

God in Three Persons: A Spiritual Odyssey

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“That which is known as the Christian religion existed among the ancients, and never did not exist, from the very beginning of the human race until the time when Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion which already existed, began to be called Christianity.”

- - St. Augustine, Retractions, Book I, xiii, 3

Apollo looked across the observation deck of the small luxury ship, the Silver Wind, at the wide expanse of the dark Tyrrhenian Sea. Behind, in the wake of the cruise ship's waves, receded the night lights of Civitavecchia, the port city of the Eternal City of Rome. Simon, who was initially reluctant to book a cruise for three people to Alexandria, finally conceded when Sophia convinced him that the mystery of Apollonius would be resolved there. Apollo had suggested a cruise instead of a flight because he wanted to experience the ancient method of travel on the waves of the Mediterranean, the sea that was once considered to be located in the middle of the earth. Sophia, on the other hand, was looking forward to visiting the center of learning in the ancient world.

The Silversea cruise line offered Apollo and Sophia an opportune time to relax in the open air after the prolonged stay in the congested atmosphere of a large city. It also offered Apollo an opportunity to visit the island of Malta, which tradition said was the place where St. Paul was shipwrecked. For Simon, it was a chance to pursue his unquenchable desire to discover the whereabouts of the illusive Apollonius of Tyana.

The south wind gently blew across the bow of the liner and softly caressed the face of Apollo as he thought of the words of Hermes that kept reverberating in his mind: “I will meet you in Alexandria.” Apollo looked up into the dark autumn sky and saw the new moon and the nearby evening star as a fortuitous sign. The propitious promise of Hermes was like a beacon of light, guiding him to a harbor of solace and tranquility. Deep inside his soul he knew Simon would not release him and Sophia until he had triumphed in his nefarious plot to destroy the name and spirit of the wise and divine man who had become one of the immortals. Apollo was torn between two conflicting ideas: if he followed in the footsteps of the sage, he would hopefully complete his investigation into the life of Apollonius and finish his manuscript; if he continued to support the stealthy tactics of Simon Petroma and utilize his ecclesiastical and financial services, he might inadvertently do more harm than good in proving his thesis that Apollonius was the

biblical Paul and the real teacher of the gentiles. Should he continue his life's work even if it meant helping Simon with his power-hungry schemes?

The dilemma that tossed the mind of Apollos back and forth like the waves of a turbulent sea was etched on the furrows of his brow, and Sophia couldn't help but notice that something was perplexing her companion.

"Do you want to talk about the bothersome thoughts that hang like a dark cloud over your head?" asked Sophia as she snuggled up to Apollos, who was reclining in a chair on the observation deck.

"It's the same problem we've been faced with for more than three months," gloomily responded Apollos, his voice cracking under the mental stress.

"You mean the problem of Simon, who is like the proverbial monkey on our backs?" asked Sophia intuitively.

"Yes," conceded Apollos, "the egoist who is exploiting us for personal fame, power, and glory."

"Just keep believing that the good we do in making the story of Apollonius public will outweigh the evil that he will try to do in discrediting our efforts," reassuringly postulated Sophia.

"You mean I should keep on writing," asked Apollos, "and let the gods decide the providential outcome of our work?"

"Precisely," said Sophia in her cheerful voice, "and may our outcome be as Apollonius prayed: 'O ye gods, bestow on us whatever is due.'"

"This extended period of inactivity has dulled my creative thinking," said Apollos, referring to the days of touring museums, churches, public plazas, and numerous restaurants instead of working on his manuscript. "Maybe this fresh seaborne air will clear the cobwebs from my mind."

"I'm actually glad we had all that time to familiarize ourselves with all that Rome had to offer," said Sophia. "The time I spent communing with the sibyls and oracles in the Sistine Chapel was something I could have continued to do for all eternity. Michelangelo's inspiring art work was like heaven on earth for me. In fact, I believe I'm inspired by all I've seen to finish the great work that we started together at Delphi."

"You mean the Key to the Initiated that the oracle of Delphi delivered into our safekeeping?" asked Apollos knowingly.

"I've read the transcribed notes that you took, and I believe I can correlate them with the scriptural revelation," confidently stated Sophia.

"And I can work on the Egyptian chapter in the life of Apollonius," enthusiastically stated Apollos, breathing in a large volume of fresh air through his wide-open throat into his expanding lungs. "This vivifying air is already stirring up my brain cells."

Apollos and Sophia laughed joyously as they walked hand in hand to their vista suite to get their writing material. Then they went to the quiet library at the back of the ship next to the Panorama lounge on Deck 8. They were too busy to care about Simon and his whereabouts; he was entertaining himself by mingling with the single women, and dancing with them, in The Bar on Deck 5.

Apollos opened his spiral notebook and began writing about Apollonius in Egypt:

The land of Egypt beckoned many a pilgrim of the soul to explore the mysteries of life and death within its temples and pyramids. Apollonius of Tyana was one in

the long line of wise men who sought initiation into the wisdom of the Egyptians. The Greek philosophers Pythagoras and Plato had preceded him, and Apollonius was determined to follow in their footsteps and learn what they had learned from their experience in the Great Pyramid.

Upon landing in Alexandria, Egypt in the summer of 69 A.D., the people of Egypt enthusiastically greeted the renowned sage with love and devotion as he stepped down from the ship in the Eastern Harbor. Philostratus writes: "They gazed upon him as if he was a god, and made way for him in the alleys, as they would for priests carrying the sacraments." (Life of Apollonius, Vol. 1, Book 5, Ch.24, p. 517) His first order of business was to visit the great Serapeum, the cult center of the sacred bull Apis, who was considered to be an incarnation of the creator god Ptah, and a manifestation of Osiris, the Lord of Heaven, on earth. Within the temple stood the statue of Serapis, a composite god used for the purpose of uniting the Greeks and the Egyptians, a blazing solar god with a coronet of seven rays, whose aspects of fertility (with a basket of grain on his head), healing, and the underworld (or afterlife) appealed equally to Greek and Egyptian essential religious beliefs.

Apollonius was impressed with the "orderliness" of the arrangements in the temple, which was "thoroughly religious and wisely framed," but he disapproved of the blood offerings and wisely offered a correction to the Egyptian rites: he showed the officiating priest how the sacrifice of a model bull, made of frankincense gum resin, would emit an ascending smoke of an oracular nature as it melted in the fire. In conclusion, Apollonius revealed his knowledge of Chaldean lore, and his own morning obeisance to the Eternal Fire, with the words: "Many things are revealed in the disc of the sun at the moment of its rising." (Book 5, Ch. 25)

Apollo placed his pen on his notebook and closed his eyes. His eyes were tired and he wanted to go to sleep. He wanted to rise before sunrise so that he could perform his morning salutation to the rising sun.

"Are you ready to call it a night?" asked Sophia, who was still working on her project.

"Yes, my eyes are tired and I want to get up early," answered Apollo with his eyes closed.

"Do you want to hear what I've written so far?" asked Sophia, who was anxious to reveal the mystery of the Apocalypse.

"Sure, you read while I listen with closed eyes," responded Apollo dreamingly.

"OK, but don't go to sleep on me," stated Sophia emphatically. "Here goes: The Apocalypse or Book of Revelation, as it is more popularly called, is a Wisdom Manual for initiates of all religions. The symbolical teachings flow from the fountainhead of the true religion of the ancient masters of wisdom – the religion and science of the human soul. What in ancient teachings was called the Christ-mind or Christ-consciousness came to be called Christ Jesus in Christianity. The principle of the Higher Self (or divine soul)

in Man is the same, no matter by what name it is called. The purpose of the unveiling of this Wisdom Manual in this day and age is to bring the individual soul of each person to an awareness of its innate divine self – its God-given birthright as a part of the All-encompassing Ultimate Reality. The key to the unfolding of the divine nature of the soul is revealed step-by-step within each verse of the twenty-two chapters of the Holy Scripture. The method whereby the regeneration of the body takes place is through self-discipline and inner attunement with the soul through silent prayer or meditation. May the divine spirit within each person reveal itself through the reading of the oracular words of Wisdom.

Here begins the verse by verse biblical and wisdom teaching correlation:

Revelation 1

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

When the Initiate first sets out on the Path to regenerate his body, an inner teacher (the Higher “Christ” Mind) appears and opens up the inner consciousness. The “book” which is unveiled are the states of vibration of inner activities (past, present, future) in the regeneration of the body.

2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

The Initiate receives these vibrations as a revelation of the Higher Mind. These are all the vibrations of all the inner states of experience and existence (“Christ-within”).

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

The mind of the Initiate receives the ability to perceive and understand the vibrations from the high spiritual realms. The Eternal Now is the “time” in which any person who qualifies may experience “illumination.”

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

The Initiate recounts the peaceful and beatific experience when the vibrations (spirits) in his body opened up the doors of his energy centers (churches) to the enthroned consciousness which abides in the Eternal.

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

The realm of Christ-consciousness contains the highest Memory of Nature and the Intuitive Mind, which is the first of man’s faculties to awaken from dormancy to become the dominant power in the body, and which also directs the purifying fire with its cleansing influence to eliminate evil in the body.

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The entire completed process of initiation opens up the way for initiates to function consciously in the Higher Divine Mind, which rules the higher class of people. The chanting of the Aum (Amen) vibration stirs up the electro-magnetic forces in the spinal cord to arouse the regenerative serpentine fire.

7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. **The awareness of the spiritual body (aura) allows the spiritual vision to see the enlightened Higher Mind, even the sense perceptions and faculties of the mental and psychic constitution which previously were unable or unwilling to perceive it.**

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. **The awareness of the God within – Pure Spirit – is the beginning and end of our existence, after we have learned all (past, present, future) lessons and discarded the physical world.**

Sophia looked at Apollos and saw that his mind was enraptured with an inner world of its own. She touched him gently on his shoulder and said, “Apollos, let’s go to our suite. You’re falling asleep.” Sophia grasped the hand of Apollos and led him to the comfortable bed in their vista suite.

The following morning, Apollos and Sophia stood together on the observation deck and greeted the sun disk as it rose above the Apennine Mountain range, the backbone of Italy. After their energizing morning devotion, and after a hearty breakfast, they returned to their suite and prepared for a day of touring in the vicinity of Naples, where the Silver Wind cruise ship stopped for the day. Simon wanted to take a day tour of Pompeii. Apollos wanted to visit Pozzuoli (the ancient Greek colony of Dicaearchia, renamed Puteoli by the Romans), where two converging stories took place: St. Paul’s journey from Puteoli along the Appian way to Rome (Acts 28:13-16); and the journey of Apollonius from Puteoli to Rome (Book 4, Ch. 36), and thirty years later from Rome to Puteoli (Book 8, Ch. 12). So Simon traveled southeast to Pompeii, and Apollos traveled west with Sophia to Pozzuoli (Puteoli).

“So this is where the famous harbor once stood,” said Sophia when they arrived at Pozzuoli, just eight miles west of Naples, “the chief commercial seaport of ancient Rome, to which the ships of Alexandria brought their corn and grain cargoes.”

“And the site where St. Paul started on his final journey to Rome,” remarked Apollos, who looked across the waters of the submerged port facilities,” after traveling on a ship of Alexandria from Malta.”

“What puzzles me is why, if St. Paul was a prisoner on his way to present his case to the Caesar, Nero,” noted Sophia, “he wasn’t transported on a smaller ship from Puteoli up the Tiber River to Rome, the way Apollonius traveled when he presented his defense against the charges brought against him in the presence of the Emperor Domitian in 92AD.”

“Probably because the story of St. Paul going to Rome had to end with the reign of Nero, who ruled until 68 AD, and not with the reign of Domitian, who was assassinated in 96AD,” conjectured Apollos. “Otherwise, if the biblical story of St. Paul concluded with his court trial before the Emperor Domitian, then there would be

conclusive evidence that the entire story of St. Paul was really about the philosopher Apollonius of Tyana.”

“That is brilliant reasoning,” said Sophia admiringly, “and I would add that the mysterious disappearance of Apollonius from the court of the emperor and his reappearance that same day at Puteoli, where his traveling companion Damis and the philosopher Demetrius were waiting for him, are the real reason the story of St. Paul ends with a complete silence about what happens to him at Rome.”

“You’re right,” conceded Apollos, “the book of Acts only mentions that St. Paul spent two years in Rome. There’s no meeting with the emperor, or Caesar, and no beheading, either.”

“Apollonius proved to the emperor that he was not a mere mortal,” continued Sophia, whose mind seemed to pierce through the vibrations of the distant past, “and that fact would conflict with the Church’s portrayal of only one immortal savior.”

“How well I remember that incident in Book 8,” reflected Apollos, whose eyes were lifted to the heavens as he recalled the words he had memorized, “where Apollonius explains his mysterious appearance at Puteoli to Damis, who traveled three days by land to get to the same place: ‘Imagine what you will, flying ram or wings of wax excepted, so long as you ascribe it to the intervention of a divine escort.’”

