, culture, resources, technology, geography,

etc. To the point, Martin: I believe mankind should be governed in a balanced way, suitable to its time and place, sometimes emphasizing personal freedom, sometimes pursuing social order.

Never neglecting the one for the other.”

Morya then adds, “The basic issue here is that government must maintain order among individuals with free will. Just as free will leads people to pursue various paths, so the style of governance varies naturally as well. No system of government is everywhere appropriate at all times. Yet, government must exist as an alternative to anarchy and chaos, which would result in suffering on a massive scale.”

He pauses and continues, “We ought to remember that the universe is populated by trillions upon trillions of individualized spirits, the human variety we call souls. On earth, through the ages, there have been different waves of souls, such that, at any given time, there are people who have older souls than others. The more mature souls have had many more lifetimes of experience than the younger souls. These levels of experience, coupled with the lessons that need to be learned, influence the type of government most appropriate to a specific group of souls at a specific time in their spiritual evolution. Since the purpose of life on earth is for the individual soul to master the use free will – that is, to learn how to create in ways reflective of their own inner quality – the circumstances of their life will have to vary: depending on the lessons to be learned. Adding to this mixture of younger and older souls evolving at the same time is the element of karma. Karma is the great teacher of mankind. You make a decision, you reap the results of that decision. The laws of karma help the soul learn, through countless actions and reactions, the proper use of free will. The earth is a schoolroom, and the souls here – when they graduate – move on to other schools and universities. Life does not begin and end here on earth. In short, no government system is perfect and no government system is permanent.”

## Spiritual Evolution

Martin asks, “I can see how souls evolve on earth, but do members of the community of light evolve as well?”

Morya says, “Actually, the brotherhood and sisterhood of light is composed not only of heavenly beings and saints. Community membership, if you will, extends beyond the spiritual dimension to souls embodied here on earth. The ‘light’ that is referred to in the name ‘brotherhood and sisterhood of light’ references the purity of God’s will that is infinitely varied in color and wavelength as it passes through the prism of individual consciousness. What you term, Martin, as your inner quality of honor and integrity is such a wavelength. You perceived it as kind of a teal green. It is part of the pure light of God, yet distinct from other wavelengths or colors or inner qualities. God is like a gardener, who sows an infinite number of seeds. Some seeds mature faster than others; some bear more fruit than others; all are somewhat different. There is nothing wrong with this diversity. It speaks to the glory of God that He would imbue all of Creation with portions of Himself so that, through free will, more of His perfection could be made manifest in the planes of matter and spirit. It is a marvelous design and an incredible architecture. One which we should respect and feel honored to be part of.”

Martin comments, “So God expressed His goodness in the most perfect way possible. First, God planted seeds of His consciousness in our souls. And then, God gave our souls free will and the opportunity to experience the joy of discovering those inner qualities and learning how to express them. That really is a magnificent concept.”

Mark adds, “I, too, am amazed at the intricacy of the design: geometric, asymmetric, fluid, constantly changing. As to how it relates to us practically, I think each of us has a responsibility to think and act in ways congruent with our inner quality. When we do that, we are congruent

with the will of God, because God is the origin of our inner quality. To maximize our potential we must embrace the responsibility of being a son or daughter of God and make responsible decisions with the energy and skill we have in the time and space we occupy.”

Morya says, “In one sense, every son and daughter of God is a member of the community of light. However, not every son or daughter of God understands this at the conscious level. Some sons and daughters of God are more advanced spiritually than others. While in embodiment, the most advanced often are teachers or prophets. When they pass on to spiritual planes, they are sometimes referred to as saints or masters. The terms don’t matter too much. What matters is that there is a spiritual hierarchy of sons and daughters of God who have graduated from the schoolroom of earth and who inspire or otherwise assist their brethren who remain in embodiment. How do they assist? Mostly, they help people discover and master their own inner qualities. The spiritual masters are just like you and me, except they have greater self-mastery in expressing their inner qualities, have balanced more of their karma, and have gone through a transformative process to a higher level of consciousness.”

Martin asks, “What kind of transformative process?”

Morya just smiles and Mark answers, “I don’t know. I haven’t been there yet.”

Martin then asks, “If the saints are our elder brothers and sisters, why don’t they help us more?

Why can’t I see them?”

Morya replies, “Most of us don’t see the saints and masters because our spiritual senses are not yet fully developed. The spiritual world is at a different wavelength or dimension than what we normally see here. The physical eye cannot see the saints any more than we can see radio waves or X-rays. We do have spiritual sensory organs, called chakras in the East, which are able to

perceive spiritual levels. But they have to mature, just as an infant's eyes have to develop before he can see the world around him.”

Mark adds, “As to why they don't help us more, I think the answer has to be that we need to master the use of our free will, so heavenly help in our decision making is constrained by the great laws of karma.”

### Faith or Good Works

Martin says, “All of these explanations put an interesting twist on the old faith versus works argument. Does one please God more by having complete faith in Him or by doing good works here on earth?”

Morya replies, “God is much greater than any of us. He is big enough to embrace both faith and good works, and more besides. Our souls may need to learn faith in one lifetime, and how to act properly in another. Judging God is impossible from a human perspective. Nor do I believe any man can comprehend the totality of God's will. The best we can do is to identify within ourselves the seed of God within – the inner quality as we have called it – and then try to become more of that quality by expressing it on every opportunity until it becomes ingrained in our outer consciousness as our predominant character. I believe this is what God intended from the beginning.”

Mark comments, “Our primary goal in life is to become our real self. Nothing could be simpler than that.”

Martin says, “Yes, that is a simple prescription. And I agree with it totally. But, in a practical sense, the challenges for the individual to realize that simple guidance can be significant. These challenges run the gamut from social pressure to oppressive governments, overzealous religious

leaders to complex karmic interactions, and excessive egoism to deep psychological trauma. All these things and more weigh us down in our minds and hearts and spirit. As hard as I work to express my inner quality, there are times when I fail or could use some help.”

Morya responds, “And that precisely is one of the roles of the brotherhood and sisterhood of light. Its members will provide, if asked and if possible within karmic law, help to humanity. But we should not take that help for granted. Ultimately, we – as individuals and society – are responsible for our actions and decisions.”

There was quiet in the room for a few moments, and then Mark suggested everyone relax for the rest of the evening. The Rockies and Padres were playing in San Diego and he wanted to catch the game on TV. Martin thought the idea was great and went to the refrigerator to get a Tommyknocker. Morya politely excused himself, saying he wanted to read for a while before going to bed.

#### Day Four: Moab

Early the next morning, after a quick bite of cereal and toast, the three friends got into Mark’s SUV and headed out I-70 toward Moab, Utah. The 10-11 hour round trip would be exhausting, but the reputation of Canyonlands and Arches National Parks was too tempting to ignore. None of them had seen the parks and they looked forward to the hikes and pictures they would take.

The trip across the border into Utah down Highway 191 was smooth. Their first stop, other than for gas, was into Arches Park. There, they drove to various scenic sights along the paved roads. The parking lots were mostly full, so they had to pass by slowly and stop on the road to take a few pictures. They were able to get out a couple of times to walk to some of the closer arches and were astonished by what millions of years of interaction between wind, water, and sandstone

could create. By late afternoon they were ready to leave the Park, so they discussed whether to spend the night in Moab, or drive quickly through the Canyonlands Park. Deciding on the latter, they drove into Canyonlands and concentrated on touring the Island in the Sky.

The Island in the Sky is a vast mesa resting atop sheer sandstone cliffs more than a thousand feet high. As they drove along the paved road, they came across many pullouts with spectacular views of deep canyons. As tempted as they were to try out some of the 4-wheel drive trails, their time was limited so they were content to get out often, peer over the cliffs, and take numerous pictures of the gorges carved out of the sandstone by the Colorado River and its tributaries. The setting sun added depth and shadow to the scenery, making it all the more picturesque. Around 7:30, they drove out of the Park and went into Moab for a quick dinner before heading back to Denver.

Returning to I-70, they drove to Grand Junction where they stopped for gas. Mark accepted Martin's offer to drive, and Martin picked up a tall latte at a nearby Starbucks. Mark sat in the back seat and stretched out to nap for a few minutes, while Morya checked his cell phone messages. A few miles down the interstate, Morya turns his head and asks Martin: "So, do you have any further questions about the brotherhood and sisterhood of light?"

#### [Are People Part of the Brotherhood and Sisterhood of Light?](#)

Martin passes a slow moving truck up one of the many inclines and responds, "I guess my main question has to do with how individuals in embodiment can be members of the brotherhood and not know it. Also, whether membership in the community of light requires a certain level of spiritual attainment, or is it a birthright of being human?"

Morya nods and answers, "There are a couple of ways to look at this. In most conversations, it is assumed that the brotherhood and sisterhood of light are ascended beings – advanced souls,

masters, saints, if you will – who have learned the lessons of life in the physical planes and who have moved on to spiritual dimensions. In other conversations, it is assumed that the brotherhood and sisterhood also include advanced souls on earth who are aware of their connection to God and His spiritual hierarchy. These souls are at the doorstep of their ascension to spiritual planes, where they will continue their evolution. In other conversations, the community of light includes souls of goodwill still evolving on this planet who may not know of this community of lightbearers, but who feel close to God and try to improve their character in daily life. So, really, the brotherhood and sisterhood of light has many different meanings, depending upon which group of souls you are referring to.”

Martin thinks about this and observes, “If we assume the largest definition, then does that not mean that every man, woman, and child is a member of the brotherhood or sisterhood of light?”

Morya replies, “In one sense that is true. All souls created by God have been given a gift of one or more of His attributes – what you call the inner quality. This is the birthright of all humanity. But it is a bit more complicated than that. Whereas all souls may be members of the brotherhood and sisterhood of light broadly speaking, men and women have free will. So it is possible for an individual to give up his birthright from God, and decide to pursue a path of complete rebellion against the Creator. Fortunately, these rebellious souls are relatively few in number, but they do exist and they can cause problems in certain planes of existence. The circumstances of a soul’s complete rebellion against God vary with the individual, but often occur because of too great of an ego, too much love of power, or some resentment for a wrong that the soul blames God for. Theoretically, it is possible for even a highly advanced soul to rebel against God. Almost all religions have myths about the origin of evil. But, essentially, evil is deliberate rebellion against God and a free will determination to degrade what is good wherever it might be found. There is

not a natural force of anti-God in the universe, but there is a force of evil created by souls who have rebelled against God and rejected His goodness.”

### Who Are The Fallen Ones?

Martin reflects for a while and then offers, “I think I can understand a bit of the motivation of some of these fallen ones. What is difficult for me to imagine, however, is how such rebellion could blind the individual to the magnificence of God and His goodwill toward His creation. It is hard for me to understand how any part of life would want to harm others, simply to demonstrate their hatred of God and all things good. I understand the role of hunters and predators, human or otherwise. But to kill an innocent child for the pleasure of mayhem crosses a moral line.”

