

Essay: "The Religious Motivation in My Life"

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I was born in the small town of Grande Prairie, Alberta. My parents were homesteaders and, when I was born, lived in a log cabin in the bush some fifty or so miles east of town, near the Cree Indian reserve at Sturgeon Lake. I have few memories of the homestead, since we moved to town when I was four years old so that my older sister could attend a larger school than was available locally, but I do remember going with my parents to the dances which were held at Sturgeon Lake.

Grande Prairie is now a thriving community of almost 30,000 people. In the late 1930's, however, it could not have numbered more than two or three thousand. Essentially, it was a farming community. There was a main street with restaurants, a hotel, a beer parlour, and a variety of stores. There was also a hospital and two elementary schools, one of which was Roman Catholic. The children were divided into pup-lickers and cat-lickers and, while I attended the public school, my best friend was a Catholic.

Sometime during my elementary school years, my classmates killed a crippled child, probably by accident. They snowballed her on the way home from school, and she died. I remember this incident as (1) occurring when I was not present and (2) occurring as if I were present. I sometimes wonder if I was present but would prefer to think that I was not.

My father had been raised on a farm, and I seriously doubt whether he had much of a religious upbringing at all. My mother, on the other hand, was raised in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,¹ in which her father had been a lay minister (although, at the time I was born, he was farming in northern Alberta and no longer active in the church).

We moved to London, Ontario when I was twelve, again for the sake of schooling. My father had a grade eight education; however, my mother had been a school teacher, and I expect that she was the driving force behind both of these for-the-sake-of-schooling moves. She was almost certainly also the driving force behind my own quest for achievement. Although I grew up as the second of three children, a boy sandwiched between two sisters, I learned later that my parents' first child, also a boy, had been stillborn. Perhaps that accounts for my special status in the family. That is, I always felt important – not that my sisters weren't, but I did feel special – and not really at liberty to let my parents down. I don't remember ever having had any specific guilt trips laid on me regarding either education or morality, so I expect that it was my mother's expectations that was the deciding factor in my life. In any event, I have no doubt at all that my mother moulded me into more-or-less the kind of person she wanted me to be.

In Grande Prairie, we had attended the Baptist church, where my mother played the piano (and where I was forced to sit through services which I hated). From time to time, we also attended the Salvation Army and United churches, and even the occasional Pentecostal revival. My father was

¹ Now known as the Community of Christ. RMR 2009

partial to the Salvation Army, insofar as he had any interest in church at all. In London, however, there was a branch of the R.L.D.S. church, and my mother took advantage of the opportunity which it presented to introduce my sisters and me to the church in which she had been raised. During my teens, therefore, I grew up in the Saints' church (although I did belong to a Cub and Scout troop which operated out of an Anglican church close to the part of town in which we lived, and I attended church parades there from time to time).

My family didn't have much money – you can guess that my father couldn't command much of a salary – and all of the children held part time jobs. I loved to work and I still do, but you could never imagine the joy that I experienced in working like a slave, partly for the sake of having a little pocket money but mainly just for the challenge of pitting myself against the demands of my various jobs. I can remember, for example, pushing a bicycle laden with groceries miles out into the country in the middle of winter just for the sheer fun of overcoming the challenge which it presented. There were teenage gangs in the neighbourhood, but I never had time to get more than peripherally involved.

When I was an adolescent, my best friend, who was a rebellious lad, was killed in an automobile accident while returning from a night in Niagara Falls – at that time, you could drink legally in New York state younger than you could in Ontario. As chance would have it, I wasn't with him at the time, and was left with virtually no other friends outside of the church. However, our church young people's group was very active. Several of our number had cars, and we travelled the province to visit other church youth from Windsor to Toronto and from Orillia to Niagara Falls. Perhaps for these reasons, and perhaps because my parents rarely ever formally forbade me to do whatever I wanted – my mother tended to rule through expectation and guilt – and perhaps because I was relatively bright, I almost missed my adolescent rebellion, and would have missed it entirely if it hadn't been for sex. As it was, whatever rebelliousness I exhibited occurred rather later than usual and didn't last for very long at all. Other than that, I worked, attended school, read like a fiend (I even managed to get access to the adult section of the library well before being technically old enough to do so), and hung out with the young people at the church, by which I mean from one end of the province to the other. As I recall, the church young people's group did not seem to have any consistent leaders, but when we did have leaders they were good role models. I still remember them with affection and envy their devotion to their young charges.

This Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints which I joined as a teenager is a remarkable organization. Its theology is both liberal (and perhaps even radical) and fundamentalist. From shortly after we began to attend this church, I knew that I had found my church home. No doubt some of the charismatic/mystical elements of the church, such as prophesy, healings and speaking in tongues, appealed to me, but what really reached me where I live was the rationality of the church's teachings.

The R.L.D.S. church teaches that children are born innocent and are seven or eight years old before reaching the age of accountability. Many, if not most of the children who are brought up in the church, will be ready for baptism into the church by that stage in their lives. I was twelve when we moved to London, so it was some time after that that I decided to join the church. For me, it was very much of a conscious decision. In a sense, you could say that I was a convert to the R.L.D.S.

church.

Of course, this does not mean that I was an easy child to teach. I questioned everything that I was taught and, I am sure, drove my Sunday school teachers to distraction. But their answers must have supplied something for which I was hungering, since something in the whole process seems to have clicked. I don't remember any specific crucial religious teachings from that time in my life, but perhaps I could illustrate the kind of teachings to which I was exposed with a few examples from the intervening years.²

The R.L.D.S. church accepts as scripture three separate books: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and an open canon of scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants. Although it is recognized that all translations of the Bible can serve to enhance our understanding of the mind and will of God, the main version of the Bible accepted by the church is the Inspired Version, a translation and "correction" of the King James version of the Bible provided by Joseph Smith, the first president and prophet of the church. My first illustration is taken from the third chapter of Genesis, I.V.:

"And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying, That Satan whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning; And he came before me, saying, Behold I, send me, I will be thy Son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore, give me thine honor. But behold, my beloved Son, which was my beloved and chosen from the beginning, said unto me: Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever. Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him [*italics mine*]; and also that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten I caused that he should be cast down; and he became Satan." (Genesis, chapter 3, verses 1-4).

My second illustration is taken from the Book of Mormon:

"...for there must be an opposition in all things. If not so, my first born in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass; neither wickedness; neither holiness nor misery; neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must be a compound in one. Wherefore, if it should be one body, it must remain as dead, having no life, neither death nor corruption, nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. Wherefore, it must have been created for a thing of nought; wherefore, there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes, and also the power, and the mercy, and the justice of God. And if you shall say there is no law, you shall also say there is no sin. And if you shall say there is no sin, you shall also say there is no righteousness. And if there be no righteousness, there be no happiness. And if there be no righteousness nor happiness, there be no punishment nor misery. And if these things are not, there is no God. And if there is no God, we are not, neither the earth, for there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon; wherefore, all things must have vanished away. Now, my son, I speak to you these things, for your profit and learning. For there is a God, and he has created all things, both the

² Because I will be quoting rather extensively from scripture, this essay will be somewhat longer than the required 3000 words.

heavens and the earth, and all things that are in them; both things to act, and things to be acted upon. And to bring about his eternal purposes in the end of man, after he had created our first parents, and the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and in fine, all things which are created, there must be opposition; even the forbidden fruit in opposition to the tree of life; the one being sweet and the other bitter. Wherefore, the Lord God gave to man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other. And I, Lehi, according to the things which I have read, must suppose that an angel of God, according to that which is written, had fallen from heaven; wherefore he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God. Because he had fallen from heaven and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, said to Eve, 'Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.' And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit, they were driven out of the garden of Eden, to till the earth. And they have brought forth children, even the family of all the earth. And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh. Wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened, according to the commandments which the Lord God gave to the children of men. For he gave commandment that all men must repent; for he showed to all men that they were lost, because of the transgression of their parents. Now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed, he would not have fallen; but he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state which they were, after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. They would have had no children; wherefore, they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But, behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knows all things. Adam fell, that man might be; and men are, that they might have joy. And the Messiah will come in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because they are redeemed from the fall, they have become free forever, knowing good from evil — to act for themselves, and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the Lord, at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God has given. Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient to man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeks that all men might be miserable like himself." (II Nephi, verses 80-121).