The remaining part of the day Apollos and Sophia spent visiting the remains of monuments still visible from antiquity, among which the Temple of Neptune and the Temple of Serapis (a market court enclosed by a portico) were preserved for tourists to view. [Note: According to Daniel Tredwell in A Sketch of the Life of Apollonius of Tyana: “On arriving at Puteoli, Apollonius repaired at once to the temple of Neptune, and sacrificed to that god for his safety from perils of the sea; he then visited the temple of Diana . . . and he also visited the temple of Jupiter Serapis, famous throughout the world.” p. 147]

That evening, after returning to the cruise ship, and after a sumptuous dinner, Apollos and Sophia returned to their favorite hangout, the library, and continued with their literary enterprise.

Apollos proceeded to write about Apollonius and his encounter with the Roman Emperor Vespasian:

In August, 69 AD the Roman emperor Vespasian was occupied with the siege of Jerusalem when a political turbulence arose in the empire, and Vespasian decided to seek the sage advice of Apollonius about making himself emperor. Vespasian sent for Apollonius, who declined “to enter a country which its inhabitants polluted both by what they did and by what they suffered.” (Book 5, Ch.27) So Vespasian came to Alexandria, to the temple where the “noble man of Tyana” spent most of his time. The future emperor, who believed Apollonius had “insight into the will of the gods,” asked him to make him king. Apollonius replied: “I have done so already, for I have already offered a prayer for a king who should be just and noble and temperate, and surely in my prayer I was asking from the gods for none other but thyself.” (Ch. 28)

After the encounter with the future emperor of the Roman empire, who spent several days conversing with Apollonius and listening to his advice, “above all to the forecasts and revelations imparted to him by the gods concerning the future of the empire,” (Ch. 37) Apollonius was ready to leave Alexandria and head to Ethiopia to visit the gymnosophists, a community of scantily-dressed ascetics known as “the naked sages.”

At this point in the investigation of the life of Apollonius, and before we leave Alexandria, it would behoove us to pause and consider the enigmatic statement in the Bible about “a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in scriptures.” (Acts 18:24) According to the Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names in the Oxford King James Version of the Bible, Apollos is another form of Apollonius. Apollos (Apollonius), furthermore, is a man “instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.” (Acts 18:25) Apollos (Apollonius) is associated in the biblical account with Ephesus (18:24) and with Corinth (19:1); Apollonius spent time teaching in both cities, urging his listeners to devote themselves to philosophy, the love of wisdom.

Certain terms, or expressions, need to be clarified in order to understand the underlying significance of the enigmatic text:

(1) “Jew” refers metaphorically to a person of high spiritual development, like Apollonius; such a person (and title) represents a knower of God, or one who possesses the knowledge and wisdom of God.

(2) “Alexandria” in the ancient world represented the cosmopolitan compilation of the religions and philosophies of the known world, which Apollonius embodied (i.e. as a world traveler, Apollonius amassed the wisdom and knowledge of that day and age).

(3) “Ephesus” is the city where the miraculous appearance (bilocation from Smyrna to Ephesus) of Apollonius took place; here he became a “physician of their infirmity” and purged the people of the plague which raged in their city. (Book 4, Ch. 10)

(4) “Baptism of John,” which involved the rite of repentance or purification, refers symbolically to the initiation (baptism) into the purificatory doctrines and teachings of Pythagoras. Apollonius actually was initiated into almost all of the mystery teachings of his time, as evidenced by the phrase “stewards of the mysteries of God,” which refers to Paul and to Apollos (Apollonius). (1 Corinthians 4:1, 6)

The crux of the matter lies in a revealing passage where Paul and Apollos are juxtaposed as both being ministers in an allegorical garden: “I (Paul) have planted,

Apollo watered; but God gave the increase.” Then a perplexing riddle (“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?”) is unraveled in a seeming conundrum: “Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one.” (1 Cor. 3:4-8) In actuality, the paths of Paul and Apollos (Apollonius) never cross because Paul is another form of Apollonius, as is Apollos – i.e. one man, Apollonius of Tyana, appears as both the “wise masterbuilder” of the Christian faith, or more aptly called “Wisdom of God in a mystery” (1 Cor. 2:7), and the man who builds on top of the foundation (Acts 3:10) by visiting the temples of the Roman Empire in the first century AD and reforming their religious rites.

“In the words of Daniel Fredwell, in his book A Sketch of the Life of Apollonius of Tyana: “He (Apollonius) passed from province to province and temple to temple without distinction of sect, in an endeavor to purify the pagan worship, as he had done at Antioch, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Athens, establishing new parishes, bishops, presbyters, elders, and priests. In this work he was assisted by the priests of the temples and his disciples. He revised the pagan festivals, amended the rites of sacrifice and penance, during a period in which Paul is said to have instituted Christian churches in the same places.” (p. 128)

Apollo looked up from his work and watched Sophia as she was putting the finishing touches to her own masterpiece.

“I think I need to stop for now and continue tomorrow,” said Apollo as he looked admiringly at Sophia and her concentrated effort with her project.

“Just a minute,” said Sophia without looking up from her work, “I’m finishing the last verse about the mystery of the human body.”

Apollo proofread his writing while he waited for Sophia to finish.

“There,” said Sophia, putting her pen down on her notebook, “listen to what I wrote.”

Sophia began to read with a commanding voice, and Apollo listened attentively this time:

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The Initiate begins recounting the ordeal of initiation which occurred in the kingdom of the higher intellect when the mind was in a state of inner introspection. The Heart of the initiate is a partner in the ordeal with the Mind, which is related like a brother (i.e. lower mind and higher mind).

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

The Initiate was in contact with the heaven worlds through deep meditation, and the vibrations of the inner voice raise his consciousness to a higher plane.

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto

Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

The vibrations strike the keynote of the Process of Initiation from its beginning to its end, which is the steady unveiling of the Mystery Temple within the Human Body, starting with the lowest spiritual center (church) and progressing to the highest center: (1) Ephesus=sacral region, Muladhara chakra; (2) Smyrna=procreative region, Adhishthana chakra; (3) Pergamos=abdominal region, Manipuraka chakra; (4) Thyatira=cardiac region, Anahata chakra; (5) Sardis=throat region, Vishuddhi chakra; (6) Philadelphia=cavernous region or Pituitary Gland, Ajna chakra; (7) Laodicea=Pineal Gland or 3rd Eye, Sahasrara chakra.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

The Initiate tries to visualize and realize the “voice within.” By directing the consciousness in the direction of the posterior side of his body, the initiate becomes aware of the 7 spiritual centers in his spinal cord.

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

And he becomes aware of the appearance of a High Initiate who functions as a Divine Man in the midst of the 7 spiritual centers, with the body of an all-encompassing aura, and enclosed with wisdom.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

The Divine Man has the Mind of innocence and his thoughts are pure; the control of his emotional nature allows his eyes to be opened and illumined with soul energy.

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

The spiritualization of his feet allows them to run errands of mercy; and the controlled force of his voice allows him to speak with power and authority.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

The Divine Man rules his own stars or planetary influences, and he speaks with the qualities of spiritual justice and impartial judgment; a charismatic force shines through his personality.

[Note: The composite image of the Divine Man or Logos as the incarnating Soul, with its 7 planetary spirits or influences can be seen from a Cosmological Point of View:

- (1) Saturn's white hair = Ancient of Days, or Father Time
- (2) Jupiter's flaming eyes = All-Seeing Father God
- (3) Mars' two-edged sword = Divine Justice
- (4) Sun's shining face = Light of the World
- (5) Venus' girdle = Divine Love
- (6) Mercury's feet = Divine Thought
- (7) Moon's voice = Sea of Generation]

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

Upon entering the state of awareness of the divine consciousness, the initiate loses consciousness of the physical world. The hand of power descends on the initiate and he is encouraged to tread the path of regeneration from beginning to end.

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

The Divine Man becomes “dead” during the cycle of physical incarnation, but he is “resurrected” to life when the soul-intuition is awakened by means of the vibration of OM (regenerative energy force), which brings consciousness of immortality and control over the physical and astral worlds.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

The impressions of the higher consciousness are conveyed to the heart and the mind as an eternal reminder of the soul’s destiny.

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

The mystery of the human body is determined by the 7 ruling planets and their influences, and the 7 centers (chakras) in the spinal column. The 7 ruling planets are the ruling intelligences (divinities) of the 7 centers (churches), and the 7 energy chakras are the 7 spiritual centers (churches).

When the Silver Wind landed at the La Cala harbor of Palermo in Sicily the following day, Apollos and Sophia were joined by Simon for a casual tour of the exotic city of ornate palaces and churches of various architectural styles.

“I wish we had landed in Syracuse instead,” said Apollos, as they walked down Via Vittorio Emanuele, the main street heading away from the harbor. “Then we could have taken a trip to Mt. Etna, or at least seen it from Catania.”

“And Syracuse is where both Apollonius and St. Paul are said to have stayed,” added Sophia, knowing the real reason Apollos wanted to go there.

“Although St. Paul stayed there only three days on his way to Rome,” added Simon with his bit of knowledge about the subject under discussion.

“Apollonius supposedly stayed at least a year in Sicily, teaching philosophy in the temples after his return from Spain,” countered Apollos.

“Where he supposedly plotted with others to overthrow Nero after he banished all the philosophers from Rome in 66 AD,” chided Simon, who relished the political intrigue Apollonius was accused of by his opponents.

“Let’s turn left here,” interjected Sophia, whose eyes caught sight of a Gothic style medieval church off Via Paternostro.

“You must remember that Apollonius fought for truth and liberty, and for his fellow philosophers, both during the reign of the tyrant Nero when he went to Rome the first time, in spite of protests from his disciples, and during the reign of Domitian when he fearlessly faced another tyrant, when he was imprisoned and in danger of losing his life,” continued Apollos as he followed Sophia toward the Italian Romanesque church.

“That imprisonment reminds me of a funny incident that occurred between Apollonius and the tribune at the jail,” laughed Simon sardonically.

“You mean that coarse tribune who claimed that the cause of the magician’s trouble was that the people of Ephesus worshipped him as a god, which resulted in a charge of blasphemy against him?” asked Apollos, who was aware of the incident Simon alluded to.

“That was quite a strategy he thought of,” concurred Simon, with a sinister grin on his face, “to actually provide Apollonius with a method of defense against the blasphemy charge. He would cut off the wizard’s head with his sword, and the accusation would be groundless; whereas if he wasn’t able to cut off his head, then the charges would be valid and the magician would be considered a god.”

“So that’s where the idea of the beheading of St. Paul came from,” suggested Sophia intuitively as they approached the Piazza San Francesco d’ Assisi.

“Now there’s a fine example of inductive reasoning,” stated Apollos, whose grasp of philosophical concepts had been perfected by the class he had taught.

“And I guess we can say that once the tradition was established that St. Paul was beheaded, everybody in Christendom accepted it as a historical fact,” concluded Simon.

“Look at that building!” said Sophia, changing the subject. She stopped and looked at the Basilica of San Francesco d’ Assisi with the richly decorated triple false arches of the portal. “Let’s go inside.” She looked up at the exquisite rose window above the portal as she approached the entrance to the building.

The discussion ended, and the sightseeing began. After the basilica, the threesome ventured back on the main street and headed to the Quattro Canti (Four Corners), the crossroad marking the heart of the city’s traditional center. Onward in their journey they encountered the Duomo, which housed the tombs of Sicily’s kings and other royal personages. The crowning moment of their adventurous walk through the city was at the Palazzo Reale (Royal Palace), the present home to Sicily’s regional government and the former splendor of the Kingdom of Sicily.

Back on board the cruise ship, the traveling companions discussed their plans for the arrival at Valletta, Malta the next day. They all agreed that the wisest course of action would be to utilize the services of a licensed guide, who would give them a private tour of the major sites connected with the life of St. Paul. They also agreed to go to bed early and get a good night’s rest.

Sophia, who had been keeping a journal of her travels, made the following entry about their sea voyage to Malta:

This is the third night out at sea for us. So far it has been smooth sailing, and the calm waters of the Tyrrhenian Sea have made the trip enjoyable. Now that we’re entering the turbulent waters of the Great Sea, my imagination is running wild and I’m imagining the voyage of Odysseus on this wind-tossed sea and the shipwreck of St. Paul on the island we’re heading to. What am I thinking? I’m on a safe modern cruise ship. However, those waves are getting bigger as I look outside our vista suite window, and I’m beginning to have a queasy feeling in my stomach as the ship is starting to rock back and forth. It’s almost midnight. I’m going to try to get some sleep. I will try to block out the sound of the ocean.

Morning. I couldn’t sleep at all last night. I was tossing and turning right along with the erratic movements of the ship. I don’t think I’ll be able to eat breakfast. It seems like we’re getting close to our destination. The movements of the ship have subsided, even though I still feel them in my mind. Time to wake Apollos up. Lucky guy slept through the wind storm and the wild ride. I can still hear the sound of the ocean in my mind.