Morya says, “You are right. There is a difference and there is a line that is crossed. God knows where that line is, and usually the soul crossing that line is aware of it as well. Once that line is crossed, it often is difficult for the soul to embrace God’s will. Think of the story of Jesus preaching to the fallen ones, many of whom asked, ‘what have we to do with thee?’ God always has room in His heart for the prodigal son, as long as the son still loves the Father and asks to be forgiven and cleansed of his sins. There is a vast difference between the soul who truly loves God but who has strayed in life, and the soul who hates God and wants to destroy all of His creation.”

Martin asks, “What happens to those souls who hate God so much that they seek to destroy all that is good?”

Morya responds, “Most religions have their heavens and hells, but I learned long ago that God’s justice is something hard for humans to understand. So I can’t really answer your question.”

## Does Man Need God?

Martin then asks, “Morya, forgive me for asking this, but it does seem germane: Why do we have to have God in the first place? Why can’t nature and life’s evolution be a sufficient explanation for the existence of the inner quality and the goodwill present in most – if not all – of humanity? Is God a reality, or is God a creation of the mind of man?”

Morya laughs, then says, “Well, that is a question that has been discussed for thousands of years. The answer, I suppose, is that every individual has to answer the question for themselves. If I tell you ‘God exists,’ then how do I prove it? If I tell you ‘God does not exist,’ then how do I prove it? Some things are best left to self-discovery. Do you think God exists, Martin?”

Martin says, “Yes, I do. And that belief, while subjective, is based on some spiritual experiences and some logical thought. At the same time, however, in all honesty, sometimes I can see where life’s evolution could explain many of the things normally attributed to God. So, I try to be objective in my mind, although my heart is true to God.”

Morya replies, “That is as good an explanation as any I have heard, Martin. Now, if you excuse me, I am going to close my eyes for a moment and let you drive in peace.”

Martin smiles at his older friend and continues to drive towards Denver, arriving around 2 am. Along the way, in the quiet and comfort of the SUV, Martin thought about many things: the people he had known, the things he did that he shouldn’t have and things he didn’t do that he regretted. He thought about the karmic debt he owed to so many people; the cross-roads he had faced and the choices he had made, never knowing what might have happened had he gone the other way. But most of all, he thought about his children and how much he loved and missed them.

## Day Five: Denver and Florissant Fossil Beds

The following morning was rainy and surprisingly cool for early summer in Denver, so the friends ate a leisurely breakfast and relaxed for the morning in Mark's comfortable home. Taking their coffee to the living room, they watched Mark light a small stack of logs in the fireplace.

### Responsibilities of Spiritual Masters

As the fire slowly caught on, Mark turns his head and says, "One thing we haven't yet discussed in regards to the brotherhood and sisterhood of light is the role of God's will. I have been wondering for some time, Morya, whether members of the brotherhood and sisterhood are assigned responsibilities through some kind of governance process, or whether the members – being aligned with God's will – automatically know what to do?"

Morya thinks for a moment and then answers, "Let's start with a human being and his or her innate inner quality. Let's say that inner quality is an ability to compose beautiful music that brings into harmony the emotions of those who listen to it. A great gift, a great talent, something that is good for mankind, something that is pleasing to God. This person has free will and has a soul which is learning to use that free will. Lifetime after lifetime that soul embodies. The soul in embodiment gradually comes to understand its gift and seeks to master its expression. At a certain point, in the natural evolution of things, the soul in embodiment begins to understand that its free will in wanting to compose beautiful music and God's will for the music to be composed are really the same thing. The key is whether the soul is expressing its inner quality. It is God's will that the soul evolve. There is, in other words, an evolutionary dimension of God's will. In an important sense, the soul adds to God's creation as the soul masters and expresses its inner quality – which is, after all, a potential given to the soul by the Creator. God's creation is highly dynamic, always evolving, and filled with infinite potential."

He pauses and continues, “To bring it to the discussion of the brotherhood and sisterhood of light: The members of this community are souls who have different levels of self-mastery and self-awareness. Some are more spiritually advanced than others. Some are more accomplished than others. Some have greater mastery in a particular area than others. But all are part of the brotherhood and sisterhood of light because all are dedicated to the expression of the inner quality given to them by God. But the degree of perfection of these individual souls is different. There is recognition of this difference in spiritual planes, so those who have less mastery look to those with greater mastery for guidance and assistance on certain matters. All the brothers and sisters of light have free will. But within the spiritual brotherhood, there is a hierarchy of greater and lesser mastery in given areas. One master, for example, may have greater understanding of the will of God; another, greater understanding of the love or wisdom of God. This hierarchy of degrees of mastery is reflected in areas of responsibility and authority, so that a master of the will of God would have greater responsibility and authority in that area, for example. Hierarchy in heaven is a natural ordering of levels of self-mastery and degrees of integration with God. Those having less mastery tend to listen to those with greater mastery, and those with greater mastery share their wisdom with others.”

Martin comments, “But we have said, in one definition at least, that the brotherhood and sisterhood of light extends to all human beings in embodiment. For this category of members, the ones in embodiment, what is the correct balance between following one’s own interpretation of one’s inner quality and following the guidance of the brotherhood and sisterhood who dwell in higher spiritual dimensions?”

### Basing Decisions on One's Best Character

Mark chuckles and Morya says, "Correct balance? That probably is not the right way to ask the question. The best solution in one circumstance might not be the best approach in another circumstance. On earth, evolution in physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions is paramount for the soul. Earth is a schoolroom, a training camp for human souls. There is a growth sequence most souls go through. There is a time of the soul's infancy; there is a time of the soul's maturity; there is a time of the soul's graduation to higher dimensions of life. Remember the flow of God's will we spoke of earlier. God does not expect the infant soul to behave as the adult soul. God does not expect the soul living in the planes of matter to behave like the soul living in the planes of spirit. On earth, as a person discovers and explores his or her inner quality, there is a great deal of freedom for the individual – like mastering a computer game or learning to drive a car. No one expects mastery from a young person first learning how to play soccer. No one expects mastery from a soul in embodiment first learning to be his or her real self."

He continues, "What I am saying is that, here on earth, it is appropriate to follow one's own direction in expressing the inner quality. And it is also appropriate to ask for guidance and assistance from the brotherhood and sisterhood of light. Eventually, however, one will probably recognize that in order to maximize one's contribution to life, one must work in harmony with the elder brothers and sisters on the path, while at the same time striving to improve oneself. Does that answer your question?"

Martin nods and thanks Morya, while Mark turns on the television to check the afternoon's weather. "Hey," he says, "the rain should be ending soon. Let's pack up a lunch and head down

to see the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument – one of the nation’s best preserved ancient forests.” Martin and Morya liked the idea and everyone began to prepare for the outing.

About 45 minutes later, the men got into Mark’s SUV and headed south on I-25 to Colorado Springs, where they took Highway 24 west to the small village of Florissant and then turned south a short distance to the National Monument. It was early afternoon by the time they arrived, so they had a pleasant picnic on a table near the Visitors Center. They then walked the self-guided Petrified Forest Loop to see the massive, petrified Sequoia trees – some of the largest diameter petrified trees in the world.

They spent about two hours at the Monument, and then returned to Colorado Springs. At Mark’s suggestion, they turned into Rudy’s Country Store for some barbeque. Taking three dinners to go, the men continued on to Denver and Mark’s home. Upon arriving, they immediately sat out the carry-out and Martin offered each of his friends one of his prized Tommyknocker brews. Morya politely declined, accepting iced tea instead. When they had finished, Mark took out a pint of Haagen Dazs pineapple-coconut ice cream to balance the spicy sandwiches.

#### [Is It Better to Accomplish Great Things or to Grow Spiritually?](#)

A half-hour later, the men were seated in the living room watching an episode of the Bering Sea gold miners on the Weather Channel. Martin asks his two friends, “I have a question for you: is it better for an individual to accomplish great things in life or to express his inner quality?”

Mark uses the remote to turn off the TV and says, “Why can’t a person do both?”

Morya says, “It is possible to do both, but it is not always easy under all circumstances.”

Martin asks, “Can you elaborate a bit on that?”

Morya answers, “It is sometimes useful to look at our life as intertwining spirals, with our consciousness moving from point to point on these various spirals. No human is capable of being aware of all things at once; the mind finds it easier to concentrate, to focus on one aspect of life at a time. It takes a while, but progress is made and, eventually, integration of one’s soul and outer consciousness will normally occur. In most cases, many embodiments are required for this process. But time is relative: time in the human sense here on earth is quite different from time at the level of the soul.

“Anyway, over its period of maturation, the soul needs to learn and experience many things. On one occasion, it may need to learn the art of parenting; on another occasion, the soul may need to learn social responsibility; on another, how to protect the innocent; on another, how to meditate and contemplate on spiritual matters; on another, the need for sacrifice for the good of others. Each of these lessons learned by the soul may require a different embodiment: sometimes in this civilization, sometimes in that; sometimes with this talent being expressed, sometimes with another talent. All of us have had to learn many, many lessons to be where we are now in terms of our spiritual evolution. And, believe me, our journey in life has just begun. Even among the heavenly brotherhood and sisterhood of light, there are multiple levels of consciousness, as each spiritual being comprehends more and more of the majesty of God and the Creation.

“To all extent and purposes, then, our evolution is endless. It is not really endless, of course, for even the universe has its cycles. But, from the human perspective, our soul’s evolution has no beginning and no end. So, to answer your question, Martin, what is ‘better’ is relative to the evolution of the soul at a given point in time and space, matter and spirit. A person can accomplish great things, internalize his or her inner quality, or both – and more besides – depending upon the lessons of life the soul needs to learn or what the soul wants to do in a

particular embodiment. That is the beauty of free will and the greatness of God. Opportunity for each of us is almost infinite to develop our talents, advance our spiritual understanding, and make our contributions to life.”

### [Does the Spiritual Brotherhood Have a Single Consciousness?](#)

Mark raises a new point. “Along these lines, I have a question about consciousness. Does the spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood of light have a single consciousness – as implied by the term ‘spirit’ – or do each of its members have a separate consciousness? And if separate, how do they coordinate, since different perspectives can lead to different conclusions as to proper actions and plans?”

Martin comments, “That is a very good question, and it gets to the heart of how it is possible to have so many different levels of consciousness functioning as one under the universality of God.”

Morya tries to explain. “Let’s discuss first the issue of whether there is a single ‘spirit’ of the brotherhood and sisterhood of light. What does that actually mean? It does not mean that there is only a single consciousness among its members. In part, by ‘spirit’ is meant a shared dedication to the fulfillment of the will of God on earth and in all other dimensions. The ‘spirit’ is a deep personal sense of conscious alignment with the will of God – a shared dedication to goodwill toward all of life. The masters know and trust one another because of their common spirit or commitment to the glory of God.”

He continues, “As to how they coordinate, this is common among most lifeforms. Where there is a common purpose, there is cooperation and coordination between members of the community, spiritual or otherwise. So it is with the brotherhood and sisterhood of light. Its members work together for the common good of the fulfillment of God’s will. There are discussions, even

debate, between members who might have a different approach to some issue. But these differences are resolved in the masters' own way and a common path forward and cooperation are the inevitable outcome.”

Mark stands up and begins to clear the cups off the table. He says, “My friends, tomorrow is our last day, so let's grab some sleep and meet over breakfast to discuss our plans for the morning before your afternoon flights.” With that, everyone retires for the evening.