My third illustration is taken from the third R L D S book of scripture, the Doctrine and Covenants. Joseph Smith was killed at Carthage, Missouri by a mob in 1844, after which Brigham Young led a group of the "Saints" west to establish the headquarters of the church in Utah. This Utah Mormon church retained the name which the church had in 1844, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. When the "Saints" who remained in Missouri reorganized under the leadership of Joseph Smith III, they chose, as a name for their church, the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In time, the Utah church adopted the practice of polygamy, which was considered an abomination by the R.L.D.S. church. When I was a child, because the names of these two churches were so similar, the R.L.D.S. church was in the midst of defensively seeking to distance itself from the Utah Mormon church and the practice of polygamy for which it was infamous. However, by the 1960's, the R.L.D.S. church in "[responding] to opportunities for evangelism in several national and cultural situations," found themselves in the position of needing to decide what to do about converts,

e.g., among the hill tribes in India, who were already involved in polygamous marriages. Some among the church were insisting that anyone who joined the church must first abandon all but one of his polygamous wives. It was within this context that the following "inspired" message was accepted by the church's 1972 World Conference "as embodying the word of God to the church at this time":

"Monogamy is the basic principle on which Christian married life is built. Yet, as I have said before, there are also those who are not of this fold to whom the saving grace of the gospel must go.

When this is done the church must be willing to bear the burden of their sin, nurturing them in the faith, accepting that degree of repentance which it is possible for them to achieve, looking forward to the day when through patience and love they can be free as a people from the years of their ignorance." (Section 150, verses 10a and 10b).

Although I still attend the R.L.D.S. church because it seems to come closest to meeting my spiritual needs, I experience my home congregation as lacking in a number of ways. I miss the theological simplicity of my Baptist Sunday school days. I miss the down-to-earth-service orientation of the Salvation Army. I miss the majesty of the Anglican services which I attended as a Boy Scout. I miss the easy-going "community" of the services which I have experienced at the synagogue attended by one of my Jewish friends. I miss the fundamentalist fervour, the born-again-Christian intolerance of some of my friends at university. I miss the praise singing of the southern Baptist Negro congregation which we lived beside during my internship year, and even the more up-beat services available in other congregations of the R.L.D.S. church. Why do I stay?

Last Spring, I represented the Toronto metropolitan area at my church's World Conference in Independence, Missouri. While there, I had the good fortune to attend a Historical Society banquet at which the guest speaker was the president of the Utah Mormon Historical Society. He spoke about the extent to which Joseph Smith revised the messages he received from God as time and circumstances dictated. Many sections of the Doctrine and Covenants, for example, were revised from month to month and year to year. Joseph Smith was demonstrably very human, indeed. But then, I already knew that.

Then again, I am a graduate of the clinical psychology programme at the University of Waterloo (although I was practicing as a psychologist long before Waterloo even opened its doctoral programme) and religion has never been a very "hot item" within the psychological profession³. In addition, from an interest in the Tarot, I developed an appreciation of some of the doctrinal disputes which formed the basis for many of the current common Christian beliefs, and the extent to which mythology is a part of the Christian tradition.⁴ From General Semantics,⁵ I learned that "the map is

³ "Recent studies continue to find that psychologists, as a group, are the least religious of all groups in the academic community." Paloutzian, p.181.

⁴ See for example, Ravenscroft, "The Cup of Destiny: The Quest for the Grail,"

⁵ Korzybski, A. Science and Sanity.

not the territory," which laid the foundation for a later appreciation of Zen,⁶ and a realization (i.e., choice to make real) that the world as we perceive it to be is an illusion. But Emmett Miller⁷ tells the story of a conversation which he had with a famous Zen master about religion: "Why," he asked, "has someone such as yourself, who knows that all our religions are merely metaphors, come to embrace Christianity?" The Zen master replied that nowhere else had he ever encountered the idea of "love your enemies."

I see within the graying of the congregation which I attend the passing of an era (actually, it was probably passed in the 1930's and has just taken this long to actualize itself in congregational attendance). Most of the congregation are now retired. Many go south for the winter, and each year there are fewer young people to take their place. According to a recent article in the Toronto Star, "Organized religion continues to turn off an increasing number of Canadian teenagers. ...a mere 10 percent say they regard religious group involvement as important.... Regular weekly church attendance by teenagers is now 18 per cent, down from 23 per cent in 1984." In the congregation which I attend, worship services have little of the fire (and/or brimstone) of years gone by. Like the congregation I attend, I am also graying, and last month I retired. Like my "brothers and sisters in the church," I seem to have little ambition left with which to revolutionize the world.