What a day! I've never seen so much in one day. We were on a fast-paced itinerary of most of the places associated with the shipwreck of St. Paul on the island and his subsequent stay of three months at various legendary sites. Our private guide drove us from place to place. She was such a devoted follower of the patron saint of the island, and she was extremely informed about all the traditions that arose to keep alive the memory of St. Paul's stay on the small Mediterranean island.

Angelina – that's the name of our private guide – was a godsend. She was able to perform a small miracle for us by hiring a small boat so we could go to St. Paul's Island to see the impressive thirteen foot high statue of the apostle holding a book in his left hand and a snake at his feet. Angelina told us that a serpent cult existed on the island before Christianity arrived, and the story of Paul handling a poisonous snake and not being harmed was similar to the story of St. Patrick driving the snakes out of Ireland. Amazingly, no snakes existed on the island of Malta after Paul threw the snake into the fire. That was when Apollos couldn't help himself and blurted out that the whole story probably referred to the kundalini fire within the spine. Angelina just smiled at him when he said that. Simon mentioned something about the islanders calling Paul a god after that incident, and we got into a discussion about how Apollonius was also called a god or a divine being. What amazed me as I looked at the statue on top of the twenty-six foot high pedestal was that the right hand of Paul was extended in a blessing, and there was no sword at his side.

After we took the small boat back to the marina of St. Paul's Bay, Angelina drove us south to Burmarrad, where a small Chapel of St. Paul, called San Pawl Milqi, stood. Angelina explained that the name meant "St. Paul is welcomed," referring to his stay at the villa of Publius, the island's Roman governor, when he came ashore after the shipwreck. Angelina showed us the excavations around the chapel, pointing out that it was the site of an agricultural estate where olive oil was extracted. When Simon asked her if there was any proof that the estate belonged to Publius, she was not able to offer any proof. She liked to use the phrase "according to popular tradition" to affirm her position on the matter. I would say she was very tactful.

As we drove further south to our next destination, Apollos got into a friendly conversation with Angelina about the possibility that the story of Paul's shipwreck might have been based on the shipwreck that the Jewish historian Josephus experienced on his way to Rome. Angelina politely brushed that conjecture aside by saying that the shipwreck that Josephus described was out on the open sea, whereas Paul's ship ran aground and was broken into pieces by the waves. I liked her ability to contrast the two events. Nevertheless, Apollos pursued his point, and he tried to say that the legend of the shipwreck was most likely taken from epic stories like the Odyssey by Homer. When he told Angelina that the real Paul never was in a shipwreck because he always changed ships if he had a premonition about a shipwreck, she looked at him with a puzzled look on her face. I knew he was talking about Apollonius, and I nudged him with my elbow to keep him from being too forceful in his argument. I knew Apollos was trying to find an explanation for the shipwreck story since we both knew that Apollonius sailed the Great Sea from one end to another and always arrived safely at his destination. And besides, there is no record of him going to Malta. My guess is that Apollonius was so popular all over the Mediterranean world that people were making up legends about his visit to their land, even if there was no record of such a visit.

Anyway, back to our trip. Angelina wanted to make sure we saw the baroque Cathedral of St. Paul in Mdina. We were all in awe of the ancient walled city as we drove through the Mdina Gate on the south side of the medieval city, which was situated on a hill. What a sight to see! No wonder they called it Citta Notabile (Noble City), the ancient capital of Malta. After marveling at the ancient fortifications, we were not as excited to see another church, even though Angelina pointed out all the marvelous memorial tablets on the floor and the ornate stained glass and the ceiling paintings. I remember the funny face Simon made when Angelina told us that, according to popular tradition, the church was built on the site of the house of the governor Publius. I laughed when Simon

asked Angelina how many churches were built on top of Publius's house. Even Angelina laughed. The biggest surprise for me was seeing a street named "TRIQ SANTA SOFIJA" (St. Sophia Street), and then looking at the oldest (supposedly) building in the city called Palazzo Santa Sophia, built in the Gothic-Romanesque style.

When we got to the suburb of Mdina, which was aptly named Rabat (suburb), Angelina took us to the cave where, according to popular tradition, St. Paul lived during his three months stay on the island while he was waiting for winter to end so he could catch a ship to Rome. The grotto was located under a church, dedicated to St. Paul. Angelina told us several legends about the grotto, one of which was that St. Paul was imprisoned there and another legend which attributed healing power to the stones in the grotto, especially for snake bites and fever. Apollos was impressed with the marble statue of St. Paul at the grotto, which showed the apostle holding a book in his right hand and his lowered left hand extended forward. Simon was thrilled to hear that Pope John Paul II came to pray in the grotto in 1990. Angelina showed us the plaque on the exterior wall of the church that commemorated the event with an inscribed prayer: "God Bless Malta and God Bless you all."

With that closing prayer we left Rabat and Mdina and headed back to our ship in the harbor of Valleta, the modern capital of Malta. I'm glad I wasn't driving – it just boggles my mind to see cars driving on the left side of the road like the English do. Angelina informed us that even though Malta gained its independence in 1964, it was still part of the British Commonwealth. So that's why they drive on the left side of the road.

Our last stop was the Church of St. Paul's Shipwreck in Valleta. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw a relic of a piece of St. Paul's arm bone and part of a column on which the apostle was beheaded. My goodness, to what extent was this worship of St. Paul carried! I guess the islanders started a tradition by saying that he was a god, and that tradition is continued to this very day in Malta. Apollos again was drawn to the statue of St. Paul in the church, which (in contrast to the others we have seen) had a sword at the left side of the statue. Simon said he had seen enough baroque churches to last him a lifetime. Angelina pointed out to us the two belfries and the seven bells when we came outside, again.

When Angelina dropped us off at the cruise ship, she reminded us to come back on the tenth of February, when there's a public holiday to celebrate the Feast of St. Paul's Shipwreck. She was a fantastic guide! I wish we had a guide like her everywhere we went. And so ends our Malta trip. Now on to Alexandria!

After seven days at sea, the Silver Wind at last brought the anxious travelers to their destination: the modern Western Harbor of Alexandria, "the Pearl of the Mediterranean." Apollos was anxious to find out about the cryptic message he had received from Hermes: "I will meet you in Alexandria." He had spent the past three days in a state of abstinence, preparing his body, mind, and soul for an encounter with the Egyptian god of Wisdom. Simon was curious to find out how the mystery of Apollonius would be resolved at the city founded by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. He trusted Sophia's promise at the beginning of the cruise. Sophia was also wondering how it all would turn out. She trusted her intuition, even if she wasn't sure of the particulars of how the mystery of Apollonius would unfold.

Simon had booked two rooms at the Mercure Romance Hotel, which was located on the seafront near the ancient Eastern Harbor. From their hotel they were able to walk along the Corniche, the road along the seashore, to the city center. Sophia was thrilled to see a new Alexandrian Library being constructed on the western end of the Corniche near the promontory Silsila. The project to rebuild the ancient center of learning, which was

burnt by Julius Caesar and finally destroyed by the zealous Christian Emperor Theodosius I in the fourth century, was an international effort to resurrect the ancient library of the ancient world.

“I would love to be here on opening day,” mused Sophia, who envisioned all the ancient scrolls being brought out of their hiding places and restored to prominence again.

“Come back in a year or two, when it’s projected to be finished,” said Simon, who saw a sign at the construction site.

“Some scholars have said that the great School of Alexandria relied on the books in the great library to create the religious thought which eventually produced Christianity,” postulated Apollos, whose mind was always trying to visualize the source of physical phenomena.

“I guess you’re referring to the great minds, the founding fathers of Christian theology, like Clement of Alexandria and Origen of Alexandria,” said Simon, mentioning his two favorite theologians. “Clement, by the way, made the famous statement in his *Stromata*, which Monists from all walks of life like to use: ‘The way of truth is one, but into it, as into a perennial river, streams flow from all sides.’”

“I was primarily thinking of Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish scholar who combined Judaism and Platonism to inaugurate an allegorical interpretation of scripture,” remarked Apollos.

“And don’t forget Apollos of Alexandria, whose genius provided the impetus to uncover the hidden wisdom of the mysteries of ancient religion and philosophy,” added Sophia, who had read what Apollos had written about the biblical teacher. Apollos looked at her and winked.

“You mean the Jew of Alexandria, to whom Aquila and Priscilla had to teach the way of God because he only knew the teachings of John the Baptist?” retorted Simon in a mocking tone.

“Yes, the Apollos who was really Apollonius, who was instructed by Priscilla and Aquila, which signifies the ‘ancient eagle’ of wisdom,” replied Apollos calmly and directly. Apollos expounded on what he had written about the subject in his treatise.

“You didn’t have that in the manuscript that I procured,” said Simon, who listened with renewed interest to what Apollos was revealing to him for the first time.

“You mean the manuscript that you stole from me,” corrected Apollos. “There’s a lot that you don’t know and that I haven’t written, yet.”

“Weren’t we on our way to the ancient site of the Serapeum, the temple where Apollonius taught at?” asked Sophia, trying to divert the two combatants from getting into another fight. She stepped in between the antagonists and walked between them to keep them from getting at each other’s throats.

They walked silently toward the Eastern Harbor, where the ancient site of Pharos Island came into view. What was once the seventh wonder of the ancient world, the Pharos Lighthouse, was now occupied by Fort Qaitbey. Simon thumbed through his guide book, which he had purchased at the hotel, as they walked along the shoreline of the ancient harbor opposite the site of the former lighthouse.

“Here it says that the Pharos Lighthouse was composed of three stages: a square shape (183 ft. high) on the bottom, an octagonal shape (90 ft. high) in the middle, and a circular shape (24 ft. high) on top, with a total height for the entire building, including the

foundation base, of about 384 feet,” said Simon as he looked at a sketch and description of the world-famous lighthouse in his book.

“The beacon of the ancient world,” stated Apollos, referring not only to the lighthouse, but also to the light of knowledge and wisdom which beamed from Alexandria to the world.

“Pharos, curiously, has the same meaning as Pharaoh,” noticed Sophia. “Both refer to the fire and light of the sun.”

“And it also states in the guide book that a statue of Poseidon (or Neptune) with his trident adorned the summit of the towering building, whose light was reflected by a mirror at least thirty-five miles offshore,” stated Simon, paraphrasing the information in the book. “The mirror reflected the sun rays during the day and fire by night.”

“Isn’t this where we turn to go south?” asked Sophia as they came to what appeared to be a main street.

“Sharia el-Nebi Daniel,” read Simon, looking at the map in his guide book. “Yes, that’s the main north-to-south street that runs from the Eastern Harbor. In ancient times it connected the harbor to Lake Mariout.” Simon noticed that the entire area between the two harbors and the sections on top, or north, of the harbors formed a T-shape.

“I just thought of something interesting,” said Apollos excitedly as he glanced back at the ancient Eastern Harbor. “The ships of Alexandria used to sail from that harbor with their cargo of grain and corn. Paul is said to have sailed on a ship of Alexandria from Malta to Rome.”

“He also sailed on a ship of Alexandria from Myra, hometown of St. Nicholas,” added Simon. “That’s the one that shipwrecked on Malta.”

“What hypothetical waters are you sailing on with these ideas?” asked Sophia, who knew that the mind of Apollos was heading into rough seas with his conjectures.

“The ship of Alexandria is a metaphor for the Egyptian mysteries,” surmised Apollos, “and the Egyptian religion and its mysteries were brought to Rome aboard the symbolical ship whose figurehead was the sign of the Gemini twins, Castor and Pollux.”

“The sign which represents the dual nature of man: the mortal Castor, who was fathered by a human, and the immortal Pollux, whose father was Zeus in the form of a swan appearing to the queen Leda,” interpreted Simon.

“According to the precession of the equinoxes, which was pictorially represented on the ceiling of the Egyptian Temple of Denderah, Gemini would be the gate of the sun and Sagittarius the gate of the moon, the equinoxes in the Age of Pisces,” commented Sophia, who tried to connect earthly knowledge with heavenly wisdom.

“Here it is,” interjected the earthly-minded Simon, cutting off Sophia before she could say that Mercury (Hermes) was the ruling planet (or divinity) of the sign of Gemini, “the cross street, Al Horreya, which traverses from east to west and was called the Canopic Way in ancient times. The Gate of the Sun was on the eastern end of this street, and the Gate of the Moon was at the western end, near the Western Harbor.”

“Which means that the design of the city was in the shape of a cross,” deduced Apollos.

“According to the cardinal points of the compass,” added Sophia. “From the Great Sea in the north to the lake in the south, and from the eastern Gate of the Sun-god, Ra or Osiris, to the western Gate of the Moon, Isis.”

“We might as well walk along Al Horreya Avenue to the tram line that goes south to Pompey’s Pillar and the site of the Serapeum ruins,” advised Simon, who consulted his guide book.