#### Day Five: Denver Tornado

Martin awoke the next morning from the sound of thunder close by. He looked out the window to see a very darkened sky with rapidly moving clouds, which looked rather menacing. He walked to the living room and turned on the television, surprised to learn that Denver was under a tornado warning until 11 am. Strange, he thought, tornadoes don't usually form in the morning. The tornado warning on the Weather Channel woke Mark and Morya, who came in to watch the latest forecast. Sipping his coffee, Mark said that tornadoes do occur in Denver but they were fairly rare. He couldn't recall one developing so early in the season.

Mark went into the kitchen to fix breakfast, while Martin and Morya went to the deck to watch the gathering storm. There was considerable dust blowing east of Denver and several intense, localized thunderstorms were dropping rain in various locations. Where they were in Lakewood, only a few drops of rain were felt, but the winds were getting gusty. After a while, they went into the dining room to eat the eggs and toast prepared by Mark and listen to reports from local television.

Since both Morya and Martin's flights were scheduled to depart in mid-afternoon, they were especially keen on airport closures or postponed flights. These began to come in about 9:00, but a check on the United website confirmed their respective flights were still on schedule.

Drinking their coffee and juice around the table, the friends decided to stay at the house before leaving for the airport around 12:30 pm. After helping to clear the dishes, Martin and Morya packed their bags, and put their towels and linen into the laundry room. The men then went outside to the deck to check on the storm.

Around 10:30 Mark pointed to the southeast, where a funnel cloud could be seen developing on the outskirts of the city, seemingly towards Aurora and Centennial. Sure enough, within a few minutes, the funnel touched down, with clouds of dusk being sucked high into the sky. Heavy lightning punctuated the dark clouds. A few drops of rain were felt, and then a brief hailstorm passed through, leaving a bucket full of quarter-sized hailstones in the yard. The friends retreated from the hailstorm, but went back out after it had passed. By that time, the tornado had dissipated and only a few rumbles of thunder could be heard.

They went inside to listen to local damage reports from the storm chasers, but other than a couple of semis being toppled on I-25 and a few sheds blown down, no injuries or damage to structures were reported.

#### [Does the Spiritual Brotherhood Actually Exist?](#)

As things settled down, Martin says, "Well, that was an interesting conclusion to the trip." He adds jokingly, "I wonder if the brotherhood had anything to do with that storm?"

Mark shakes his head at the question, but Morya answers it seriously. "I doubt it. The brotherhood does not seek to control the weather, or any other major environmental or geological

process. These things are not spiritual manifestations but rather the laws of nature and physics being worked out on earth. The brotherhood and sisterhood of light are concerned with spiritual evolution of lifestreams, not weather patterns. Although, I guess, if God wanted something major to happen on earth, it could happen. But I doubt these things occur very often at all.”

Martin then asks, “Forgive me for pressing this point, but if we cannot be sure of moral justice in the universe, such as what would theoretically occur to a wicked society in a natural cataclysm, then how can we be sure that the brotherhood and sisterhood of light actually exist?”

Mark says, “There are some things we have to take on faith, Martin. We observe the workings of karma in our lives. We know that we have a spiritual side to ourselves, that we possess an inner quality. We know and have experience with spiritual things. Shouldn’t that personal experience be sufficient to infer that cosmic justice exists as well? Why should we, in our lack of understanding, dismiss the existence of God or the spiritual brotherhood, especially when we all have experienced His graciousness at one time or another?”

Martin replies, “I accept your argument, Mark. I would say, however, that we either know, or we don’t know. We should be honest about our limitations.”

Morya says, “That, my friend, is a true statement. Each of us must determine for ourselves whether the brotherhood and sisterhood of light exist. But let’s reason together on this.” He thinks for a moment, then continues. “Do you agree that certain beautiful and magnificent qualities exist?”

Martin says, “Of course. That is self-evident to everyone.”

Morya asks, “Do you think that everyone shares or expresses these qualities equally?”

Martin replies, “No, people experience and share these qualities quite differently. Some people are good artists, some are good car mechanics.”

Morya nods, then asks, “Would you say that the mastery of art or the ability to repair cars has a limit, so that humanity can only attain such-and-such a level of mastery in these areas and go no further?”

Martin answers, “No, there is no limit to the mastery of these abilities. Their expression is virtually unlimited.”

Morya says, “All right. We agree then that humanity has good qualities and that the expression of these qualities vary among individuals but there is no limit to the mastery of these qualities. Is that true?”

Martin says, “Yes. That is what we have said. In fact, two of the characteristics of inner qualities are that they are infinitely good and have infinite potential for expression.”

Morya replies, “What about the level of spirituality in people? Is everyone’s awareness of the soul, or God, or the masters the same?”

Martin says, “No. There is great variety in the level of people’s spirituality. We can all see that.”

Morya pursues the point: “Do you believe there is an upper limit on what is possible for humanity to know or experience spiritually?”

Martin replies carefully, “No. I think there is no limit to the spirituality of mankind.”

Morya then says, “OK. We agree further that there is no limit on the expression of good qualities in people and there is no limit to the level of their spirituality. Is that true?”

Martin says, “Yes, I would agree to that.”

Morya smiles and asks, “Would you not say that at the upper end of self-mastery in expressing one’s inner quality and in being spiritual, that one could be called a saint?”

Martin replies, “I suppose I would have to agree with that.”

Morya concludes, “The question then is whether, at the end of the life of a saint, there is only death, or continuation of multiple lifetimes, or ascension to a higher plan of consciousness. What do you think makes the most sense?”

Martin takes his time in responding. “Well, if we assume that the purpose of life on earth is for the soul to master free will, then we also have to assume that, having gained that mastery, the soul is ready to move on to other dimensions. If we assume the existence of the soul and we assume the existence of saints, then we have to hold out the possibility of there being a spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood of light comprised of these saints. Of course, if we don’t believe in things spiritual, then our conclusion would be that after death there is nothing. It all depends on one’s fundamental belief in the soul and things spiritual.”

Morya then asks, “And how does one make that determination?”

Martin says, “That seems to be a highly personal conclusion based on many factors. I am convinced the soul exists and that there is a spiritual dimension to life, but I have known people just as convinced the opposite is true. I believe that only time will tell which view is correct. I don’t know how else to think about this issue.”

Morya replies, “And that is the case with all of us. Whether God exists, whether the brotherhood and sisterhood of light exist, whether the soul exists, whether a spiritual side of life exists – belief in these things has to be decided by the individual. Of course, reality is independent of

human belief. But still, for our sojourn on earth, it is part of our destiny to answer these questions for ourselves.”

Mark nods at this and reminds his two friends that it is time to go. They prepare a quick snack for the return flights and go out to Mark’s SUV and Martin’s rented Jeep to drive to the airport. After the Jeep was returned, Mark drove his friends to the terminal, where they shook hands, expressed appreciation for a great vacation, and promised to meet again soon.

## Chapter 7: Defining Oneself as a Son or Daughter of God

A few years later, the three families decided to spend Christmas vacation at Martin and Marcella's second home in Woodstock, Illinois – about 50 miles northwest of Chicago. Earlier in their careers, they had purchased the home for retirement, although subsequent jobs in the Washington, D.C. area had limited their time in Woodstock. Martin told his friends to bring lots of warm clothing, because winters in northern Illinois were predictably cold, windy, and snowy.

### Day One: Woodstock

When Martin picked up Morya and Helen, Mark and Elizabeth at O'Hare Airport, each of the couples had two large suitcases and were bundled up with coats, hats, gloves, and scarfs as if on a journey to Antarctica. Laughing, Marcella welcomed her guests as Martin maneuvered their luggage into the van. Mark commented, "You were right in telling us to dress warmly," as he rubbed his hands together and tightened the scarf around his neck. Elizabeth commented on the drive to Woodstock on how flat and wind-blown the area looked, and Martin replied that, up here, one had to brace for the cold and learn to appreciate the fresh air. As everyone got out of the van and went into the house, the ladies gathered by the large sliding glass door near the kitchen and admired the wild beauty of the area. Helen especially noted how peaceful and quiet it was, with only occasional gusts of wind howling above the silence. After coats were put away and luggage moved into the guestrooms, the friends sat around the dining room table to enjoy hot, locally made apple cider and generous slices of a mochi and red-bean cake that Marcella had prepared. Martin started a fire in the fireplace.

Later, over a warm dinner of homemade beef stew and cornbread, the men ask their wives to recount their best memories of their trip to China. The ladies responded with enthusiastic stories of taxi drivers, tour guides, amazing historical sites, incredible museums, and several delightful

days of interaction with the panda bears at the National Bifengxia Panda Reserve near Chengdu. They volunteered to clean up the panda enclosures and, in return, the keepers gave them daily access to several pandas for hand feeding and photo opportunities. The ladies said they would return to China as soon as possible, and Helen mentioned that she especially wanted to spend more time in Xi'an to visit the terracotta warrior site, depicting the armies of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China. Their husbands again deferred on making a commitment to accompany them, so the women turned to planning between themselves.

After the dishes were cleared and washed, the women joined the men in the living room to sit in front of the fire. Marcella served everyone chamomile tea with a touch of honey from a local farm. After Helen and Elizabeth had complimented Marcella on her choice of furniture and decorations, Mark asked Martin if he had any particular subjects he wanted to discuss during their visit.

#### [The Importance of Correct Self-Identification](#)

Martin replies, “One thing that has caught my attention recently is a comment I heard from a young lady about not feeling worthy. When I asked why she felt that way, she replied that she grew up in an environment in which others seemed to consider her unaccomplished and inferior to her peers. I have pondered this and have concluded that she and others like her must not be in contact with their real self, which is truly unique and magnificent – else why would they feel inferior? I was wondering how you all might respond to this young woman’s feeling about herself.”

Marcella says, “Actually, this is a very common feeling, not only among young people but also older people as well. I see it often in counselling.”

Elizabeth comments, “I think this feeling is a reflection of the person’s self-identification. If you identify yourself as a human ego, then you tend to gravitate to either of two extremes: you feel you are superior to other people, or you feel you are inferior to others. Both attitudes are ego-centered. They are not based on reality. The reality is that we are all sons and daughters of God, and the portion of God within ourselves is the true value of our selfhood. When we view ourselves as a son or daughter of God, then we concentrate on becoming more our true self rather than allowing our mind and feelings to dwell on any temporary imperfections we might have – or believe we have.”

#### [What Does the Term “Sons and Daughters of God” Mean?](#)

Martin responds, “Well, this is interesting as a point of discussion. What does it actually mean to be a son or daughter of God? We assume we are all sons and daughters of God, because God is the Creator of the universe. However, even if God’s role as Creator is taken as a given, then we are still left with a dilemma of why mankind lives the way it does in such a state of imperfection. Shouldn’t we be living differently than we do? If not more rich and comfortable, then at least living in peace with good moral behavior? To be honest, it is sometimes hard for me to reconcile the evil deeds recorded in history with the notion that we are sons and daughters of God. Something does not add up logically in this description of reality.”