One of the gifts which I was given on retirement was a set of audiotapes of the King James version of the Bible.⁸ Now, listening to these audiotapes has provided me with a whole new perspective on the Bible, and on the Christian community to which I belong. Listening to these tapes (as opposed to reading the Bible), it is easy to believe that the stories recorded within are just that, stories which may have some basis in fact but which are fanciful as well.

So where does that leave me on my spiritual journey? If the map is not the territory, if the world as we see it is an illusion, if things did not happen as we have been told they happened.... Yes, I realize that everything in our world exists only because it is perceived to exist, and that the doctrines of the religion which I have espoused cannot be defended in their entirety. Nevertheless, my religion gives me something that I don't get anywhere else – perhaps illusions of rationality and stability. It may also provide me with a sense of community, although I truly believe that that is relatively unimportant. So why do I stay?

The R.L.D.S. church sponsors yearly get-togethers called "reunions," and when I was about seventeen, I attended one of these reunions. This particular reunion was held at a campground owned by the church at Erie Beach, just south of Chatham. For some reason, I was all by myself one sleepy summer afternoon, and I wandered into the little chapel to the west of the grounds. As I sat there, not thinking about anything in particular so far as I can remember, I experienced such a feeling

⁶ See for example, Kapleau, "Zen Dawn in the West."

⁷ Miller, E. Right Imagery: Wisdom of the East as a Basis for Healing.

⁸ Zondervan Corporation, The King James Version [of the] Bible on cassette.

of peace. In Maslow's⁹ terms, it was truly a peak experience. I associate that experience with religion, and it is like a fire, albeit heavily banked, which burns within and provides the personal daemon which keeps me on the straight and narrow way, at least as I may choose to interpret it -- like the rest of the (nominally) Christian world, I try not to be too Christ-like. After all, who would want to get crucified?!!. In truth, this fire is probably not just derived from that one experience but, rather, is probably a gestalt derived from all of the religious experiences to which I have been exposed (and probably ultimately driven by a need to please my mother -- otherwise, why would I be so influenced by a simple feeling of peace?). Interestingly (to me), it doesn't seem to contain any specific doctrine; rather, it just is, a gift from God. "Blessed be the rock of my salvation."

Having said that, I must admit that I have no personal experience of God, other than as archetype¹⁰. That is, I have yet to meet him face-to-face and, as Tart (1975) notes, "All [real] knowledge is experiential knowledge.... [Given] certain sets of experiences which I (by assumption) attribute to an external world activating my sensory apparatus, it may be possible for me to compare them with purely internal experience (memories, previous knowledge) and predict with a high degree of reliability other classes of experiences, which I again attribute to the external world. Because my ability to predict what will happen in the class of experiences I attribute to the external world is so remarkably high... I have come, like everyone else, to believe that the physical world exists independently of my experience of it..." (pp. 20-21). While it is true that one's personal experience is governed by the limits of conceptualization and subject to modification through the normal processes of social reinforcement, insofar as it is experienced it is hard to deny. The problem with religions is that they often seek to perpetuate a belief in religious experience in the absence of that experience being personal experience. Jesus of Nazareth had an experience of God -- whether that experience would be labelled as such by someone else or not does not matter -- and he told others about it. Many believed on his experience and many had corroborating experience of their own. Others believed, to a greater or lesser degree, but without any corroborating experience of their own. Belief, in the absence of personal experience is shaky knowledge, indeed.

On the other hand, I am far from accepting any kind of psychological explanation for the experience which I do have. Given that psychological knowledge is established almost entirely through social agreement¹¹ it can define the meaning of an experience much more readily than it can establish or

⁹ Maslow, A. (1967) *Self-Actualization and Beyond*.

¹⁰ Jung (1964) defines archetype as an instinctive tendency to form certain types of "primordial images."

¹¹ O'Keefe (1982) reports that "Bertrand Russell has noticed that experimenters [in "academic experimental psychology"] seem to pick organisms which confirm their theories: To demonstrate insight, the gestalt psychologists used apes; to demonstrate trial-and-error, Skinner used rats and pigeons. Hull used duller, blinder rats than did the cognitive theorist Tollman. There is also a fit between apparatus and theory: mazes to prove proprioceptive-muscular guidance of action; T- maze choice-points to show cognitive choice; Skinner boxes to demonstrate operants....the schools maintain their adherents by having students repeat the packaged experiments using their apparatus and animals." (pp. 107-108)

disestablish the experience itself . With my own knowledge of the limitations of science, and scepticism regarding what others may regard as the "truth" of any socially accepted patterns of thought, my own experience is almost insurmountable as a guiding force in my own life.