They took the yellow-colored tram south to the highly visible Pompey’s Pillar, which was located on Alexandria’s ancient acropolis, a small hill adjacent to the city’s Arab cemetery. Apollos began to sense a change in his consciousness as he stepped onto the grounds where the ancient temple of the composite god Serapis once stood. He knew that Apollonius taught his wisdom philosophy at the sacred site, but there was no sign of the temple of the Greater Mysteries of Serapis and Osiris that had been razed to the ground by Emperor Theodosius in 319 AD as a culminating victory of Christianity over pagan religions. Apollos gravitated to the twenty-five meter high solid red granite column, which stood on a high pedestal.

“That pillar was actually erected in honor of the Emperor Diocletian in 297 AD,” stated Simon, whose eyes darted from his guide book to the round pillar as he tried to gather information about the remaining relic of a distant age.

Sophia raised her hands toward the symbolic ray of the sun, which connected the heavens and the earth, and she closed her eyes and said a silent prayer in her mind. She felt the fructifying ray of the inner sun pierce through her receptive mind and give birth to an image of a sublime sun-god, whose hair and beard beamed with light.

Apollos imitated the pose of Sophia, just as he had done at the red granite obelisk in Rome. He sensed a presence emanating from within the sacred stone. The presence revealed itself in a voice vibrating within his mind: “You have come to Alexandria, as expected. You have prepared yourself, as required. Now, seat yourself in front of the sphinx. Go deep within your inner Self, and I will transport you to the Holy Mount.”

Apollos moved automatically to the nearby statue of a Ptolemaic sphinx on a pedestal. He sat down at the base of the pedestal and relaxed his body and mind. He focused his attention on his mind’s inner eye. Sophia noticed Apollos sitting at the foot of the sphinx statue, and she came and sat down at his right hand. Simon watched in wonderment at the silent scene unfolding before his eyes, and he expected to witness something unusual at any moment.

Apollos continued to sit with a straight back for several minutes. He watched his breathing, through a slightly opened throat, become almost imperceptible. He felt the cool lunar and the warm solar currents of energy flow up and down his spine. His mind became crystal-clear, like a calm pool of silver-colored water. In the reflective pool of his mind an image of the Great Pyramid appeared. The next thing he knew, he was standing inside a cave-like room inside the pyramid. Inside the room was a majestic throne, and on the throne sat the familiar figure of Hermes.

“Welcome back, Balinas,” stated the awe-inspiring voice of the messenger of the gods. Apollos stood silently and ruminated on the significance of the name he was called. He realized the name was connected to Apollonius. “You are the proxy of Apollonius in this day and age. The alter ego, or an etheric aspect, of Apollonius – who goes by the shortened name of Paul – was here some time ago at the etheric Mt. Sinai, the Holy Mount. He received the new revised or simplified version of the Emerald Tablet for the arrival of the Aquarian Age. You will use the cosmic laws of that version in conjunction with the Key to the Initiated that you recently received.”

Apollo watched as the green Emerald Tablet materialized in the right hand of Hermes, and the ten cosmic laws flashed simultaneously on the wall of the room and in Apollo's mind. From the unity of the One to the multiplicity of the Ten, Apollo watched the archetypal principles demonstrated within the crystal ball of the caduceus which materialized in the left hand of Hermes. He witnessed the transformation of the gold serpent and the silver serpent of the caduceus into two keys, a solar gold key and a lunar silver key. The lunar key opened the inner sanctuary of his receptive mind, and the solar key opened a cone-shaped golden box in the tabernacle of his soul, the Pineal gland. He watched as the golden windows of the soul opened in his cone-shaped mind's eye, and a scroll unfolded to reveal the mysterious Book of Thoth, which was subtitled "The Key to Immortality."

"Listen as I relate the story of your divine soul," spoke Hermes, whose voice seemed to travel from the depths of outer and inner space simultaneously. As the story unfolded, Apollo saw a pictorial representation on the screen of his mind. "The life of the universe and of your divine soul is like a great dragon whose body moves in endless rhythm. It is like a vast mind made of creative thought particles which constantly vibrate and give birth to energized units of life-matter. It radiates a light from within itself, which becomes the light of the world in which it lives. This light descends into a world of darkness called matter, and this light becomes imprisoned within a body. The imprisoned light of the soul can never be extinguished, for it always rises like a pillar of fire from the constantly moving creative thought particles. Thought is the voice of the inner light, which generates a reasoning mind. The reasoning mind makes invisible things become visible by virtue of the light and the voice, or creative word, of thought. The visible becomes a physical body composed of the masculine principle of light-energy and the feminine principle of life-matter. Thus, the visible body is said to be in principle a hermaphrodite, or male and female."

Hermes paused in his discourse as he displayed an image of the great dragon transformed into a vast wheel that revolved eternally within the great celestial kingdom, and within the small kingdom of the soul. The twelve divisions of the wheel, which pictorially represented the zodiac, seemed to be governed by seven planetary spirits. Apollo instantly had a vision of a seven-branched candlestick that was illuminated with seven lights within his cerebral-spinal system, and the twelve divisions of the wheel were like a chain of continuous lives on the Great Wheel of Life.

"Now watch as I reveal to you the life of the divine soul as it rises back from the visible to the invisible, or from the mortal to the immortal," said Hermes, whose mind emitted a beam of light that revealed an image of a man crucified on a cross of matter. Instantly the thought of Apollonius arose in Apollo's mind, and he knew that Hermes wanted him to realize that he was witnessing the initiation of Apollonius in the Great Pyramid. Apollo saw that the naked body of Apollonius was unconscious. Tears welled up in his eyes, for he thought that Apollonius was dead. The seemingly-lifeless body was laid in the tomb of the sarcophagus for three days.

And then the scene changed and Apollo watched as Hermes unfurled a vast canvas of the soul rising to immortality: the seven material aspects (or planetary spirits) of the imprisoned soul were cast aside one by one, starting with the generative desire of the Moon, the crafty mental aspect of Mercury, the lusty nature of Venus, the ambitious fire of the Sun, the martial spirit of Mars, the ruling power of greed in Jupiter, and finally

ending with the dark illusion and falsehood of Saturn. As the lower nature of the divine soul was transcended, a higher nature became manifest – an ethereal body of light.

Apollo watched as the body of light rose from the tomb. The consciousness of Apollonius radiated within that body of light, sending an image of his regenerated etheric form to the eye of the beholder. As Apollo watched the vibrations of light-energy assume the bodily form of Apollonius, he realized he was witnessing the materialization of an ascended master. In his mind, Apollo heard the voice of Hermes announce: “He who realizes that the physical body is the tomb of the divine soul, and transcends the cross of flesh and bones, that person will wear the crown of immortality.”

The vision of the immortal Apollonius was imprinted on the eye of the soul of the mortal Apollo. Apollo looked into the face of that vision, and the face of Apollonius became vivid and clear. The mind of Apollonius spoke a grand thought and transmitted it to the mind of Apollo: “God has given us Eternal Life.” The eternal truth reverberated within the mind of Apollo like the ripples of an ever-widening circle in a pond.

As Apollo continued to gaze at the extraordinary vision, he saw the face of Hermes, the god of wisdom, transfigured on the face of Apollonius. The apotheosis of Apollonius was complete.

As the vision of the immortal Apollonius faded from the elevated consciousness of Apollo’s mind, the immortal words of the sage resounded like the cosmic waves of an infinite ocean:

“There is no death of anyone save in appearance only, even as there is no birth of anyone or becoming, except only in appearance. For when a thing passes from essence into nature we consider that there is birth or becoming, and in the same way that there is death when it passes from nature into essence; though in truth a thing neither comes into being at any time nor is destroyed.” [Life of Apollonius, Epistle LVIII]

Apollo felt one with the universe, and he did not want to return to the consciousness of his physical body. His mind seemed to float on billows of peace and bliss. And yet, there was a silver-like string pulling him back to earth, to Alexandria, to his physical body, and to Sophia. He felt the energy of his body again, and he opened his eyes. Sophia was still sitting beside him, and Simon was watching him intently from a short distance nearby.

“What happened?” asked Simon as soon as he saw Apollo open his eyes. Sophia opened her eyes at the sound of Simon’s voice and looked at the distant gaze in Apollo’s eyes.

“Give him a minute to gather his senses,” cautioned Sophia, who stroked the arms and legs of Apollo to bring circulation back into his limbs.

“I saw Apollonius,” said Apollo after a minute of readjusting to his environment.

“He’s alive?” asked the astonished skeptic, Simon.

“I saw his mortal body become an immortal body,” stated Apollo, his gaze fixated on the heavenly vision which was still visible to his mind’s eye.

“Where is he?” asked Simon, who was becoming impatient.

“All I know at the present moment is that he did not die at Ephesus,” affirmed Apollo. He told Sophia and Simon all about his vision. “Now I understand the biblical passage where Paul or Apollonius was called Mercurius or Hermes. The god of wisdom resides in Apollonius.”

Apollos suddenly became aware of a solution to a problem that had perplexed biblical scholars for centuries: Who wrote the book of Hebrews? Martin Luther had suggested in the 16th century that Apollos of Alexandria probably wrote it. Apollos now knew that Apollonius, the divine man who belonged to the Order of the Immortal Ones – the biblical Order of Melchizedek, who was without beginning and end – most likely wrote most of the book of Hebrews.

“If he didn’t die at Ephesus,” persisted Simon, “where did he die?”

“There is no definite record of his death,” reaffirmed Apollos. “Even Philostratus in the biography of Apollonius states that there are many stories about the time and place of his death, adding the disclaimer ‘if he did actually die.’ And I’m convinced after what I saw that he never died. He became one of the immortals.”

“Perhaps if we go to Ephesus, we might find a valuable clue to your perplexing question,” suggested Sophia. She turned away from Simon and gave a wink to her loving companion, Apollos.

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Joshua slowly climbed to the top of Mount Gerizim with Yusuf’s seventy-year-old grandfather, Ibrahim. The mountain rose 881 meters above the valley in which the city of Shechem was situated. With each laborious step that Joshua took, he thought of the friend he had lost. Memories of the past three-and-a-half months raced through his agitated mind. The two friends enjoyed traveling together so much that they had decided to extend their stay in the Holy Land and visit as many sacred sites as they could. Part of their decision stemmed from their discovery in midsummer that pilgrims from all over the world were making pilgrimages to the Holy Land in the year of the Great Jubilee. Even Pope John Paul II had made his commemorative pilgrimage during the season of the spring equinox.

Yusuf and Joshua became such good friends that Yusuf felt comfortable enough to invite Joshua to meet his relatives in Shechem, which was presently named Nablus. Nablus was an Arabic version of the Greek name Neopolis, meaning “New City.” Joshua recalled the day they traveled on Route 60 (the ancient “Way of the Patriarchs”) from Jerusalem via Ramallah to Nablus to meet the relatives. They stopped on the way to see the ancient site of Bethel in the picturesque Arab village of Beitin. The ancient Beth-El (“House of El” or God) was at the crossroads of the main north-south road and the east-west road. Yusuf and Joshua reminisced about the legendary “Jacob’s Ladder” as they climbed the steps of a crumbling watchtower on the archaeological site. Joshua remembered Yusuf saying that Jacob’s vision of a stairway ascending to the heavens reminded him of the visions of Joseph. Joshua was surprised to find out that in Muslim tradition, Bethel was known as the “Assembly of the Prophets,” because Mohammed had a vision of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the site.

The relatives that Joshua met in the heartland of the Palestinian West Bank were from Yusuf’s father’s side. The grandfather, Ibrahim, who was rooted to the land, was not in favor of moving to America or anywhere else. This was his homeland and he

wanted to lay his bones in the land that his namesake, Abraham, first entered when he came to the ancient land of Canaan and was promised the land on which he set foot. Ibrahim took an instant liking to Joshua because Joshua loved to listen to the stories that flowed from the reservoir of knowledge in Ibrahim's brain. Of course, Yusuf had to translate the Arabic words into English for Joshua.

When Joshua and Ibrahim reached the Samaritan high place, one of the three summits of Mount Gerizim, they sat down and rested. This was the sacred mount on which Abraham built an altar and later offered up his son Isaac as a sacrifice, according to the Samaritan tradition. Joshua recalled the first time he ascended the mount with Yusuf and Ibrahim, who was an avid mountain climber even in his waning years. Yusuf and Joshua had discussed the significance of the intended human sacrifice and the substitution of a ram in place of the human sacrifice. Joshua had reasoned that each new age was inaugurated with a symbolical sacrifice, and the sacrifice of the ram signified the beginning of the age of Aries the Ram. Yusuf said that in the Muslim tradition the sacrifice signified a personal submission to the will of Allah. Ibrahim had asked Yusuf what they were discussing, and when Yusuf told him, the wise old man told Joshua a story that he had never heard before. As Joshua looked down at the narrow pass between the higher Mount Ebal to the northeast and Mount Gerizim to the south, he reflected on Ibrahim's story:

“Over four thousand years ago, when the prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) first left the idolatry of his father's home in Mesopotamia, he became the first true believer in the One God. He tried to show his idol-making father and the people of Chaldea that statues can't hear or talk, and that it was useless to pray to them. He tried to reason with people who worshipped the celestial planets and stars that they were brought into existence by the word of Allah, who alone should be worshipped. When the people wouldn't listen to the servant of the one true Allah, the prophet went into the temple with an ax and destroyed the stone and wood statues of the false gods. The idolaters tried to burn him by casting him into a deep pit of fire, but he came out of that pit unscathed, as if he had walked out of a cool garden. Still the people did not leave their idols, so the prophet left the land of polytheism and came to bring monotheism to a new land. His wife Sarah came with him, but she was not able to produce a son for him. So she offered him the servant Hagar, from whom the father of our Arab nation was born. In time the servant and her child, Ismail, were taken by the prophet to start a new nation in the valley of Mecca, where they built a House of worship, which is the Kaba of the Holy Mosque, a place of pilgrimage for every Muslim. It was there that the prophet had a vision that he must sacrifice his son Ismail. However, when Allah saw that both of them had submitted their wills to the will of Allah, they were told that they had fulfilled the vision through the act of submission, and a substitute sacrifice was offered.”