Mark says, “I think this is a great subject. What exactly is a son or daughter of God? And why, if human beings are the offspring of the Creator, are people so intent to harm each other and other parts of life? Why do people identify so much with their lesser self? It’s a mystery to me as well.” He glances at Morya, who continues to leaf through a book he had picked up off the coffee table.

Mark continues with his train of thought. “Let me see if I can reason this through. It’s obvious that all living things go through cycles: birth, infancy, adolescence, adulthood, seniority, and death. Even planets, solar systems, and galaxies go through cycles of creation and destruction. I suppose we could conclude that all things – living and material – do not exist forever. They are created and over time disintegrate, according to the rules of their own domain. Life has its cycles and the purely material world has its cycles as well. If that is the case, then why wouldn’t there be a similar pattern for souls? True, souls are of a spiritual nature, but they are also connected to life and matter. If that is true, then younger souls could be referred to as children of God, and adult souls could be referred to as sons and daughters of God. This assumes, of course, that there is such a thing as a spiritual dimension, that there is a Creator we call God, and that there are souls. It also assumes that souls are basically masculine or feminine. Otherwise, they would not be called ‘sons and daughters’ of God.”

Helen observes, “We all have had experience with our souls and the souls of others. No mother can look into the eyes of her infant and not see the soul within. You can even perceive some kind of spirit residing within animals when you closely observe them. How often do we remark about the spirit inside of our favorite pets? So the existence of a spiritual world is not altogether unreasonable, even if – from a rational perspective – we do not fully understand its laws and functionality.”

Elizabeth adds, “It seems to me that if there are souls, then there must be God. Although who among us really knows what God is? Not that this matters so much, I suppose, because none of us fully know our children or our spouses, yet they certainly exist. I believe that souls are predominantly either masculine or feminine. However, in the teachings we have heard that sometimes masculine souls are incarnated as females, or vice versa, depending on the lessons the

soul may need to learn. Interestingly, I have known many mothers-to-be who swear they are about to bring into this world a masculine or feminine soul, only to be surprised to find their baby is actually of the other sex.”

Marcella and Helen agree that has been their experience as well.

Helen asks her husband, “What do you think?”

Morya looks up from the book and replies, “Logically speaking, if there is a universal Creator, then the creation must contain within itself portions of the Creator. These seeds can be atoms and energy, life and spirit, or other dimensional things beyond our knowledge or experience. Even if this assumption is true, however, it does not mean that God predetermines every step of the evolutionary process God may have set into motion. For example, every day we witness a certain randomness in nature and in the affairs of men. God may be the source of all, but the laws of physics and nature take it from there. Gravity and magnetism are such laws, as are evolution and life cycles. We use the terms of ‘children of God’ and ‘sons and daughters of God’ to describe our conceptualization of our relationship to the Creator. Is our conceptualization correct? Let’s just say it is probably close enough although certainly not complete.”

Helen laughs and addresses her husband, “Your ability to bring abstraction into every discussion constantly amazes me.”

Martin asks, “But, seriously, if we are sons and daughters of God, then why is Jesus referred to as the ‘Son of God’?”

Morya says, “God has many children, since He is the Creator. However, the title ‘Son of God’ has been given especially to Jesus because of his many lifetimes of service to God and to humanity. He is our example, our mentor, our savior in many ways, and he shows us one path to

self-mastery on this planetary home. But each soul learns the lessons of life in its own way, and there are perhaps thousands of paths one can take to become one's real self and unite with God. Neither Jesus, nor the Buddha, nor any teacher, prophet, saint, or master can make every decision for us. We have to make our own choices in order to learn self-mastery. That is why earth is referred to as a schoolroom: it is here that we learn to use our free will correctly. It is here that we learn to be a co-creator with God. It is here that we learn what it means to be a son or daughter of the Most High."

Marcella asks, "What do you mean when you say 'co-creator' with God?"

Morya replies, "God does not create the universe fully formed. He imbues all of creation with aspects of Himself. Mankind has an exceptional ability to identify the qualities God has placed within the individual soul. We have referred to this aspect of God within ourselves as the inner quality. With knowledge of this inner quality and properly using free will, we can create almost without limit the patterns found in God's consciousness – just like an architect or engineer can use geometric designs in an infinite variety of structures. This means, for example, that God's character of love or wisdom can be replicated over and over again in infinite ways to the benefit of all of life. In this way, mankind is a co-creator with God. With the inner quality and creative free will, mankind can take the seeds or patterns of God's consciousness and bring forth fruit or creations for the blessings of all. That is a special opportunity given to human souls that has been refined through the evolutionary development of the mind. However, it is up to each individual to accept, reject, or ignore the opportunity – and responsibility – of being a co-creator with God."

### [Does the Spirit Evolve?](#)

Mark raises a point. "We all see that there is evolution within life. But is there a spiritual evolution as well?"

Morya says, “Of course there is. Nothing that is created can remain permanently the same. All dimensions evolve, including the spiritual dimension – of which there are many sub-divisions, by the way, just like the physical universe and life’s variations. The spirit in an animal, for instance, is different from the spirit or soul of man. The spirit of a giant oak tree is different from the spirit of life within a blade of grass. Different kinds of spirits have different evolutionary tracks, if you will, kind of like the various branches of the tree of life, only in a spiritual dimension.”

Mark persists, “But does the material universe – a nugget of gold or a drop of water – have a spirit as well?”

Morya says, “That’s an interesting question. Spirits, like human souls, use the material world as the medium through which they function physically. The human body, for example, has physical attributes that have evolved for millions of years. Trees and elephants, whales and grasshoppers – the same thing. Different forms evolve because life adapts in different ways to the environment at hand. The life force is everywhere present, but not everywhere in form. There may be spirits residing within a mountain but the existence of a physical mountain does not necessarily mean a spirit resides there. But, certainly, if you are sensitive to these kinds of things, you can perceive the life force inhabiting a forest of bamboo or giant sequoias. You can sense the spirit of an elephant or tiger. Where there is life, there is spirit; but where there is material structure, there is not necessarily life or spirit – although it could be. The laws governing when and how spirit and life inhabit physical structures is something I am unable to explain.”

Martin then asks, “I have a question. In the realm of spiritual evolution, do the spirits move from one lifeform to another? In other words, can the spirits of dogs become the spirits of dolphins?”

Everyone smiles at this, and Morya replies patiently. “Evolution does occur in spiritual dimensions. When the soul of a saint enters heaven, so to speak, that soul does not remain forever the same. It evolves. So, yes, it is possible for one type of spirit to evolve into a more advanced spiritual state. But, again, what governs the specifics of this process, I do not fully understand.”

Martin persists, “If there is spiritual evolution, where do human souls stand on the evolutionary ladder?”

Marcella starts to object to Martin’s endless questions to their guests, but Morya answers, “I have always heard it said that we are somewhere in the middle.”

Martin jokes, “Ah, that explains it. That is why we have both an animal side and a divine side – all inside of ourselves.”

Marcella comments, “Speak for yourself, husband dear.”

All laugh as Martin replies, “I was. I was.”

[Is the Real Self a Son or Daughter of God?](#)

Marcella then asks, “Morya, what is the relationship between one’s true or real self, and being a son or daughter of God?”

Morya says, “In the broadest sense of the word, since God is the Creator, we are all sons or daughters of God. Not all sons and daughters of God, however, become their true selves on earth or understand their birthright. Becoming one’s true or real self requires that the individual know their inner quality and – more importantly – use that quality to guide their behavior, deliberately becoming the best person they can be. As you go through this process of becoming a better person, day by day, you gradually become your true self. For the son or daughter of God to

advance spiritually beyond a certain point requires that they become – to a degree – their real self. But it is important to realize that the real self is not the apex of some mountain. The real self is an unfoldment of the full potential of God within. There is almost no limit as to what the true self can be. The key for human beings is to begin the process of becoming their true self. That requires individual self-determination. What occurs is that the free will of the individual begins to align more and more closely with the will of God. Greater alignment with the will of God enables the soul to transition to higher and higher levels of consciousness. Souls who have gone sufficiently through this process graduate from earth's schoolroom, perhaps becoming saints or ascended masters. But the soul's evolution does not end there.”

He pauses, then continues, “It is important to focus on engaging in the process rather than measuring one's attainment as rungs on a ladder. It's the orientation of the consciousness of the soul in embodiment that counts in the planes of human existence.”

Marcella thanks Morya and then suggests that, as the hour is late, perhaps everyone would like to rest for the activities planned for tomorrow. All agree and retire for the evening.

### Day Two: Woodstock

After breakfast the next morning, the friends drove in Marcella's van to downtown Woodstock, a small rural community that was a picturesque Mid-Western town and the site of the filming of “Groundhog Day.” They stopped at Starbucks and enjoyed watching people scurrying along the sidewalk, bundled up against the cold but with smiles and friendly glances to everyone they passed. Marcella explained that the town was rapidly becoming a suburb of Chicago, as the metropolitan giant expanded inexorably to the west. Martin said they were able to purchase their house before the prices skyrocketed and were happy to have the second home as a retreat from

the pressure of federal contracting work in the Nation's capital. Elizabeth asked about the schools, and Marcella said they were good but needed improvement, at which point Helen observed that education should be a national priority. Everyone agreed as they walked outside to look into the various store windows that lined the square. They returned home around 12:30 and Marcella began to prepare lunch for her guests, while Martin served everyone their choice of hot tea.

Following lunch, they walked around the neighborhood to get a little exercise and to enjoy the afternoon sun, and then went back into the living room to warm up by the fire. Marcella gave everyone a cup of hot chocolate and offered some homemade cookies, and they talked leisurely about their favorite moments from previous vacations.

#### [What Does the Soul Learn on Earth?](#)

Mark says, "I remember most vividly our conversations about community during our trip to Muleshoe Ranch in Arizona, and looking at the vastness of the high desert and the incredible stars that appear almost within reach during the night."

Everyone smiles at the memory, and Martin comments, "That was a great vacation. What I remember most about that trip was how insightful our wives were on what a community needed in order to prosper. Which raises an interesting question in regards to our conversation last night. Why are communities important to the soul, if it is the individual soul which must stand before God on judgment day?"

Mark offers an explanation. "As I recall from one of our earlier conversations, we determined that the soul has to master not only his free will, but also how to live and function harmoniously in a community."

Martin then asks, “But does the soul actually require a successful lifetime in a community? Haven’t we all heard about individuals who were either exiled from their communities or who abandoned their communities, yet who became saints or masters, or who otherwise led exemplary lives?”

Helen comments, “You make a good point in suggesting there may be circumstances in which the soul can better evolve spiritually outside of a community rather than inside. However, most people need to function well both as individuals and as members of society. My husband told me of your discussions last year about the brotherhood and sisterhood of light. Brotherhood and sisterhood imply a community, don’t they? So it seems to me that before a soul can become a member of these advanced communities, it needs to learn self-mastery both as an individual and as a member of society.”

Elizabeth adds, “Besides, what is the point of mastering your inner quality if that wonderful gift is not shared with others. We are not meant to be wandering stars in the universe. We are meant to be individuals living in peace and harmony with our fellowman, contributing as we can to the common good of all. Starting with our own family.”