In addition, there is my "patriarchal blessing." There is, within the R.L.D.S. Church, a procedure referred to as a patriarchal blessing, in which a Patriarch (a particular priesthood office .in the church) asks God for a blessing on behalf of the petitioner¹² and offers counsel to him or her. In my case, I have both received and chosen to accept the counsel to "let not your questioning become too much of doubting." I suppose that equates to something like "don't throw out the baby with the bath water!" In truth, while I certainly question everything that I am told – or, more precisely, I accept it as what I have heard – I don't have a great deal more faith in my own intellect than in those who designed the church.

Capps and Wright (1978) have noted that "The sacramental vision describes a capacity to perceive more than one level or dimension of reality at a time, and to know that all levels or dimensions are available to any event or experience. Drawn by the hunger of love and the thirst for knowledge, mystics enter so deeply into their own inner lives that they discover a reality, as it were, 'on the other side of themselves.' Abandoning themselves to a transformation by the presence they discover both within and outside their own selves, they become the voice of humankind articulating its awestruck perception of God. It is as if, finding themselves at or near the vital centre, they begin to hear the heart's rhythmic beating, sense its pulsing life, and little by little experience the heart as receiving its vitality from the greater heart. Here the mystic is most profoundly alone and most intimately related to every other living being. Mystics in the West have described this experience as the discovery of the image of God (imago Dei) within." (pp. 2-3). I don't experience myself as even beginning to approach any such knowledge, for a number of reasons: (1) I am basically a depressive type of person, and I do not feel at all confident of my ability to survive the "Dark Night of the Soul" which Saint John of the Cross¹³ describes as part of the (mystical) search for God. (2) When I was in my late teens, I was "going 1with and madly in love with a girl who, one weekend, on a visit to her home town, married an ex-boyfriend. I believe this, in a sense, dirninished my capacity to love – although in all fairness, it may simply have already been diminished by earlier life experiences. I am a bit distant, intellectual, cool if not cold, and possibly somewhat detached. Contributing to this "detachment" is a real reluctance to interfere in other people's lives, beyond what they give me permission to do -- as might be inferred from the first scriptural quotation which I have chosen to invoke. (3) In the R.L.D.S. church, there is a official belief in specific "calls" to the priesthood. I have never received such a call. Contrarily, I have been "called" to be a psychologist, and that may be as close as I am ever going to get to either other people or to God. In a sense, you could say that I know there exists the possibility of (Buddhist) enlightenment, and of (Christian) mystical experiences, but neither is a high priority. There is too much other good work/play to be done. Unlike Abu Ben Adam, I may have to settle for having my name written into the Book of Life as one who tries to understand and accept and care for his fellow man. In my opinion, for the present at

¹² Ambrose Bierce defines pray as "To ask that the laws of the universe be annulled in behalf of a single petitioner confessedly unworthy."

¹³ In Capps and Wright (Eds) *Silent Fire: An Invitation to Western Mysticism*.

least, that wouldn't be so bad. On the other hand, although it is not my number one priority, I must admit to some curiosity, both intellectual and emotional, about the process of spiritual experience....

I believe that all religions are derived from the experience of a felt connectedness with something beyond oneself and beyond community. I shall call this "spiritual experience" or, as Jung has been quoted to have said, "the scrupulous observation of the numinous." This experience is felt to give added meaning to life, although perhaps it would be more accurate to say that those who have spiritual experiences choose to give meaning to their lives beyond what they had done before. Formalized religions develop as these charismatic figures attempt to relate their experiences and the conclusions which they have drawn from them; and as their disciples accept their teachings, codify their beliefs, and coerce agreement from others in return for a sense of community with other believers and the promise of communion with the divine. Spiritual experience, as contrasted with religious experience, is probably relatively rare, but still very important, and infinitely worthy of study.