Joshua remembered telling Yusuf that he thought both stories of the sacrifice of a son represented submission and sacrifice of the individual ego to the will of a higher mind. He recalled quoting the prayer, “Not my will, but thine be done.” Now as he reflected on the sacrifice of his friend Yusuf to the reignited uprising in the land, he wondered whether it was Allah's will or the age-old battle for territorial rights that he was witnessing. The question loomed large in his mind: Why can't the two nations that claim Abraham as their spiritual and ancestral father live in peace?

Joshua stood up and raised his hands to the sky. In his mind's eye he saw the last ritual that Yusuf had performed on the holy mount – it was a blessing that he said used to be shouted from the top of Mount Gerizim by the children of Israel. Joshua thought of Yusuf resting in the bosom of Abraham, the universal spirit of life, as he shouted the blessing in honor of his friend: “Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out.” From the opposing northern Mount Ebal he heard a response – it was the curse that would come upon those who did not follow the voice and commandments of the biblical Lord thy God: “Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.”

Ibrahim had tears in his eyes. The loss that he felt was unbearable. He didn't know how many more lives would be sacrificed before the blessing of peace would return to the land. He could only hope and pray that peace would come soon, Allah willing.

The rest of the day Joshua and Ibrahim walked through the 100-acre archaeological park on top of Mount Gerizim, where a Samaritan temple had once stood. Supposedly, it had been modeled after Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. Yusuf had walked through the sacred ruins with them a month ago.

The next day Joshua bade Yusuf's relatives farewell. Before he left, Ibrahim told him that the times were dangerous for travelers in the Holy Land, and he advised Joshua to return to his own land. Ibrahim didn't want Joshua to suffer the same fate as Yusuf. Joshua took his advice to heart, but there was one last place he needed to visit before he said farewell to his motherland: Samaria, the burial place of the prophet Eliseus. That was the last place Yusuf and Joshua had spent a day together before the fatal incident which took Yusuf's life.

Joshua left the crossroads that divided Nablus (Shechem) by way of its ancient north-south and east-west trade routes, and he followed Route 60 (the “Patriarch's Highway”) north to Samaria (modern Sebastiya). One of Yusuf's male cousins volunteered to drive Joshua the short distance of seven miles to the remains of the royal city of Samaria, which was known as Shomeron (“Watch Mountain”) to the Hebrews. A sign on the highway directed the visitors to Samaria/Sebaste, the old capital of the northern Kingdom of Israel. The present name of Sebaste was given to the city when Herod the Great rebuilt it and named it after the emperor (Augustus' name in Greek was Sebaste).

Joshua thanked Yusuf's cousin for the ride to the ancient acropolis, and then he proceeded to climb the isolated 300-foot oblong hill overlooking the main north-south road. The long flat top on the summit had an extensive amount of ancient ruins, including what was left of a temple of Baal from the first millennium BC, a tower and city wall from the time of Alexander the Great, a Roman basilica used as a hall of justice and a public meeting place, and steps from a temple dedicated to the emperor Augustus (Sebaste). It was a veritable City on a Hill in ruins.

Joshua walked past the ruins to the east end of the hill, where an old Crusader church from the 12th century AD had been converted into a mosque with two tomb chambers – one for the prophet Elisha (Eliseus), the other for John the Baptist. Joshua sat down beside the mosque nearest to the tomb chamber for the prophet Elisha. The midday sun warmed his face. He closed his eyes and thought of the conversation he had with Yusuf at the tomb chamber:

“Remember when we arrived in Egypt back in June and you called the sun Ra-Khepri as it emerged from the eastern horizon?” asked Yusuf in his soft-spoken voice.

“Yes, and I remember you calling it Re, like in Ray, a drop of golden sun,” chuckled Joshua with a beaming smile on his face.

“Well, the story of Elijah ascending into heaven in a chariot of fire reminds me of the Egyptian story of the sun-god Re sailing across the sky in his solar boat,” remarked Yusuf as his eyes lifted toward the light in the blue sky.

“I’m more inclined to think of the Greek story of Helios in his radiant chariot driving his blazing white horses through the heavens,” gesticulated Joshua, his right hand tracing a semi-circular path through the air.

“So would that mean that the story of Eliseus continues the journey of the story of Elijah, just like the setting sun follows the rising sun?” queried Yusuf, casting a dark glance at Joshua.

“That sounds reasonable, except that the Egyptian sun-god is represented in three aspects: Khepri in the morning, Ra at midday, and Atum in the evening,” reasoned Joshua, scratching his head.

“Actually, the story of the sun’s journey also includes the night journey through the dark underworld,” added Yusuf.

“So then we have a duality of day and night,” said Joshua, continuing Yusuf’s train of thought.

“I think Eliseus does represent the double power of the sun as it passes its zenith and heats up the earth,” said Yusuf, reflecting back on the story of Eliseus.

“So in a sense he embodies the setting sun that dies and then is reborn in the morning as Khepri—the One who always comes into being with each new day,” concluded Joshua, as his thought became interiorized and he reflected on the idea of birth and rebirth.

At that moment a voice within Joshua’s inner mind interrupted the memorable conversation with Yusuf: “There’s much more to the story of Eliseus than just the diurnal journey of the sun through the sky.”

Joshua instantly recognized the celestial musical-quality of Binah’s voice. His inner ears perked up to listen to her melodic words: “The story of Eliseus, like the story of Everyman, is a multi-layered, multi-dimensional story that needs to be understood not only from a historical or literal perspective, but also from an allegorical or symbolical viewpoint. There’s always the outer and the inner worlds, the cosmic and the personal, and the physical and the spiritual realities that must be taken into consideration whenever you read any sacred scripture.”

A celestial sphere appeared on the canopy-like screen of Joshua’s crown chakra, and he saw with his mind’s eye a projection of the circle of the stars of the zodiac on the screen. Simultaneously he saw a picture of a man on the backdrop of stars plowing a field with 12 connected oxen. The man seemed to be performing the Herculean task of moving through the 12 signs of the zodiac, starting with Taurus the Ox (or Bull). The mantle of authority from the sun-god JAH fell on the burdened shoulders of the Plowman as he assumed the responsibilities of his predecessor, the forerunner of the end of the age of Taurus. The Age of Taurus ended with the sacrifice of the oxen, and the Plowman followed the sun-god JAH to a new task and a new age.

“Such is the cosmic picture of the path of the Cosmic Savior,” announced the voice of Binah as Joshua continued watching the celestial Eli-JAH (“My God is JAH”) and Eli-SEUS (“My God is Savior”) move toward the sign of Pisces the Fish.

Before Joshua could see what transpired in the ensuing ages, the cosmic vault of heaven faded, and an image of a scantily-clad guru and his disciple materialized on the screen of his mind.

“The prophet Elijah and his disciple Elisha,” sub-vocalized Joshua as he watched the hairy ascetic dressed in a loincloth emerge with his faithful servant from what appeared to be a zodiacal circle (Gilgal).

“The journey through the twelve signs of the zodiac is the destiny of every soul as it travels in the physical world,” explained Binah. “For the average person, fate and necessity push the soul along; for the disciple, self-determination motivates the soul.” Joshua visualized an image of the disciple taking the proverbial bull by the horns.

Joshua watched the moving picture and scenery change as the guru and disciple traveled down the dusty road of the patriarchs to Bethel (“House of El”). He knew that the road represented his spine and he felt a warm current (flow) of etheric energy descend to his heart center. As an initiate of the forces and energies in his body, Joshua was aware that the imagery he was seeing stimulated certain nerve impulses in his body. When the guru and disciple traveled further south to Jericho (“a fragrant place”), Joshua sensed the flow of energy descend to his generative center. When the guru and disciple stood on the banks of the Jordan (“flowing down”) River, Joshua saw fifty streams of nervous energy, like fifty streams of knowledge within the nervous system, enter the spinal river of life. When the guru took the mantle off of his back and divided the waters of the river and crossed over to the other side, Joshua felt the spinal energy in his back reverse its flow and begin to ascend to the top of the head. Finally, as the guru ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by blazing horses, Joshua became aware of a spiraling fiery energy moving upwards like a whirlwind through his etheric spinal cord and ascending out of the physical body through the top of the head.

The vision of the inner mechanism of the driving fiery forces in his etheric body brought Joshua to a state of exaltation, and he saw himself as the disciple Eliseus cry out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and its horsemen.” A flash of solar light illuminated Joshua’s mind as he (as Eliseus) realized that his guru had transcended the three physical bodies of the physical, astral, and etheric realms and had been transformed into the immortal solar body. He had become the master of his own inner starry universe.

“Consumed by the fire,” said Binah as Eliseus picked up the physical remains (mantle) of his master and cast them upon the waters of the Jordan. “Now you understand why his name is Eli-JAH, for JAH means ‘a consuming fire.’ The spirit of his kundalini fire will be doubly powerful in your life now that you have witnessed the manner in which the fiery energy ascends.”

Joshua was no longer aware of any physical sensations. His consciousness became totally absorbed in the life of Eliseus, the son of Shaphat (“Judge”), as if he himself was the disciple. “Yes, Yeshua, you are witnessing a previous incarnation,” whispered Binah in her soft angelic voice, using Joshua’s spiritual name.

Yeshua (Eliseus) entered the stream of his spinal river, and then he began retracing his master’s steps, first through the generative system (Jericho), where he used the alchemical salt of the earth with the waters of his circulatory system to begin the

regeneration of his body, mind, soul, and spirit. Next he traveled up by the Way of the Patriarchs to the heart center (Bethel), where he witnessed his ascent to the bald crown chakra of his head; he saw the recapitulation of an age as the Big Bear and Little Bear in the heavens devoured (progressed through) forty-two children (generations).

“Now there’s an interesting image, two bears killing forty-two children,” whispered Binah into Joshua’s inner ear. “Actually, the Age of Aries that was inaugurated by Abraham and completed by the coming of the Messiah of the new age progressed through forty-two symbolical generations. Or should I say constellations?”

Yeshua (Eliseus) continued his journey on the path of the disciple, spending some considerable time at the school of the prophets at Mount Carmel (“the Garden of El” or God), where his master Elijah had instituted a center for the study of the holy mysteries of life. “You’ll come back here in a future incarnation,” whispered the guiding voice. “There will be an Essene community here paving the way for the arrival of the Messiah of peace.”

After Yeshua (Eliseus) finished his studies at the school of the prophets, he came to Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Here he became the servant of God and man. His mantra became: “In which way may I serve?” He had also become a seer of the vast underlying reality of consciousness, where he could see and hear intuitively beyond the realm of time and space and perceive the Eternal Now. However, his greatest development pertained to the blossoming of his throat chakra and the creative words that sounded forth an inner wisdom whenever he said, “Thus says the Lord.” This development went hand in hand with his awareness of the role that the northern extremity of the spinal cord, the medulla oblongata (the symbolical Samaria, the northern capital of the human body—the mind), played in his life when he became the mouthpiece of divine consciousness.

His first task in serving mankind came at the request of an alliance of three kings (Israel, Judah, and Edom), who asked the prophet for a prognosis of their upcoming battle with the king of Moab. Like a true oracle, he foresaw the events leading up to the complete conquest of the kingdom of Moab (physical realm) by the alliance of the mental, soul, and emotional realms. What he didn’t foresee, though, was the king of Moab’s sacrifice of his oldest son, heir to his throne, as an offering to appease the alliance of kings, who left afterwards.

His second task came about when a poor widow complained to the servant of man about creditors coming to take her two sons away as payment for debt. He asked, “What can I do for you?” She told him she didn’t want to lose her sons. He found out she had a pot of oil in the house, so he had her borrow empty vessels into which he had her pour the never-ending supply of oil. She sold the oil, paid her debts, and lived with her two sons free of debt.