Morya observes, “I think it is important to remember that singularity rarely – if ever – exists in the physical universe. Everywhere we observe dualities and even multi-polarities. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the soul has to learn through successive embodiments how to live properly as an individual and how to live properly as part of a larger group.”

Marcella says, “A son or daughter of God is both an individual and a member of society. It all depends on the role the soul is playing – or needs to play – at the time. Sometimes people need to be by themselves; sometimes they need to be with others. In all depends on the circumstances.”

Martin asks, “How does that relate to the inner quality of the individual?”

Mark explains, “The inner quality is the special character God gives to the soul. The soul carries this inner quality through its incarnations. The soul goes through various human incarnations in order to learn how to use the inner quality as its standard of behavior and its guide for free will decisions. Ultimately, the inner quality is what connects the soul both to God and to other parts of life.”

Morya comments, “A single letter of the alphabet has its own characteristics. It has a sound and meaning by itself, and – when combined with other letters of the alphabet – it has myriad other sounds and meanings. You can be filled with honor and integrity in the privacy of your room, and you can express honor and integrity in the company of thousands. In both cases, you are the actor, the soul in form. But how you express the inner quality will differ according to circumstances. The challenge for the soul here on earth is to learn to master through free will the expression of the inner quality in daily life. Whether alone or in the company of others, the individual soul in embodiment should reflect its inner quality. When the soul is able to do this, it graduates from human dimensions and is ready to move into higher dimensions – which are generally spiritual in nature.”

At this point, Marcella says, “I was going to make sukiyaki tonight. Would you ladies like to help?”

### [Just and Unjust Wars](#)

Elizabeth and Helen nod enthusiastically, and the three women walk to the kitchen. Martin turns the television on to CNN, which is running a program on the latest developments in global terrorism.

After listening to several reports, Martin comments, “I cannot understand how these people can do these atrocities in the name of religion. This truly must be evil incarnate.”

Mark says, “There have always been religious wars, many times between various sects of the same religion. Millions of lives have been lost and great suffering brought to millions more. Fighting is a human characteristic. Fighting religious wars is a reflection of that, used sometimes as an excuse to fight.”

Martin observes, “But, surely, not all fighting is evil. Sometimes it is in self-defense; sometimes in defense of honor or in order to protect one’s family or society.” He continues, “I think there must be a distinction made between the lust for war and the necessity for war. Also, as I recall in the Old Testament, there were occasions when God instructed his followers to go to war against their enemies. Maybe this suggests that not all wars are evil or unjust. Don’t we often speak of a struggle between good and evil, for example?”

Morya comments, “Some wars are justified, but most are not. Some violence is necessary, but rarely so. There is a struggle between good and evil, but this struggle mostly occurs in consciousness, not at physical levels. The real battleground, if you will, between the forces of good and evil occur over the destiny of the soul: whether the soul will evolve as God intended, or whether the soul will forever align with the lesser self.”

Martin asks, “Can you explain when violence is justified and when it is not? I have always been puzzled by that, because I feel an inner calling to protect the innocent and to counter those that seek to harm what is good in life.”

Mark says, “I also feel that calling, as I am sure you do, too, Morya.”

Morya nods and replies, “There are occasions when a son of God must take up the sword to defend himself, his family, his religion, his society. It is rare, however, that aggressive violence on others is justified, except where there is clear evidence of threat and preemptive action needs to be taken. One of the huge moral costs of living in societies where leaders are not properly aligned with the will of God occurs when citizens are called to arms for reasons that are selfish, greedy, immoral, or based on ignorance. Yet, this is what thousands of sons and daughters of God have been called upon to do throughout history. The cost in lives lost unnecessarily or in treasure wasted has been immeasurable. On the level of karmic accountability, when leaders ask their citizens to go to war, they need to ensure that the cause is correct and not misguided. The positive and negative karma of leaders is much greater than the karma of normal citizens. When a leader makes a decision, thousands benefit or suffer. With some exceptions, wars are almost always damaging to the human soul.”

He is quiet for a moment as if reflecting on some distant memory, then continues. “But to address the issue from the perspective of an individual: it is necessary for a son of God to remove from his consciousness the lust for bloodshed and violence. One must not desire to slaughter others for the pleasure of inflicting pain on one’s fellowman. That is not God’s intention. On the other hand, it is not forbidden by God that a man protect himself or his loved ones from aggressors. Karma is always involved in the killing of others, but there is considerable difference in karma from killing done in defense of the innocent and killing done to advance the purposes of evil.”

Mark asks, “Morya, let me ask a question that my students sometimes ask of me. Is it more appropriate for a son of God to take up the sword in defense of good, or to renounce the sword in the name of peace?”

Morya answers, “I would say that the answer depends on where the soul is at that moment in its spiritual evolution. Jesus, for example, did not take up the sword. Nor did Gautama elect to become a king. But other great religious leaders have taken up the sword or commanded that it be used by their followers. There is something deeply personal between God and the individual in embodiment. It is not always possible for someone outside to know what is appropriate under a given circumstance. The best advice for any human being is to pray to God for guidance, try to determine what is the correct thing to do, and then to be courageous and act accordingly. The story of Arjuna is a great example of this moral dilemma and its resolution.”

Elizabeth comes into the living room, announcing that dinner is almost ready and asking what each of the men would like to drink. Shortly thereafter, they all sit down at the table, delighted at the several Japanese dishes spread out before them. After dinner, the six friends enjoyed the evening around the fireplace, chatting about family, vacations, and plans for the future.

### Day Three: Blizzard Conditions

The next day ushered in near-blizzard conditions, with heavy snow being blown horizontally from a strong wind down from Canada. Even though the house was warm and well-insulated, everyone put on another layer of clothing just to be comfortable. A full breakfast of eggs and pancakes put a bright light on things, and the mood shifted from one of hunkering down to sitting back and enjoying the power of nature on display across the barren fields in winter. By noon, the snow had drifted half-way up the glass door, but the Weather Channel indicated that the worst of the storm would be moving out of the area in a few hours.

The friends sat around the table, drinking tea or coffee, and appreciating each other’s company.

The ladies talked a lot about their recent shopping trips and the possibility of another tour of

China, while the men exchanged job-related stories and discussed home projects they intended to do. By 3:30 in the afternoon, the snow and wind had died down sufficiently for Martin and Mark to go outside and shovel snow, while Morya relaxed in a recliner by the fire to read his book. Their wives decided to do some baking, so they moved to the kitchen to prepare a lasagna dish and a pineapple upside down cake for dessert.

After about an hour, Martin and Mark came back in, shaking off snow and removing their boots. They walked to the fireplace to warm up, and Marcella brought each of the men a cup of hot chocolate. Soon, everyone came into the living room and sat around the fireplace watching the flames and conversing lightly on this or that subject. More than one yawn appeared on their faces, so Marcella suggested that those who were tired might want to take a short rest before dinner in about two hours. Their guests all took the advice and went to their rooms, while Martin helped his wife clear the cups and saucers before retiring for a brief rest himself. Marcella stayed behind in the kitchen to watch the stove, busying herself with clipping coupons and watching the neighborhood children emerging from their homes to play in the snow.

#### [Is It Better for a Spiritual Person to Marry or Remain Unmarried?](#)

Dinner that night was appreciated by everyone as they watched the dark clouds and outbursts of flurries stream across the back yard. When the cake and coffee were served, all toasted each other and wished their friends a happy holiday season. The men cleared the table and placed the dishes into the washer, then filled their coffee cups and sat down next to their wives, who were having a deep discussion by the fire.

Mark asks, “What are you ladies discussing so seriously here?”

Elizabeth smiles and replies, “We will discussing an interesting point: whether it is better for a woman to be single or to be married.”

The men raised their eyebrows and cautiously asked their wives to continue the conversation.

Marcella says, “I was just making the point that, to be married, distracts considerably from a woman’s choices in life, because she must take care of so many household responsibilities and support her husband. You men have no idea how much of our time is taken up in caring for you,” she adds mischievously.

Martin responds, “That may be true, dear, but the benefits of marriage clearly outweigh the disadvantages. You don’t have to work hard to support yourself. You can raise a family and enjoy all the comforts of home.”

The women glance at Martin and Elizabeth comments, “We are serious about this. Yes, there are advantages to being married and there are also some disadvantages. The more time we give to our children and to our spouses, the less time we have to ourselves to grow materially and spiritually. Women, in general, naturally want to support those whom they love and tend to be self-sacrificing. When we are married, we give most of our attention to our family and set aside or postpone things that would advance ourselves.”

Mark says, “I personally believe that women have a certain spiritual awareness that men do not have because most men concentrate on work outside the home.”

Martin adds, “I think so, too. A man has to face many challenges in the workplace, and some of these work against his efforts to improve spiritually. Try to harbor good thoughts toward all, when your boss is breathing down your neck about some absurd deadline that is impossible to meet for some ill-conceived objective.”

Marcella says, “Maybe the tests and lessons of life are different for a man and a woman.

Maintaining a house in harmony and raising children keep a wife and a mother very busy, and I

know of no woman who can truthfully claim to be able to balance a professional life with household responsibilities. Let me ask you, Morya, is it better – spiritually speaking – for a son or daughter of God to be married or not?”

Morya looks at the fire for a moment and then replies, “There is no single answer to that question. Consider the saints and masters. Some were married and some were not. To advance spiritually does not require that one be either single or married, or male or female for that matter. The union between men and women is a natural bonding. Being single throughout one’s life is usually a matter of choice. Men and women hold up equal parts of heaven, as the Chinese would say. Yin and Yang depend on each other; the whole is not complete without its parts. So the issue has less to do with the appropriateness of matrimony than with what is appropriate for the individual at that particular stage of life. To progress spiritually might require some people to be married. To progress spiritually may require others to be unmarried. From the soul’s perspective, being married in one lifetime and not in another does not distract from the soul’s progression.”

Elizabeth comments, “What you are saying is that marriage may or may not be good for an individual – spiritually or otherwise. This certainly would align with my experience.” She turns to her husband and says with a wink, “Mark, you are the lucky one.”

Everyone laughs and Martin adds, “I think that is true for all of us. You ladies may question whether marriage is good for you, but we can tell you in all honesty that it is good for us. We only hope that we can return to you a small portion of all that you have given us. And that includes spiritual understanding as well.”

The ladies look truly moved, then Marcella says, “Well, there you have it. Somehow, all men have to do is to express their love for us and we are ready to go another thousand miles. It must be written into our DNA.”

The talk then turns to the morrow and the ladies’ plan to go shopping at Schaumburg, weather permitting. Around 10:30, Martin turns on a local television station to find tomorrow’s forecast – which seemed to be OK. About a half-hour later, everyone exchanges goodnight and retires for the evening.

#### Day Four: Woodstock

After a light breakfast, the women got into Marcella’s van and went shopping for the day, promising to return before night and asking the men to take care of themselves for lunch. When the dishes had been cleared, Martin, Mark, and Morya sat around the table and talked about politics, the weather, and their jobs.

#### [Does One Become the True Self by Overcoming Personal Weakness or Doing Great Things?](#)

Martin then asks, “I have been wondering about the challenges faced by a son or daughter of God as they attempt to fulfill their potential in this world. We have called this the process of becoming the real or true self. Here is my question: does a son or daughter of God best become their true self by overcoming their limitations, or by creatively using their inner quality? In other words, is the process of becoming one’s true self accelerated by overcoming the negatives in one’s life or by acting in a positive, creative way?”