Psychology is a social science concerned with trying to understand people. It asks "where," "when," "how," "what" and "why" they think, feel, and act the way they do. The psychology of religion applies these questions to the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours which make up the religious experiences of people. Now, I am not a philosopher, except perhaps in the temerity to hope to be pursuing wisdom, and I cannot claim much understanding of metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, epistemology or even logic. Nor can I claim any special insight into how best to even begin to approach this field which would seem to demand a knowledge of all of the above. And I realize that, as one enlightened person once said, The world as apprehended by the senses is the least true (in the sense of complete), the least dynamic (in the sense of the eternal movement), and the least important in a vast 'geometry of existence' of unspeakable profundity, whose rate of vibration, whose intensity and subtlety are beyond verbal description.... Words are cumbersome and primitive – almost useless in trying to suggest the true multidimensional workings of an indescribably vast complex of dynamic force, to contact which one must abandon one's normal level of consciousness." (quoted in Kapleau, 1980). Nevertheless, I believe that it is with our normal level of consciousness (sensory-based and structured by our genetic endowment, sex, language, culture, socioeconomic status, and a host of other factors) that we must seek to understand when we talk about the psychology of religion. However – and here the argument gets very tricky, indeed, trying to reconcile understanding (which must, perforce, be put in words) with experience (which never can be entirely captured in words) – it seems to me that understanding spiritual experience and having spiritual experience are two rather different things. Spiritual experience, after all, does not demand any understanding at all. On the other hand, just suppose that an understanding of spiritual experience, from a psychological perspective, would allow one to facilitate it. I wonder if there could possibly be any point in pursuing that line of reasoning.

According to Jaynes (1976), "A long time ago, in a land far away, human nature was divided into two parts, an executive part called a God and a follower part called a man. Neither part was conscious. The man simply lived his life without thinking about it, and the God-part spoke to him from time to time, as one person to another, to tell him what to do. How could that be? In the dawn of history, mankind did not have a mental language.... In fact, it wasn't until about [1200 B.C.] that language had evolved to the point that man could consciously have a conversation with himself, and

the Gods began to withdraw from his company and to make their residence in heaven; and winged beings, angels (or genii, as the Assyrians called them) began to appear as intermediaries between the absent Gods and their forlorn followers. In addition, demons began to appear and needed to be defended against, and a priestly caste arose. In Persia, they were known as the Magi, or Magicians." (Reynolds, 1985). The experience which they mediated was religious (and sometimes even spiritual) experience.

When I think about mediating spiritual experience, I don't think primarily of either Elmer Gantry¹⁴ or the Holy Rollers. I think about Julian Jaynes and the bicameral mind, and the conditions under which that bicameral mind might just possibly be reinstated.¹⁵ Tad James (1987) suggests that the answer begins with Korzybski's (1933) recommendation that we attempt to overcome our semantic reactions¹⁶ (what I would call our "cortico-thalamic" reactions, after A.E. Van Vogt)¹⁷ to words, and he reports having developed a process through which that reinstatement may readily¹⁸ be achieved: "Every single word is an anchor to [i.e., trigger for] a certain feeling inside the body." "What the language integration process does is it temporarily disconnects all of the language inside the individual from the meaning of the words.... So what were left with... is direct perception of all of the elements coming in through the senses [i.e., enlightenment, that state in which we are (re)united with the infinite]." If, as St John of the Cross and others have suggested, God is to be found within, perhaps such numinous experience also carries with it the potential for once again walking and talking with God, just as humankind did before our semantic reactions began to interfere with our inherent ability to do so. And if that is so, I hope to try it out, some day, when time permits.

Reg Reynolds Oakville, Ontario 11 November 1992 5488 words exclusive of scripture

¹⁴ Elmer Gantry, a movie by Richard Brooks and starring Burt Lancaster, Jean Simmons, Dean Jagger, Arthur Kennedy and Shirley Jones, and based on the story. by Sinclair Lewis. 1960.

¹⁵ Short of the investment of time and effort typically required for attaining such spiritual experiences.

¹⁶ "The working tool of psychophysiology is found in the semantic reaction. This can be described as the psycho-logical reaction of a given individual to words and language and other symbols and events in connection with their meanings.... It is of great importance to realize that the term 'semantic' is non-elementalistic, as it involves conjointly the 'emotional' as well as the 'intellectual' factors." Korzybski (1933, p. 24).

¹⁷ In 1945, A.E. Van Vogt wrote a science fiction novel, *The World of Null-A*, published by Ace Books, New York, which drew on some of the principles of General Semantics.

¹⁸ According to James, the Language Integration Process takes about three hours.

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