The third task involved the use of the life force which the man of God had conserved within his body for a creative purpose. It happened one day, as he was on his way from Samaria to Mount Carmel, that “a great woman” in a small village named Shunem (“two resting-places”) invited him to eat bread with her and her old husband. Her hospitality was extended to him, and he stayed in a chamber prepared for him, within which was placed a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. He discovered through his servant Gehazi (“valley of vision”) that the woman was childless. He asked, “What is to be done for you?” She did not respond, but the man of vision knew that she would

conceive and bear a son. Unfortunately, when the child was grown, he died after he complained of something happening in his head. The woman went to Mount Carmel to tell the man of vision about her son. He had his staff of life placed upon the child, and then he placed his body on top of the son and breathed the breath of life into his mouth. The life force from the heart of the master flowed into the child's seven life centers and energized the body. The child came back to life and sneezed seven times.

"Do you understand the significance of the tasks you have undertaken so far?" whispered the still small voice of Binah into Yeshua's conscious mind.

"I think I do," responded Yeshua, as he tuned into the inner dialogue that he was having with his guiding intelligence, Binah. "In the first task the master of the physical body aligns himself with his mental, emotional, and spiritual bodies and coordinates their unified activities to bring the physical under submission to a higher purpose. However, I didn't anticipate the necessity of the sacrifice of the ego, the first-born."

"That is always the hardest lesson for the aspiring disciple to understand and the hardest task to accomplish," coached Binah.

"The second task teaches the requirement of keeping the supply of regenerative oil in the spine always full in order to keep the energy centers completely energized and the dual currents, Ida and Pingala, vibrantly active," said Yeshua, who internalized the object lessons as he reviewed their impact on his life. "And the third task demonstrates mastery of the life forces in the staff of the spinal energy, which awakens life within the feminine pole of the brain, the pituitary gland, and gives birth to the son, the pineal gland. The atrophied pineal gland must be brought back to life by the energy of the staff of seven centers."

"Good," remarked Binah admiringly. "If you wish to see the great woman in the story from a cosmic perspective, you can visualize Virgo, the Virgin mother who gives birth to the solar child."

Yeshua returned to his meditative circle of consciousness and reflected on the laborious turning of the wheel of life. The mantra, "He that endures to the end will be liberated," sounded as a chant in his mind as he put his hand to the plow, again.

The fourth task that Yeshua (Eliseus) had to complete was the transmutation of poisonous food into edible food for his initiates (sons of prophets), and the multiplication of twenty loaves of bread to feed a hundred people. Transmutation of evil (or negative) into good (or positive) was a mark of mastery of polarity, the dual forces of life. Multiplication of food, with lots to spare, demonstrated mastery over matter and the ability to manipulate cosmic energy to produce a desired result.

As each new task presented itself to the consciousness of Yeshua (Eliseus), an awareness of progress on the path dawned in his mind. As he watched Naaman, the captain of an army, dip seven times in the Jordan to cleanse himself of leprosy, he realized the necessity for purification of all seven centers of the nervous system in the spine. When an initiate lost an axhead in the Jordan while cutting down a beam of wood, the master demonstrated how to retrieve the iron and make it float to the top, thereby teaching the initiate a lesson in sublimating the energy of the spinal fluid in the sacral center at the bottom of the spinal river and making the metal (energy) rise to the top (surface of the head).

The seventh task brought Yeshua (Eliseus) to an understanding of the omnipresent and omniscient aspects of the seer's superconscious mind, which understood

ultimate reality to be in essence vibrations of light and sound. Thus when the king of Syria plotted to attack the land of Israel, Eliseus picked up on the sound vibrations emanating from the king's camp and warned the king of Israel. When the king of Syria sent an army of chariots and warriors to capture the seer, Eliseus showed his servant a phenomenal etheric army of chariots of fire surrounding and protecting them. As a master of the subtle laws that operate behind the play of chiaroscuro in the mental projection of light and shade, Eliseus demonstrated the illusory aspect of physical reality by making the enemy army blind as he led them to the king of Israel, and then he opened their eyes when they were captured. Like a master magician, he told the king of Israel to feed the captives and let them go back home, and thus he demonstrated complete control over the phenomenal world of light and sound.

As the eye of the soul developed within the seer, he was able to envision a time of plenty in the midst of a famine. He was shown through his mind's eye the death of one king and the evil reign of the successor. As an oracle of the intelligent consciousness behind the scenes of the human drama, he orchestrated the anointing of a king, Jehu ("Jah is He"), who brought down the house of King Ahab in a dramatic karmic retribution for the Baal-worshipping Ahab's bloody slayings of the prophets. Thus, Eliseus was able to finish the task that his guru Elijah had started, and he brought to an end the remnants of the Age of Taurus, the age of the Bull (Baal).

On his deathbed, Eliseus predicted partial victory for the king of Israel over his enemy. King Joash ("whom Jah supports") put his hand on the bow and, like Sagittarius the Bowman, shot the arrow of deliverance eastward. Then the king watched as the divine fire in Eliseus' spine rose like a chariot of fire, crossed at the base of the skull, and ascended through the top of the head. The king cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen."

Joshua felt a fire in his spine rise to his head and illuminate his mind with light. The ethereal fire formed an overarching mantle-like fabric of starry space on the dome of his skull, and he saw a solar being in a chariot rise to the zenith and then descend below the ocean of consciousness in his visionary mind. The thought, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen," resounded in his inner ear.

"The kingdom of heaven is within you," annunciated the angelic voice of Binah. "The manner in which you saw the spirit of Eliseus leave is also the manner in which he will return."

One final image flashed on the screen of Joshua's mind as he started to sense the return of physical consciousness: a dead man was lowered into the sepulcher of Eliseus, and when the dead man touched the bones of the holy man, he was revived and came back to life.

"That was the twelfth and final task of the great seer," explained Binah. "Like St. John of the Cross, his physical body underwent total alchemical regeneration and became incorruptible. No physical disintegration or deterioration of tissues occurs in a body that has become united with the invisible, eternal fire of the One Universal Spirit."

Joshua opened his physical eyes and looked up at the sky. The sun was starting to descend toward the Mediterranean Sea.

"You have a great task before you," stated Binah. Joshua felt a bulge in the center of his forehead, and it started to throb with an intense rapidity. He closed his physical eyes again and focused on the single eye in his mind. An image of a bearded old man in

a black suit and black hat materialized in his mind's eye. "You will go to Jerusalem and meet the old rabbi at the Western Wall."

"Isaac," voiced Joshua as he suddenly recognized the old rabbi who had shown him the Chapel of Adam at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The next day, Joshua arrived early in the morning at the Western ("Wailing") Wall in Jerusalem. He looked at the wall of huge limestone blocks that were stacked about 18 meters high. The wall was the last remnant of one of four retaining walls of the Second Temple, which had been built by Herod the Great and then destroyed by the Romans in 70AD. The wall was sacred to the Jewish people, for it stood as a lasting memorial of the rock of their indestructible faith. Joshua watched as the pilgrims of the Eternal One came to worship at the sacred shrine of the symbolical Rock of all Eternity. His eyes were scanning the row of bodies bowing and gesticulating in front of the large stone layers. He specifically was searching for the figure of Isaac, the Jewish rabbi who befriended him on his first visit to the Old City of Jerusalem.

It did not take long for Joshua to spot the medium-sized bearded rabbi in his black suit and black hat walking briskly across the Western Wall Plaza toward the wall known as the Kotel ha-Ma'aravi (the Western Wall) to the Hebrew people. Joshua took a step forward and then hesitated. He thought perhaps he should not interrupt the rabbi's prayers this time, like he had the first time he met the blue-eyed rabbi. Instead, he watched as the rabbi walked up to the wall. He noticed the rabbi glance in his direction. For a split second, Joshua imagined that the rabbi knew he was there, waiting to talk to him. The next moment he saw the rabbi reach with his right hand into his suit pocket and pull out a piece of paper. The rabbi placed the kvitlach (written prayer or message) in a crevice between the stones in the Wall, and then he proceeded to say his prayer: "Shema Yisraeil: Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad (Hear, O Israel: The Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One)."

Joshua all of a sudden was drawn to approach the Wall. As he came closer, he could hear the chants and prayers ascending to the stone surface and ricocheting from the wall and out to the plaza. He could also hear birds chirping from the cracks and hidden spaces further up the wall. The mixture of sounds vibrated in Joshua's head as he came nearer to the twenty-four stone layers of which the visible wall was composed; he did not see the other layers underground. He thought the vibrations of past ages resounded from the stone enclosure, and he could hear the march of history, from the ruin and exile of an ancient people to the rebirth of a nation. He heard in his inner ear the sounds of war and the silence of peace, the sounds of noisy activity and the eternal pause to tune in to a divine presence. He stopped within earshot distance of the rabbi's prayer, to which Joshua listened with respect and devotion: "Baruch Ata, Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam (We praise you, Eternal God, sovereign of the Universe)."

Joshua felt an inner prayer project itself from his heart to the Wall, which became like a spiritual receiving station for the thoughts and prayers directed toward the center of spirituality that was embedded in the framework. The rabbi felt the presence of Joshua near him, and he turned to look over his right shoulder at the young man two steps behind him. The rabbi reached into his left pocket and pulled out a plain black yarmulke (skullcap) with an inner white lining and handed it to Joshua, saying, "You'll have to wear this kippah if you're going to pray at the Kotel."

Joshua put the yarmulke on the crown of his head, closed his eyes, and slowly recited the prayer, the Shema, that his Hebrew mother taught him: “She-ma Yis-ra-eil: A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu, A-do-nai E-chad! Ve-a-har-ta eit A-do-nai E-lo-he-cha be-chol le-va-ve-cha, u-ve-chol naf-she-cha u-ve-chol me-o-de-cha (Hear, O Israel: The Eternal is our God, the Eternal is One! You shall love the Eternal One, your God, with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your being).” Joshua felt a close proximity to something sacred, a Higher Reality, as he sensed the prayer from his heart ascend through the Wall and up to the heavens.

When Joshua finished his prayer and opened his eyes, he saw the rabbi looking intently at him with smiling eyes. The rabbi motioned for Joshua to follow him to a section of the plaza where they could talk.

“I didn’t know you knew Hebrew,” said Isaac as soon as they were off to the side and away from the Wall (Kotel).

“My Hebrew mother taught me how to pray the Shema,” said Joshua, referring to the confession of faith in the One God.

“So you have a Hebrew heritage,” remarked Isaac proudly.

“But my father is an American Christian,” disclosed Joshua.

“So you are from a mixed heritage,” said Isaac, with a slight inflection of his voice showing disappointment.

“May I ask you what that piece of paper was that you placed in the crevice of the wall?” asked Joshua out of curiosity and also as a means of deflecting the conversation away from his bicultural background.

“That is the kvitlach that I bring to the Kotel every morning,” responded Isaac, using the Hebrew word for the written prayers. “It’s a reminder to the world of the kvitlach that the leader of the Christian world brought to this Kotel, imploring God’s forgiveness for injustices committed in the name of religion.”

“Are you talking about the Pope’s visit to Jerusalem?” asked Joshua, remembering Pope John Paul II’s visit to the Holy Land.

“Yes,” emphatically asserted Isaac. “Here, I want you to read what he wrote.” Isaac took a piece of paper out of his right suit pocket and handed it to Joshua. “I always carry an extra copy in my pocket.”

Joshua unfolded the kvitlach and read what Pope John Paul II had written and placed at the Western Wall on Sunday, the 26th of March, during the Great Jubilee Year, for the whole world to see: “God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations: We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer and, asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant.”

Joshua finished reading the kvitlach and was ready to hand it back to Isaac, but the rabbi told him, “Keep it. Keep it as a reminder to yourself and to anyone who forgets the One Eternal God that the descendants of Abraham revealed to the nations of the world.”

“And you bring this same kvitlach to the Wall each morning?” asked the incredulous Joshua.

“Every morning till I leave this world and go to the next world,” asserted Isaac.

“I want to ask you another question,” said Joshua, suddenly remembering something that was on his mind since the moment he saw Isaac look at him as he approached the Wall. “Did you know I was going to be here this morning?”

“Yes, I did,” admitted Isaac. “From my childhood, I was taught by my father to listen to the guiding divine voice within my neshama, my soul. Last night I heard the voice directing me to meet you here this morning. That’s why I brought the yarmulke for you. I knew you would need the head covering.”

“I, too, heard an inner voice directing me to you,” disclosed Joshua.

“I know,” succinctly stated Isaac.

“You know, I think I should also write a prayer on a kvitlach and put it in the Wall,” said Joshua, divulging a secret desire that burned in his heart.

“Make it a prayer that will invoke understanding between religious points of view,” advised Isaac. “Maybe with your bicultural heritage, your vision will encompass all monotheistic religions, just like this Wall which encompasses and supports the Temple Mount. And perhaps the One who stands behind our Wall will hear and answer your prayer.”

Joshua took out a pen and tore a piece of blank paper from his small pocket notebook and began writing a prayer and a message: “May the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man be realized on earth.” Joshua was just about to cross out the sentence and write a politically correct statement, thinking that the male-oriented words might offend the sensitivity of those who believed in the equality of the genders, both on earth and in heaven. So he wrote a second sentence to embrace all humanity: “May the One Spirit of Life living in All be realized on earth. And may we all live in Peace.”