Mark answers, “Obviously, an individual must do both. For there are positive goods to be done in life and there are weaknesses in one’s character that must be overcome.”

Morya adds, “It’s actually a four-dimensional process: overcoming human weakness, building positive traits in one’s character, balancing negative karma from past misuse of free will, and creating good karma by improving conditions in one’s sphere of influence. All four must be accomplished before our full potential can be realized.”

Martin observes, “But the good that I would do, I sometimes fail to accomplish because of some internal weakness. The bad characteristics I would overcome sometimes appear to be more powerful than my best intentions. It seems there is not a linear path here, but one that is more accurately described as interlocking spirals of overcoming bad traits and acquiring good habits. The net effect is that, here on earth, we are locked into both the beauty and the beast of human existence.”

Mark comments, “It is important to remember that the spirals you describe are not permanently locked into place, but rather moving in a direction that is either closer to or farther away from God. And, besides, let’s face it. From the broadest perspective, we are moving toward God whether we become completely good or become completely evil. If we are good, then our spirit lives forever. If we are evil, then our darkness is dissolved and is no more.”

Martin replies, “That may be true, Mark, but whether it is an accurate description of reality is another matter. How do we know that the reward of being good is permanency and the punishment of being evil is disintegration? Do any of us really know what the end game of existence is? I don’t think so, even though my faith points me in the direction you have just described.”

#### [Role of Ideals in Human Development](#)

Morya says, “From as far back as our earliest ancestors, there is evidence of conceptualization of ideals. The cave paintings, for example, are depictions of ideal animals, ideal hunts, ideal

ceremonies, ideal people, ideal gods and goddesses. Our sophistication has grown over hundreds of generations, but the ideal as an attribute of our consciousness has remained the same: it is a vision toward which we strive in our daily lives. Ideals exist as goals which motivate us to seek to achieve personal and social greatness – or at least a better life. It is a distinguishing characteristic of humankind. One could argue that God has planted the need for ideals in our consciousness. One could likewise argue that, somehow, evolution developed the ideal as a way to improve our chances of survival as a species. Either way, the ideal exists in the human mind. And either way, the ideal is a powerful motivator to improve ourselves individually and collectively.

“In some ways, the existence of the inner quality can be seen as an ideal before its reality is discovered and then expressed by the individual. Whether the ideal of the inner quality has its origin in God or evolution is probably not so important. What is important is that the ideal of the inner quality exists and that it becomes a goal recognized and pursued by the individual. The interesting point is that the inner quality may seem at first like an ideal, but when pursued over time, the inner quality becomes a reality. There is no endpoint in the expression of one’s inner quality. What is the endpoint of love or wisdom or honor or integrity or goodness to one’s fellow man? And, for that matter, there is no limitation on the number of people who can try to express these qualities.

“Collectively, the existence of these infinitely good potentials in the hearts and minds of men give us great hope and optimism that the future can be better than the present or the past. This means that the ideal of an inner quality is a powerful force in the evolution of mankind. For those who are spiritually inclined, such an ideal liberates the mind to explore one’s spirituality and closeness to God and His Creation. For those who are not spiritually inclined, the inner quality is

an ideal that expands one's sense of personal freedom and potential. No matter how it is viewed, the ideal of the inner quality benefits the individual, society, and the human race as a whole."

Mark and Martin thought about what Morya had said, and nodded their agreement. After a moment, Martin suggested they drive out to Farm and Fleet and then Walmart to pick up a few items. His friends agreed, and they got into Martin's Tundra for the short ride to the local Woodstock stores off Highway 14. The men made some purchases at each store and then went downtown to get a cup of coffee at Starbucks. On the way back home, they stopped by a small pizza shop to order some subs, then drove to the house about 1:30. Their wives hadn't returned yet, so they ate their sandwiches and walked to the living room with a cup of hot Darjeeling tea in hand.

#### [Eastern and Western Philosophical Traditions](#)

Martin, picking up an earlier conversation, says, "On the nature of man, I think the fundamental difference between the Eastern and Western traditions is that, in the West, we tend to think of the individual – as a person and as a soul – as being an entity separate from nature, as a unique being unto itself. There is a distinction between you and me, us and them. And that perception has many social and political implications."

He thought for a moment and continues, "In the East, as I understand it, there is a long tradition of looking at people as being part of nature, not entities separate from nature. The appearance of separateness, from the Eastern point of view, is an illusion which can be overcome through wisdom and understanding. Thus, from the East comes the view that people should play their appointed role in life; and from the West comes the idea that individuals need to move beyond their limitations to realize their full potential."

Mark replies, “I think there is truth on both sides here. It is true that the individual soul is part of Creation, or nature if you prefer. It is also true that the individual has a unique inner quality which he can, through free will, seek to maximize. To me, the question of whether man is an individual or part of nature is not too important. Why can’t we be both? The key question for the individual is how he or she can live a life that is personally fulfilling. If they feel comfortable playing a culturally prescribed role, so be it. If they want to move beyond social boundaries and maximize their unique potential, so be it. Morya, what are your thoughts on this?”

### [The Soul’s Great Missions in Life](#)

Morya says, “The soul has two great missions in life. One is to become a co-creator with God in the sense that the soul should do all it can with its gift of free will to create and build and to improve life. To make its greatest contribution, the soul needs to know and express its inner quality. That is the soul’s special gift, an exceptional talent to be mastered. The second thing the soul has to do is play its part in the great drama of life. But aren’t these two things the same, or at least complementary? God does not intend the soul to go off into a cave, never more to reemerge. God intends for the soul to add to the greatness of Creation by contributing what it can for the betterment of all life. The point of connection between the two great missions of the soul is the inner quality. When an individual decides to become and to express the inner quality, he in fact is playing his proper role in the drama of life.”

Martin asks, “But wouldn’t it be possible, at least for some people, that they express their inner quality without even being aware that the inner quality exists? In other words, to be naturally attuned with God and nature by simply being themselves?”

Mark says, “Ah, the Garden of Eden reappears.”

Morya comments, “Yes, it is possible and, as Mark alluded, the soul does not have to go through all this suffering on earth simply to be its true self.”

Martin tries to digest this for a moment, and then goes on. “OK. I have known a few people who had a pure and innocent consciousness. Without trying, they seemed to be in harmony with God and nature. They act confidently, without great display of ego, in ways that are noble and devoid of moral uncertainty. They are not perfect, but I truly respect these people. On the other hand, many people are like me – living in a kind of moral ambivalence, sometimes doing good, unfortunately sometimes doing less than good, sometimes not knowing what is good or bad in a given circumstance. To make the point: sometimes I often have to consciously choose to do the morally correct thing. By contrast, these innocent souls I spoke of earlier simply act in a morally correct way without any thought. I don’t have a clue how they became that way. To me, life is – if nothing else – a reoccurring moral dilemma.”

Mark observes, “Maybe that’s the great challenge for Western culture in general. Western culture emphasizes individuality and free will, rationality and questioning everything. This can lead to insatiable desire for change and unleash great creative energy, but it can also lead to efforts to manipulate the natural order of things and inadvertently undermine the harmony of life. If you destroy the harmony, you harm life itself, and if you harm life, you lose your moral innocence. You can’t always push the moral envelope without sometimes entering uncharted territory.”

Martin replies, “I understand what you are saying, Mark, but I usually don’t see life as being in harmony. I see competition and battle for survival, with all too brief periods of peace and harmony. Even if humans did not exist, there would be predators and prey and suffering of the innocent. This is not as I wish it to be. It is the reality of life. We on earth live in duality: a

beautiful home filled with remarkable and noble people; yet a home that can also be ugly and dangerous. We have to be able to function in our environment as it is and not try to escape either physically or in some kind of mental fantasy. To me, the great challenge for Eastern culture is to awaken to the realization that people can and should take responsibility to improve themselves and their environment, rather than to accept life as it was given to them at birth. Being spiritually attuned does not equate to living a life of squalor or ignoring the injustices that occur in the world.”

Mark starts to respond and then says, “Well, that was an interesting conversation. I hear the garage door opening, so our wives must have returned. Let’s help them with the shopping bags and hear about their day.” The men open the inside door to the garage, greet their wives, and help bring several bags of presents, food, and other goodies into the kitchen.

### Commonalities

After putting away their purchases, the women set out on the table some Chinese carry-out they had picked up in Crystal Lake. As everyone ate, the men asked their wives about their day and the ladies inquired as to how their husbands had spent their time. After Mark explained they were trying to identify the common elements of Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, Helen asked what they had concluded. Martin said that the two cultures appeared to be opposite in some ways but probably were two sides of the same coin. Marcella observes, “Sort of like male and female. Quite different, but equal parts in the whole of humanity.”

Elizabeth asks, “I wonder if the Eastern-Western distinction is not over emphasized, just as the differences between men and women can sometimes be exaggerated?”

Mark responds, “That may be true, but we cannot ignore the differences either, because in examining these differences we gain insight into the greater whole.”

Helen observes, “I think, on questions such as these, we should take a broader perspective. As you know, many scientists are now convinced that it is just a matter of time before we discover intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. There is general consensus that the building blocks of life are nearly everywhere present, and we have found that life can exist and even thrive in the most inhospitable of places. If we assume that intelligent life has evolved elsewhere, then what does that tell us about small things such as cultural differences here on earth? It tells us that our metaphysics and cosmology may be outdated and in need of revision. We need a new perspective.”

Marcella takes up the theme: “From this point of view, the differences between cultures and religions may be less important than the common elements that define us as human beings. I have a feeling that if we do someday encounter other forms of intelligent life, our criticisms of our fellowman will likely become a secondary matter and perhaps even fall to the wayside.”

Morya says, “Interestingly enough, that is precisely the rationale behind a community of goodwill. Mankind is at a turning point in its evolution. As we begin to reach for the stars to discover other intelligent life, we must recognize that – if such lifeforms are found – their views will almost certainly be quite different from our own. Maybe even hostile in some instances. We are unique as human beings, and that uniqueness is a precious commodity all men should cherish. We should treasure what we have, including our environment and planetary home. But we also need to expand our understanding of ourselves, and our relationship to God and nature. That understanding will help us concentrate on the much more important commonalities that we share. We are all sons and daughters of God, and we need to work more closely together to achieve the greatness we have as potential – both individually and collectively.”

Everyone nods their agreement. After a moment, the ladies turn the conversation to what to have for Christmas dinner – a discussion their husbands enthusiastically join.

#### Day Five: Christmas Eve

The next day, after a quick breakfast of bagels and orange juice, the ladies went out to buy the turkey breasts and side dishes they had decided on for Christmas dinner. The men did their own shopping, picking up some wine and brandy, along with egg nog and a few snacks that only they would remember to buy. By noon, everyone returned to the house. After putting away the food, all sat down to a leisurely lunch. They then cleared the table and retired to their rooms for a little rest before making pies and decorating the living room with Christmas ornaments. Later in the afternoon when all the Christmas preparations were done, Marcella served a light dinner of salad and freshly baked bread to whet the appetite for tomorrow's big feast.