“So,” began Isaac when he saw Joshua fold the piece of paper and put it in his pocket, “I would like to ask you a question, now. Which Messiah were you brought up believing in, the Jewish Messiah or the Christian Messiah?”

Joshua looked at the serious look in Isaac’s blue eyes. “The Christian Messiah,” he confessed, after a moment of hesitation. “Although, after years of personal thought and investigation, and after a thorough searching of my own soul, I believe that both Messiahs represent humanity’s quest for the ideal deliverer or redeemer, the perfect man. And both religions await the arrival of that god-like person in the flesh.”

“We have had many failed Messiahs throughout our Jewish history,” said Isaac somberly. “The Moshiach, or the Anointed One as we call him, is expected to be a king that arises from the House of King David and restores the Jewish people to their homeland and rules during an age of universal peace. The Moshiach will restore the Law of the One God. But above all, the Moshiach will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.” Isaac looked longingly at the Western Wall and envisioned a rebuilt Temple on the Temple Mount behind the Wall, with a reconstructed Holy of Holies where the Divine Presence would descend.

Isaac’s mind withdrew into a meditative silence. Joshua looked at the same wall and reflected on the sad history of hatred and persecution that the Jewish people endured at the hands of Christian intolerance. His mind tried to rationalize the teachings that his father taught him as the convictions of a true believer in the Christian savior, and yet he couldn’t forget his mother’s constant admonition to never forget his Jewish roots and the belief in the One God as the true Savior. He couldn’t reconcile the two points of view,

for on the surface they were two totally different belief systems, each claiming exclusive superiority for itself. And yet, in essence, he reasoned that both were valid paths to God.

“Do you know why the Jewish people consider the Christian Messiah to be a failed Messiah?” asked Isaac when his mind and attention were directed back to Joshua. Joshua looked back into Isaac’s sorrowful eyes and felt the rabbi’s soul opening up to him. “He did not drive the oppressors, the Romans, out of the land, and he turned the people away from observing the laws of the Torah; and to top it all off, instead of inaugurating a reign of peace, a reign of terror arrived to bring a final destruction of the Temple. Besides, in the Talmud version, he is known by the name of Yeschu ben Pandera, whose father was a Roman soldier, whereas in the Christian version, he is known as Yeschu ha-Notzri (the Nazarene), who belonged to an Essene community. O, the patchwork of stories that were fabricated to put the blame on the Jewish people for his supposed death, instead of finding the Roman Empire at fault.”

“Supposed death?” interrupted Joshua, whose brow was furrowed with a quizzical look.

“You’re not familiar with the Essene story of the crucifixion and subsequent resuscitation of the Nazarene?” asked Isaac incredulously. Joshua shook his head. “According to their version, Yeschu was a reformer who wanted to eliminate animal sacrifices in the temple, like the Essenes, and he was a healer who went around the countryside doing good. He was not a zealot fighting against Roman authority, or a false messiah in the mold of Judas of Galilee, Theudas, or the unnamed Egyptian, of whom the Jewish historian Josephus writes. He was more like an itinerant teacher. Some say that he was willing to be a martyr for his faith, and others say that he willingly gave himself as a sacrificial lamb to the Romans so they would leave the Jewish people alone. Another version says that there was a mix-up with a certain Jesus Barabbas, whose name Bar-Abbas means son of the father, and the wrong person was released. Anyway, with so many Jesus names, and false messiahs, and insurgents or zealots fighting the Romans, there was bound to be lots of confusion with the crucifixion stories. You must remember that the Romans were crucifying hundreds of Jewish people in those days. Well, in the Essene story, the friends of the Nazarene save him by getting the Roman ruler to allow them to take the unconscious body from the cross and put him in a special garden tomb where they could revive him. You’ve probably heard that the Essenes wore long white robes. Well, they were the angelic-like men who brought healing herbs and salves to reanimate the body and rescue the Nazarene from death. The Essenes told the Nazarene’s disciples and friends that he would meet them in Galilee. That’s the gist of the story. I won’t elaborate on another version that I heard, about a certain Simon the Cyrene who was the actual person who not only carried the cross of execution, but was also the person who was crucified on that infamous cross. Nor will I try to confuse you with an apocryphal book that was discovered where the Christian savior tells his disciple John that he is not the body on the cross.”

Joshua’s mind was spinning and perplexed by the onslaught of cross imagery. There was a bell-like ringing in his ears. He looked at the Wall, and he felt compelled to go to it and touch it. He was drawn to it like metal to a magnet. He started walking back to the spot at the Wall where he had said the Shema prayer. As he came nearer to the Wall, the sound in his head and all around him became a crescendo of thunderous sounds, like the waves of the ocean breaking on volcanic rocks. He reached for the kvitlach in his

pocket, and he placed the written prayer in a crack between two large limestone blocks. In his mind he saw the message being transmitted through the Wall to the Eternal One Behind and Above the Wall. He sub-vocalized the words, "May the One Spirit of Life living in All be realized on earth, and may we all live in Peace." Then he reached out with the palms of both of his hands and placed them on the smooth surface of the Wall.

Joshua closed his eyes, and the image of a man with a noble countenance materialized in his mind's eye. The head of the man was covered with wavy brown (like the color of earth) hair, which flowed down his shoulders and was parted in the middle of the head in the fashion of the Nazarenes. A dark beard and moustache adorned the lower part of his face. A compassionate smile beamed from the face and from the bright brown eyes. "Yeshua the Nazarene," annunciated the inner voice of Binah at the same moment that it dawned in Joshua's mind who he was seeing. The translucent face of the Nazarene revealed a panorama of a distant time, and Joshua saw a little boy being raised in an Essene community beside the sea on Mount Carmel. There was an older boy with the active lad, and Joshua heard Binah's voice gently say, "Yohanan and Yeshua." When the boys became adolescents, their paths bifurcated: Yohanan went to the Wilderness of Judea and lived with an ascetic community, and Yeshua left home and traveled with a caravan to India. Neither of the boys wanted to get married and settle down.

Joshua continued watching the changing face of time through the placid clear water-like face of the Nazarene, which became totally transparent and revealed a grown man coming to the Jordan River. Joshua felt a powerful warm sensation along the entire length of his spinal cord. He watched as the grown man Yeshua approached the ascetic Yohanan – their paths had crossed once again. Joshua sensed a flow of energy at the base of the skull surge through the medulla oblongata, like a river arriving at the mouth where it merges with the sea. As the two men entered the stream, Joshua heard a whirlwind descend from the clouds, and within the whirlwind a golden chariot appeared. The crown of Joshua's head seemed to open up in the area of the fontanelle, beneath the center of the inner white lining of the yarmulke, and a stream of golden light flowed through the soft membranous opening. The golden chariot descended upon the head of Yeshua, and Yohanan cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen." A fiery current of energy raced through Joshua's skull, illuminating it with the creative light and intelligence of the universal mind, and then it flowed through the seven centers of the spinal cord, bringing light and energy to the entire body.

"The guru and disciple have been reunited," gently spoke the inner voice of Binah. Joshua realized that she meant Elijah and his disciple Eliseus. At that moment of realization, Joshua saw the mind and consciousness of Yeshua the Nazarene become one with his mind and consciousness, and the wall of separation disappeared, and so did the image of the resplendent face. "You are not the body, which dies and passes away, nor the feelings of bodily consciousness," instructed Binah as Joshua no longer felt any bodily sensations. "Nor are you the mental ideas and images which cause the appearance of astral and physical consciousness. You are, in essence, the immortal soul."

One last image illuminated the mind of Joshua as it merged with the vast consciousness of Yeshua the Nazarene, like a drop of water becoming one with the ocean: an infinite Cross of Light whose rays expanded to the four corners of the starry heavens. Within that Cross of Light at-one-moment, like the flash of an Eternal second, Joshua saw a stream-of-light-consciousness unveil the mystery of the immortal body

crossified on the mortal cross of matter: At the head of the majestic panoply was a conscious spark of an eternal flame that emanated from an invisible source and projected itself onto the wheel of existence by immersing itself into the elements of fire-water-air-earth and forming them through mind-and-desire into a physical body which was born-lived-and-died and returned to its source in a recurring cycle until one day the conscious spark awakened from the endless cycle and realized it could reverse the entire process by consciously building a bridge between the world of coming-into-existence (or matter-in-nature) and the world of coming-into-being (or spirit-of-the-source) within the temple of one's inner being by replacing or transforming the cells or building blocks of the mortal physical body with etheric deathless cells of light-energy from the source and uniting the male aspect of spirit with the female aspect of nature into the original spark of its inherent immortal self which would no longer be subject to an endless cycle of births and rebirths but could travel in its conscious regenerated immortal body through existence (or being) by conscious choice, saying, I will arise and go back to my Father's House—the Source of All Life.

As the image of the Cross of Light faded, and only an afterimage of its recent brilliance remained, Joshua made a conscious decision and withdrew his consciousness from bodily awareness by mentally affirming the instructions that Binah had given him: he affirmed his independence from the solid physical body, the liquid sensations and feelings of the astral body, and the vaporous mental ideas of the causal body. He visualized himself tearing the veil between his mortal body and his immortal soul. He projected his consciousness beyond the confining encasements of his bodies and stepped beyond the wall of limitations. He pierced the star of the pineal gland with the sacred spear of his concentrated mind, and he drank from the cup of the holy grail of the pituitary gland, filling himself with infinite light and life. He knew he was the immortal soul.

“You have gone beyond the image to the Source,” soothingly cooed the dove-like voice of Binah. “The images in your mind may serve as windows or doors to the Eternal Source, but always remember that they are not the Source.”

Joshua now knew that he didn't need to see an image of the Nazarene to connect with the Oneness of the Spirit of Life. He knew his consciousness was of the same essence as the consciousness of the Nazarene, a consciousness that was present in everything that existed, in every cell and atom of the vast body of the expanding universe. “I am with you always, even unto the end of all ages,” rang the words of the avatar-like consciousness.

It took Joshua several minutes to release his hands from the powerful vibrations that pulsed from the Wall into his body, mind, and soul. When he finally withdrew his hands from the Wall and opened his eyes, he saw that Isaac was standing next to him with both of his hands attached to the Wall.

“Isaac,” whispered Joshua, trying to get the rabbi's attention so he could tell him what he had seen. Isaac lowered his hands from the Wall and turned his head to face Joshua. “Isaac, I know how he rebuilt the temple! I know how he became immortal!”

Isaac looked at Joshua with tears streaming down his face. “I know,” said Isaac as the tears continued to roll down his face and into his gray beard. “I also saw King Moshiach. I saw him rebuild our temple in Jerusalem and bring peace to the world.”

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Paul's eyes continued to look at the face of Bannus, whose piercing eyes tried to penetrate into the depths of his soul.

"What did you see?" asked Bannus, his curiosity piqued to a high expectancy.

"Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead?" asked Paul as he sat up, simultaneously thrusting aside the bark-woven robe that covered his body. The dawn light was brightening up the interior of the cave in which the master and the disciple sat.

"Do you mean rising from the dead in this life or in a future life?" inquired the perceptive mind of Bannus.

"What's the difference?" asked Paul, whose mind was trying to fathom the mysteries of life and death.

"Rising from the darkness of our dead mortal body in this lifetime, and rising to the light of our immortal body, is one meaning," explained Bannus in his succinct manner. "The other meaning is where the soul returns to earth through rebirth into another body, as taught by great masters like Pythagoras."

"What I saw falls into the second category," reasoned Paul, his mind visualizing his future-life experience. "I was living the life of Elisha ben Abuyah. The Romans had just destroyed the temple, and . . ."

"Destroyed the temple!?" interrupted Bannus. "Are you sure you saw that?"

"Yes, not one stone was left on top of another," remarked Paul sorrowfully. "A new messiah named Bar Kokhba appeared on the scene to deliver our people from the oppression of the Romans."

"A new messiah!?" exclaimed Bannus. He jumped up and ran excitedly out of the cave before Paul could tell him that the three-and-a-half year revolt led by the valiant "Star," as Simon Bar Kokhba was referred to, would end in utter defeat for the Jewish nation. The emperor Hadrian would turn Jerusalem into a pagan city called Aelia Capitolina and build a temple on the Temple Mount dedicated to Jupiter (king of the gods), Juno (queen of the gods), and Minerva (goddess of wisdom). And the country's name would be changed from Judea to Palestina.

"Elijahu!" yelled Bannus through cupped-hands, shaped like a megaphone, to project the sound through the etheric waves. "Elijahu!" The transmitted sounds were accompanied by a mental transmission from the mind of Bannus to the receiver, Elijahu. When Paul came out of the cave, he saw Bannus lifting his hands with palms extended in the direction of Ein Feshka. Paul wasn't sure, but he thought the master was sending out heartfelt vibrations through the concave-like palm and antenna-like fingertips to Elijahu. It looked like the uplifted gaze of Bannus' face was communicating through mental telepathy with the mind of Elijahu, and the interior mental apparatus was transmitting and receiving auditory sounds and visual images.