Afterwards, everyone went to the living room to sit around the fire and listen to Christmas carols on T.V. Morya told his favorite story of the Wise Men, which no one tired of hearing even after all these years. Around 9:00 pm, eyelids were starting to droop, so Martin suggested that perhaps an early retirement would be appropriate. Since the wind was strong and blowing snow, and the morning would start early with last-minute preparations, the ladies politely excused themselves and went to their bedrooms.

#### Process of Becoming One's True Self

The men sat around and watched the fire for a while, then Martin observes, "Becoming one's true self doesn't happen overnight, does it."

Morya says, "No, it takes a while...sometimes a long, long time. I remember hearing stories of the rise and fall of civilizations, and the roles played by individual souls, lifetime after lifetime,

learning lesson after lesson in the great schoolroom of earth. Some graduate from this schoolroom earlier than others; some seem to be forever stuck at some point in their lessons so they don't make much progress for a while. Lifetime students we would say. But most people graduate eventually."

Mark asks, "How does a person know when he has learned enough on earth to move on to other mansions?"

Martin tries to answer, "I cannot speak for everyone, but I feel a certain internal shift when I learn some fundamental lesson of life: a kind of natural reordering of priorities. One day, you look at life through a certain lens. The next day, you see things differently. I have learned to be sensitive to these shifts and to move in the direction which appears natural under the new circumstances. Unfortunately, it took me many years to learn that I should not always try to swim against the tide."

Morya comments, "A valuable lesson indeed. We should all remember that there is a connection between our human self, our soul, and God. Ideally, the flow of inspiration from God to the outer consciousness is smooth and uninterrupted. In practice, the connection can be tenuous until the soul in embodiment gains in self-mastery. And in response to your question, Mark, the human mind does not always know when the time for graduation has come. These things are not laid out like a curriculum."

Mark wonders, "Why is this? Why are the connections between spirit and matter so tenuous?"

Morya answers, "When we are in spiritual dimensions, the connection between God and the soul is very close. This is because God is spirit and the soul is spirit. It is much easier in spiritual planes to know and follow the will of God. But when we walk through the door into

embodiment, we find ourselves in a different environment. We still can connect to God, but it requires an effort of free will or at least a receptivity to spiritual promptings. This can seem hard to maintain on earth, where it is sometimes challenging to live as a good person. And, don't forget, on earth our bodies have certain senses and mental capacity. We do have a sense of spirituality, but it is not often as fully developed as, say, our vision, hearing, and sense of smell. Nonetheless, it is our karma and dharma to learn self-mastery here on earth, and it is here that we must discover the seeds of God within ourselves. Having an understanding of how spirit and matter can be integrated inside of our own consciousness is an important step in the development of a son and daughter of God. The awakening to one's true self is one method the Creator uses to expand His gifts throughout the universe. It occurs as souls – one by one – learn to become co-creators with God. Once the individual realizes his true identity as a son or daughter of God, then it is natural for the individual to become a co-creator with God. The son follows in his Father's footsteps.”

Mark adds, “I see your point, Morya. Every morning when I wake up I ask the master for guidance on what I can do that day to advance the will of God. It is actually a wonderful feeling to sense one's will gradually aligning with God's will.”

Morya comments, “This is the process. If the path is followed, one finds one's personal will becoming congruent with God's will. Eventually, the will of man and the will of God are one and the same insofar as man's destiny is concerned. At that point, the individual acts as a co-creator with God.”

### [Are Souls Connected to Each Other in Some Kind of Relationship?](#)

Martin then asks, “I wonder, Morya, if you could explain the connection of souls to each other.

Do we always belong to the same family or society, or are we embodied first in one group and then in another?”

Mark offers, “I think we are talking about mandalas here: a group of souls linked to each other by karma and dharma.”

Morya says, “Yes, mandalas do exist. All of us are linked to various other souls in different ways. There is usually a karmic connection between parents and child, husband and wife, brother and sister. Sometimes this connection is to balance karma caused by harm brought to some person. Often there is a positive link between souls who are committed to some great purpose, say the emergence of a civilization or culture. There are also soul-mates and twin flames, which are the subjects of countless romantic legends. There also souls with whom we feel very comfortable as friends. And, unfortunately, there are a few souls we would rather not see at all. Karmic patterns on earth can be very complicated, but over time even negative karmic relationships generally get resolved.”

Martin asks, “What about mandalas?”

Morya says, “Mandalas usually are of a positive kind: kindred souls that are committed to one another for some cause such as the expansion of freedom. That kind of thing requires a commitment between many souls lasting many lifetimes. There are other types of mandalas, as well, but that is the one I think you are asking about.”

Martin then asks, “Are we in this house part of a mandala?”

Mark smiles and Morya answers, “Of course.” But he would say no more.

After sitting quietly in front of the fire for a few more minutes, they men say goodnight and go to their rooms for the evening.

### Day Six: Christmas

In the morning, everyone got up and went to the dining room to enjoy a delightful breakfast prepared by Marcella and Martin. Beside each plate was a small gift box containing a semi-precious stone shaped and polished by Martin and placed in a gold wire setting by Marcella. Their friends produced their own gifts and presented them to all. After many smiles, hugs, and handshakes, the couples toasted each other and Morya said a few words of gratitude to the Creator for the opportunity of life and the joy of good friends. The men then cleared the table and washed the dishes, while the ladies went to the living room to enjoy the fire and a cup of mint tea.

Their husbands joined them and the conversation turned to memorable holidays of the past, when each of the couples had young children with all the happiness and challenges that period in life brings. After an hour or so, the ladies got up to begin preparing the early afternoon Christmas dinner. Marcella sent Martin out for a few items she had forgotten to buy, and Mark and Morya sat by the fire to read and watch television.

### [The Dweller on the Threshold](#)

When Martin returned, he joined his friends, commenting on how bitterly cold the wind was that day. Later, he excused himself to bring in some more logs for the fire and came back with a cut finger which Marcella quickly washed and bandaged for him.

Mark, noting the cut, says, “I often wonder how it is that, if we truly are sons and daughters of God, we can be so subject to imperfection.”

Morya comments, “Life on earth is never perfect.”

Martin replies, “Somehow, that thought brings little comfort to one sitting here, cold and hungry, nursing a cut finger and drinking coffee for the caffeine.”

Mark chuckles and observes, “We all know of your imperfections, my friend. No need to remind us.”

Martin then says, more seriously, “What I find most interesting is the difficulty in overcoming base impulses that seem to come from deep within one’s subconscious. And, even more interesting, is the fact that these impulses often intertwine with those that are nobler in character. It is almost as if we live in two different worlds, both inside of ourselves. Does that make sense?”

Mark nods and responds, “The teachings say that within each of us there is a dweller on the threshold – the false persona we have become over the eons of our evolution. I think on one occasion, Martin, you mentioned a dream of having to overcome a killer whale that was both the enemy of your soul and the thing you most admired because of its power and beauty. We each have many sides to ourselves, and often these are contradictory. Remember the story of the charioteer having to coordinate several horses at once in order to go anywhere. We are kind of like that, with our wild horses being our minds, emotions, spiritual nature, and physical body. To become our true self requires that we first learn to control ourselves.”

Martin asks, “Still, the question is, how do we separate our real self from our lesser self? From a practical point of view, our lesser self is often what enables us to survive in this world. The world is not perfect, so how can we be expected – or even want – to be perfect in an imperfect

world? We should not let our desire to be perfect be the cause of our demise in the world of practicality.”

At this point, Helen and Elizabeth bring some crackers and cheese, accompanied with a small glass of wine. The men gratefully accept the snacks, and the women go back to the kitchen with a promise of more to come, telling their husbands to prepare for dinner in about twenty minutes.

The Christmas dinner was delicious, with turkey and dressing, honey baked ham, sweet potatoes, Chinese broccoli, carrots, freshly made rolls, and several pies with whipped cream for dessert.

The men complimented their wives many times during the meal, and everyone enjoyed the light conversation and good company between life-long friends. After dinner, the ladies retired to the living room to relax and watch television, while the men washed the dishes and put away the pots and pans. A half-hour later they joined their wives, and watched a bit of the movie *Marcella* had selected from Comcast Xfinity. Feeling the romantic story a bit slow for their collective taste, the men excused themselves and retreated to the kitchen table.

### [Separating the Real and Unreal in Self](#)

Martin picked up the conversation from earlier that afternoon. “We were discussing before dinner the problem of separating the real self from the artificial self. The real self we consider to be the person God intends us to be – essentially, someone who expresses in their daily lives their inner quality to the best of their ability. The lesser or artificial self is the human ego which identifies itself as being separate from God. For many of us, the human self appears to be the composite of all the qualities picked up in order to survive on this planet. Separating the ideal self from the human self can be a real dilemma, since we may be divine in potential but are human in reality.”

Mark replies, “That is the challenge we all face. However, it is not necessarily a black and white decision, nor is it like walking from one room to another. What normally occurs is that the individual, having recognized his or her inner quality and therefore sensing the true self as potential residing within, begins slowly and deliberately to work towards improving his or her character. This is a step-by-step process, as one chooses to express more and more of one’s inner quality. Gradually, making these choices transforms the individual’s self-identification from his artificial or superficial self to his true self. In other words, as the Buddha once said, we become what we think we are. If we think of ourselves as a barbarian, we act like a barbarian. If we think of ourselves as a scholar, we act like a scholar. If we think of ourselves as a son or daughter of God, we begin to act as someone who has that responsibility. The power of the mind in molding our character is one of the defining characteristics of mankind. Our potential for self-improvement is almost limitless. The natural desire for self-improvement is a force that can propel us into higher levels of consciousness and productivity.”

Martin thinks about this for a moment, and Morya adds: “The dweller on the threshold is the composite of all that is not God’s will in an individual. The dweller is the sum total of the individual’s wrong use of free will. At some point in the soul’s evolution, the dweller must be confronted and overcome. Another way to think of it is this: at some point on the path, a son or daughter of God must determine to let go of past misdeeds and commit themselves to becoming the fullness that God intends. God’s intent for our soul is written in our hearts as recognition of our infinite potential as a son or daughter of God. God Himself provides both the seed of the individual’s inner quality and the opportunity through many lifetimes for the soul to discover and express those higher qualities.”

Morya continues, “When you seek to express your inner quality, you are deciding – consciously or unconsciously – to become your true self. This act of self-determination aligns with the will of God. God does not direct your every move. God gives life and opportunity. God wants you to awaken to your inner potential and to accept your inheritance as His co-creator. That inheritance comes with both honor and responsibility. But God has patience with us. Here on earth, God is mostly concerned about the intentions of our heart, less so on perfection. As we have said, in the planes of matter, perfection is impossible and form is impermanent. God does not expect perfection from human beings. He expects us to make responsible decisions based on our understanding of what is best in the circumstances we find ourselves in.”

Mark then observes, “And this is where the Tao or flow of life comes in. God’s will for the expression of goodness is like a great river carrying all things along with its flow. Once we align our will with the will of God, we swim with the tide rather than against it. From the perspective of the individual unaware of or not aligned with the will of God, becoming the true self can appear meaningless or unattainable. From the perspective of an individual who seeks to swim with the flow of God’s will, the realization of his full potential appears almost inevitable.”

Martin, after thinking a bit, gets up and brings some cookies and milk to the table, inquiring if his friends would like a warm-up on their tea. A short time later, hearing that the movie in the living room had ended, the men returned to their wives and asked if they would mind switching the channel to the news and weather. The rest of the evening was spent in light conversation about friends and family, with Mark and Martin taking turns on the cable switcher to find something interesting. Around midnight, the couples thanked each other for a wonderful Christmas, said goodnight, and retired for the evening.

Day Seven: Polar Vortex

That night, a polar vortex swept southward through Canada, hitting Minnesota, Wisconsin, and northern Illinois with strong winds, bitter cold, and extremely icy conditions. No one ventured outside, and the governors of the three states declared local emergencies, warning everyone to stay off the roads so the crews could prepare the highways for the coming work week.

The three couples were warm and comfortable in Martin and Marcella's home, so they didn't mind the weather. Their guests wondered if their afternoon flights the next day would be cancelled, but Martin ventured that they probably would be fine since O'Hare was very efficient in clearing runways once the winter storms had passed. The weatherman on a local station said this would be a fast moving storm, so no one was too concerned.

After a relaxed breakfast, the three couples took their coffees and teas into the living room to sit beside the fireplace and enjoy each other's company. They talked about their kids and work activities, catching up on things they hadn't discussed earlier.

### [The Role of Humanity](#)

After a while, Martin comments, "I often wonder about the special place of humanity in the larger scheme of things. We know there are billions of stars and probably millions of planets as well, some of which have been found to be fairly similar to earth in terms of distance from a sun and chemical composition. All of this suggests that human beings are not the only intelligent life in the universe. No matter how unique each of us feels as an individual, a nation, a culture, or even a species – we are not alone. We are part of a greater whole that is larger and more varied than any of us can imagine. When you look at life that way, you have to wonder about man's relationship to God. If there is a God, and we in this room certainly believe it to be true, then our understanding of God must change as we explore the universe further and one day perhaps find ourselves not alone in the cosmos. In this sense, there is a close connection between science and

religion. Whereas religion helped civilization grow out of the Dark Ages by preserving wisdom, so now science by its discoveries is helping religion expand its conceptions of spirituality.”

Helen said this was the point she had tried to make earlier, and then asks, “How do you think this new understanding of God relates to what we should be doing now?”

Martin thinks for a moment, and attempts to answer: “I think it has to begin with one’s orientation towards life. Are we functioning from the belief that we are the center of the universe, or from a perspective of acknowledging the vastness of life throughout cosmos – of which we are a small but important part? I believe all life is precious to God. To the best of our ability we should view life the same way.”

Mark says, “Once you recognize your real self, you naturally see other people as individuals becoming their real selves. What defines us as sons and daughter of God is that we all carry the seeds of God’s potential, which we can develop almost infinitely until the end of this great cycle of existence.” He pauses, then continues: “I often think of Native Americans and how many of them considered themselves descendants from the gods and therefore caretakers of nature. To them, possession of a piece of land did not imply ownership, but responsibility of stewardship on behalf of the Creator. To modern man, this may seem a simple notion, but it really is profound because it encapsulates the essence of what it means to be one with life. Mankind is special in that we are the caretakers of our environment and natural surroundings. We should not exploit nature and life, but rather take care of it, nourish it, and work in harmony with it.”

Morya nods his agreement and adds, “Human beings are not likely to be the only sons and daughters of God. Children of the light exist in many forms in the universe and in its various dimensions. However, one unique characteristic God has given to humanity is free will and –

most importantly – the ability to be highly creative in our use of that free will. God has given mankind one of His most cherished gifts: the ability to use the mind to plan and to build.”

Helen observes, “It is so natural, just like giving birth and raising children, and then watching them mature and go their own way. It seems that all of life exists within the same patterns of creation, birth, maturity, work, and then passing on for spiritual rest and recuperation between embodiments.”

Martin interjects, “But humans are a relatively new species on this planet. I have a hard time imagining dinosaurs using their free will to do good things.”

Helen laughs and says, “Well, what you say may be true, but what I am talking about is the underlying force of life that propels evolution. The life force is everywhere present in the universe, like a spirit: always flowing, always filled with potential, always seeking to be expressed wherever and whenever the slightest opportunity exists.”

Mark adds, “To some extent, the life force is similar to the Holy Spirit. It manifests itself at various times through different forms. It exists independently of a given person. A person can become an instrument of the Holy Spirit, but the person is not the Holy Spirit itself.”

Martin replies, “I understand how the Holy Spirit can inspire individuals to show kindness and mercy and bestow blessings. We all have felt that Spirit flow through our minds and bodies on occasion. But did the Holy Spirit use the dinosaurs as its instrument? What I am saying is that the life force is different from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a spiritual blessing from God. The force of life seems almost an environmental factor like climate and the elements. Both dinosaurs and human beings share life and the environment, but we do not necessarily share an experience with the Holy Spirit.”

Morya says, “That is true. The life force propels evolution from start to finish, like a great river coursing throughout cosmos. The Holy Spirit is God’s inspiration given to receptive forms of life to stimulate their growth potential. The life force and the Holy Spirit are two of God’s instruments. But God has more in His tool box than just these two.”

Mark comments, “I would love to dig around in that tool box and see what is there.”

Marcella replies, “We all would. Now, how about we get ready for lunch?” Everyone nods and gets up to help in the kitchen.

After a lunch of homemade soup, seasoned to warm the body on a cold wintery day, the friends returned to the living room with a cup of yogi tea Helen had made according to an old family recipe.

#### [Aligning Oneself with the Will of God](#)

Martin raises a question. “Morya, I would like your opinion on a basic issue facing all of humanity. What steps can we take to better align ourselves with the will of God? I am not talking about a particular religion or philosophy, but commonsense guidance that anyone can follow.”

Morya thinks for a moment and then replies, “The simplest guide is to be your best self. We have discussed the inner quality before, but it is – in essence – a person’s conceptualization of the best character they possess. If individuals can find within themselves a tiny nugget of good character, then that is sufficient to build upon. If one seeks every day to express that good character in larger and larger measure, a process is initiated whereby the person increasingly becomes his or her real self. God’s will is very simple. God wants His sons and daughters to realize their full potential and become their true selves. The true self is what God intends your soul to become. It is your inheritance. God’s gift to your lifestream.”

Mark adds, “None of us have the ability to control what comes our way in life. We do, however, have at least some control over how we react to our circumstances. To me, this is the essence of becoming a son or daughter of God: assuming personal responsibility for our actions and reactions in life.”

Elizabeth offers, “We actually teach that lesson to our first graders: ‘Learn to control your anger and your desire to possess what is not yours. Learn to help others who depend on you’.”

Marcella comments, “It’s interesting that you mention the early lessons of life, Elizabeth. I have found in counselling that people often have to return in their memories to some earlier event in order to see what impedes them today. We all want to be free of our burdens and limitations, but – more often than not – we are our own worst enemy. We are the source of our limitations. Not in the sense that unfortunate things can always be avoided, but in the sense that we can control our reaction to these unfortunate events and not be defeated by them.”

Martin observes, “It’s easy to say, but difficult to achieve.”

Morya says, “It all depends on your perspective. When we gaze at the summit it seems inaccessible. But once on the path, the overcoming of obstacles becomes second nature. One wakes in the morning anxious to see what challenges will arise to test one’s resolve.”

Helen laughs and comments, “You have to excuse my husband’s enthusiasm. To him, the joy is in the overcoming because it makes him feel closer to God. Sometimes, I confess, he is hard to live with.”

The others chuckle at this, because they know Helen shares Morya’s dedication to the will of God. If anything, she is even more determined to do the right thing in life.

Martin comments, “We all acknowledge that you are quite a pair and well suited to each other. I would only hope that my wife were as patient as you, Helen.”

Marcella lifts her eyes, and Elizabeth says, “We all appreciate you as well, Martin – and Marcella, too – for being such good friends and good hosts. Mark has his quirks as well, but – all in all – he is not such a bad person.”

The friends smile at each other, and then Martin turns on the T.V to catch tomorrow’s weather forecast.

#### Day Eight: A Fond Farewell

The next morning the friends enjoyed a late brunch, engaging with each other for a few hours before Mark and Morya and their wives were to be driven to O’Hara for their afternoon flights. At the table, Morya told everyone that he and Helen had decided to go to Darjeeling in the spring, and to spend some time at an ashram he had been introduced to years ago when he visited India with his parents.

Mark and Martin were silent for a moment, and then Martin says, “Well, I can understand why you would want to go to that spiritual retreat. I hope someday that Marcella and I can follow in your footsteps. I will miss our conversations but look forward to their continuing at some time in the future.”

Mark adds, “Morya and Helen, my dear friends, I wish you the best on your trip. We feel so appreciative of your friendship and wisdom over the years. I wish we could have you here forever, but I know it is impossible. Please drop us a line once in a while, and do come back when you can.”

As everyone got up from the table, they hugged each other, looking into eyes but without many words. Some things are understood between friends.

About an hour later, Martin and Marcella drove their guests to the airport. After seeing them to the security gate and waving goodbye, everyone went their separate ways.

#### [A Special Note from Morya](#)

A few months later, Martin received a brief handwritten note from Morya. The letter said Helen and he were doing well and becoming more invigorated by the day from being in such close proximity to the Himalayas. He wrote that they had decided to stay longer than originally planned, and that perhaps they would look into buying some property on which to build a small home for their retirement. Morya told his friend: “Martin, look inside of yourself for guidance. For God has placed within you a lighthouse to show you the way. Give my love to Marcella, and treat her kindly and with love. Remember, Martin, that God is full of mysteries. All of Creation is part of the Creator, and all of Creation is unfolding according to its own laws and principles. It is not foreordained that every part of life will perceive itself as part of God. Yet the potential of self-recognition is at all times present for each of us. God does not hide spiritual truth from anyone. As you go about your work, think of God as the Architect and you as the builder. Consult often with the Architect and listen carefully to His suggestions. Embrace your opportunities, love your fellowman, and always act with integrity in honor of your Heavenly Father.”

Martin re-read these words and his eyes became moist as he remembered the many conversations he and Morya and Mark had over the years. He quietly folded the note and placed it on the fireplace mantel. He understood that he would not see Morya again in this lifetime, but took comfort in the belief that their paths would cross in the future.

Martin and Mark met several more times over the next few years. Eventually, Mark and Elizabeth decided to open a teaching center overlooking Lake Titicaca in Peru. After that, the three couples never met each other in person but often communicated by email, sharing news and opinion. Somehow, even though thousands of miles separated them, they all felt as close as a thought away.

## About the Author

Martin Lasater is an author, political scientist, and national and homeland security specialist with an interest in philosophy, ethics, and governance. He has a Ph.D. in Political Science from George Washington University and degrees in Asian Studies from the University of Arizona. He has written a dozen books on U.S. policy towards Asia and has served as a consultant to federal government agencies for more than 20 years. He may be reached at: [mlasater@comcast.net](mailto:mlasater@comcast.net).