"Bannus!" called out Elijahu from the top of the hill overlooking the cave.

Bannus and Paul turned around simultaneously to witness the majestic sight of a white-robed Essene master with the rays of the morning sun streaming directly above his head.

“How in heaven’s name!?” wondered Paul aloud. The spectacle of Elijahu standing on top of a hill surrounded by the aureole of the sun was too dazzling for Paul to look at.

“Didn’t I tell you that he comes and goes whenever and wherever he pleases?” stated Bannus emphatically. “This time I called and he answered, thankfully.”

“Come up to the top of the mount!” commanded Elijahu in a stentorian voice.

Paul and Bannus scampered to the top of the hill with hurried steps. They did not want to keep the master waiting.

“Now tell me,” intoned Elijahu in a gentler tone when the threesome sat down cross-legged on the dry blades of wild grass. “Why was I called back to this place?”

Bannus explained in an apologetic tone of voice the urgency of the matter, and Paul filled in with crucial details of the destruction of the temple and the devastation of Jerusalem by the Romans which he had envisioned. Elijahu sat quietly for a long time, looking out over his beloved land across the Jordan and musing over the unfolding story of his people.

“Our life in exile is our life in the flesh of bodily existence, and our return to our homeland is our return to life in the spirit of celestial existence,” said Elijahu contemplatively.

“Is what I saw bound to happen?” asked Paul anxiously. A sense of despair like a small dark cloud appeared in his consciousness, and he felt as if he were the cause of the impending doom upon the land.

“What you saw was a true vision and revelation of things to come for you and for our people,” replied Elijahu straightforwardly. “The wheel of life turns for all of us, and the Eternal One directs where on the wheel we need to be to fulfill the grand design of the ages. The wheel turns in a progressively upward manner, so that what once was will be again, but with the condition of changing physical mortal forms. Henceforth, though our people are dispersed or sent into exile, they will in due time return to our homeland.” Elijahu was referring to the Diaspora, the scattering of the Jewish people outside their traditional homeland.

“Is there anything that can be done to prevent the trials and tribulations that will befall our people and to keep them together in the Law of our God?” asked Bannus with a sense of urgency.

Elijahu pondered the question for several minutes before he answered: “The history of our people, like the rest of suffering humanity, must traverse through the manifold wilderness of life and through the variegated landscape of many ages. The names and faces of the Eternal One are many. However, the Law of the Most High must be preserved. We are the people of the everlasting Covenant, which abides forever in the mind of God for thousands of generations. I believe I have a plan that will save our people from assimilation into foreign religions, especially the zealous messianic sects that keep sprouting in our midst.”

“You mean the Zealots who have been revolting against the Roman occupation of our land since the time of Judas of Galilee?” inquired Bannus, who was familiar with the new politico-philosophic sect that exhorted the people to throw off the yoke of slavery to Roman taxation and fight for liberty and national independence.

“It is now thirty years since that rogue cleverly aligned himself with the religious Pharisees to proclaim a kingdom for Israel, ruled by God alone,” recounted Elijahu. “He

wanted to bring in the Kingdom of God by force with himself as the Messiah-King, but his violent revolt only led to his own violent death.”

“So what is your plan?” asked Paul impatiently.

“Well, Saul, the plan will require your whole-hearted assistance, your complete dedication, and your unwavering loyalty, even unto death,” stated Elijahu solemnly. “You will be the instrument of divine justice. You will divert the messianic sects into the Gentile stream to keep the Jewish strain pure.”

Paul’s face turned ashen at the mention of the word death. He recalled his ordeal in the desert, when he had confronted the terrifying specter of death. He had wondered if he was capable of dying for a cause. Now, he had to decide whether or not he was willing to put his life on the altar of martyrdom.

“I can see that he fears the sting of death,” commented Elijahu to Bannus when he noticed that Paul stood stiff as a stone. “Has he been initiated into the little death?”

“Yes, he has completed the death which leads to a knowledge of rebirth,” explained Bannus. “That’s how he saw the destruction of the Temple. But he has not undergone the ritual where he is crucified to the world and reborn to an awareness of the immortal body.”

“So he has yet to destroy the enemy called death,” confirmed Elijahu, who realized he needed to ascertain Paul’s readiness to slay the mortal self. “Saul, remember when I initially accepted you on a probationary basis into our community?” Paul nodded his head. “And remember how I agreed to assist you in your quest to become a disciple of Bannus?” Paul nodded his head, again. “Well, now you must decide if you are ready for the final step in your initiation into our brotherhood.”

“Son,” interjected Bannus, as he put his hand on Paul’s shoulder to reassure him of the master’s guidance, “I will guide you through the entire ritual, with Elijahu’s help. So far, you have worked out your own spiritual regeneration with discipline and perseverance. You had a revelation of the journey of the soul on the eternal great wheel of life. Your next revelation will be of your deathless immortal body. Then you will know that you have nothing to fear, for you can never die.”

The reassuring words brought tears to Paul’s eyes. He was ready to step into the vast unknown, for he already knew that life was continuous.

“I am ready to die to the old man, my mortal self, and be born anew to a new man,” spoke Paul through his tear-choked voice. “I am ready to die in Jerusalem, if need be.” He spoke from a heightened sense of a perceived destiny.

“It is customary to undergo seven days of purification before submitting the body to the three day ordeal,” instructed Elijahu. “Bannus will prepare you. I will return in seven days.”

Without saying another word, Elijahu turned away from Bannus and Paul and slowly walked down the hill. The two men kept their eyes riveted on the descending figure of the old master until he disappeared from view.

Afterwards, Bannus took his disciple to the cave and began the prolonged preparation for Paul’s mystical crucifixion. Paul was shown how to slow down his breathing and, consequently, his heart rate. He was instructed how to tune out and disconnect the mind from the senses of the physical body. He was directed to concentrate on the single eye of the soul within the cavern of his skull. He was instilled with a

profound inner state of silence. For seven days, Paul fine-tuned his body, mind, and soul to its optimum capability.

On the seventh day after Paul began his rigorous preparation for the transformational experience, Elijahu returned. Bannus already had a specially prepared sacred fire burning in his cave, and Paul was sitting cross-legged beside the red-orange-blue flames, warming his body. The morning air around him was moist and cool.

“Peace be with you,” said Elijahu as he entered the natural cave in a half-stooped manner. He was using the traditional Essene greeting.

“Peace be with you,” responded Bannus and Paul together.

Elijahu sat down beside the sacred fire and intoned in a long drawn-out monotone the sacred sound: “OM.” The interior of the cave resounded with the three voices chanting the sacred Word. The resounding vibrations appeared to bounce off of the walls of the cave like ocean waves breaking on the rocks, and the amplified sounds seemed to harmonize the souls of the participants with the cosmic sound of the universe. Once the keynote was sounded, the etheric space within the cave appeared to be filled with a sacred presence.

After the sound in the cave resumed its usual muffled stillness, Elijahu ceremoniously announced: “Saul, today your spiritual eye will see what human eyes cannot see, and your inner ear will hear what human ears cannot hear. You will die to your old lower physical self, and you will rise to your new higher spiritual Self. The revelation of your celestial or immortal body will assure you of the resurrection of the dead.”

Elijahu handed Paul a white linen robe which he had tucked under his arm. Paul slipped out of his old bark-woven robe and put on the new white linen robe. Elijahu motioned for Paul to lie down on the soft sandy ground. Paul lay down and adjusted his new robe.

“Be not afraid,” said Bannus, who had stepped aside to let his master perform the initiatory ceremony. He wanted to let his disciple know that he was committed to taking care of him throughout the journey of the soul to a rendezvous with its ultimate reality. “We will both be right beside you, watching over you.”

“Close your eyes and focus your gaze on your spiritual eye, the star of the East,” instructed Elijahu, placing his right index finger gently, but firmly, on the center of Paul’s forehead. A white star on a dark blue circular background appeared in his mind at the touch of the master’s electromagnetically-charged point of contact. A golden glow surrounded the image of the star that beamed like a beacon of light on a distant shore. As Paul peered into the light of the star, he felt as if he were traveling on a beam of light through a tunnel of endless dark cosmic space. And then, after what seemed like an eternal night, a brilliant flash of light, like the manifestation of a supernova, dispelled the darkness and flooded his consciousness with a golden radiance. Within that radiant light he saw a great fiery wheel revolving in the wide expanse, and within the wheel he perceived a resplendent cruciform image.

“The wheel of Ixion,” thought Paul as he consciously recalled the vision in the wilderness, where he saw himself impaled on the cross. Except this time, fastened on the cruciform, he saw an archetypal man, a cosmic emanation of a creative intelligence which pervaded the entire universe. A visible projection of a cosmic blueprint for all human beings! The etheric light body of the archetypal first man in its original state

displayed an androgynous being – both male and female. “You are that,” a voice in his inner ear sounded like a trumpet. “You are that being.”

Paul no longer had any sensation of a physical body, which seemed to have evaporated in the brilliant heat of the etheric light body. Everything seemed to stand still, and the illusion of time and motion were no longer part of his awareness. The silence in his heaven-like brain was void of vibration. He knew he had risen in his consciousness to a realm of, what appeared to be, an eternal day of pure creative light that expanded in infinite directions. He identified himself with the image of the celestial light body, whose light particles encompassed the sun, moon, and stars; ethereal rivers and streams flowed through it, majestic mountains of light formed its backbone, and energetic sinews of strength moved its luminous form. The creative mind and intelligence of the immortal body of light was one with the universal mind.

From the conscious mind of the immortal light-body emerged a thought, “I am that, a conscious immortal being of blissful light.” The thought sprouted like a seed into a luminous image that reflected the androgynous archetypal man, the Anthropos, and became a Self-contained, bubble-like sphere floating on the ocean of manifest reality. The miniature spherical light-body took on a life and mind of its own and projected itself by a conscious will, born of the desire to experience the field of manifestation, into an astral form that merged with a physical form.

At that moment, Paul’s consciousness appeared to reside in an etheric double of his immortal light-body, and the etheric body appeared to hover like a bird above the physical form and pulsate with a light substance that scintillated with all the colors of the rainbow. As the etheric body merged with the physical form, Paul became aware of his desire to experience life connect with the feeling of a physical form, and for a split-second he thought he was being swallowed by a fish. The sensation of being entombed remained in his consciousness for an indeterminate amount of time. Paul recalled Bannus’ words, “Be not afraid.” He realized that he was experiencing the consciousness of the light-body imprisoned in the proverbial house of clay, the mortal human body. He felt as though he had entered the netherworld, and the only light that remained was his conscious realization that he was in essence the immortal soul, a body of light.

The realization of a higher Self opened a door within Paul’s mind, and he knew he would need to walk through that door to regain the lost paradise of blissful light. He felt an awakening within his etheric nervous system, and he sensed a fiery energy flow like a river from the base of his spinal cord to the base of his skull, where he saw a cross of two electrical currents, the positive and the negative, enter the stem of the brain. At the convergence of the two currents with the river of life, Paul noticed the birth of a solar light which radiated from a white stone-like protuberance, the pineal gland, which was immersed with oily secretions from the seven activated centers of the brain, producing a golden glow and a phosphorescent radiation that brought the dormant brain cells to life and illuminated the entire cavernous skull.

The secret place of the Most High, the pineal gland, opened up like a lotus flower, and the intense stream of light vibrated at an incredibly fast rate, causing the cup of anointing luminous oil to overflow into the entire nervous system, forming an inner body of light. The thought raced through Paul’s enlightened mind: “You are the light of your own little world.”

“Awake, O Saul, and rise from the dead,” said Elijahu in a soft voice into Paul’s right ear. Paul was not aware how long he had been in the rapturous trance, and the voice of Elijahu calling him seemed so distant. “You are the awakened one, and you have attained the resurrection of the dead.” Upon hearing the affirmation of attainment, Paul’s consciousness made a dramatic shift from the immortal back to the mortal, and he felt as if he had taken off the interior imperishable garment and put back on an exterior perishable garment.

“I have vanquished death,” stated Paul as he opened his eyes and looked at the bright smiling faces of Elijahu and Bannus. He wanted to jump out of his coat of skin and fly above the rooftops, proclaiming the good news of his victory over darkness, ignorance, and death. But he couldn’t move. His limbs felt numb from lack of movement.

“You have inherited the Kingdom of Light,” proclaimed Bannus. He started massaging Paul’s arms and legs to bring back circulation to his body parts.

“The light streamed from the back of your neck and formed a magnificent aureole,” confirmed Elijahu, who moved his hands several inches above the entire length of Paul’s body, back and forth along the aural electromagnetic field that surrounded his physical body.

“The light is with me, and I am with the light,” affirmed Paul, his eyes seemingly still transfixed by the heavenly vision. “Everything is made of light. We live, move, and have our being in light.”

“Now you know why we affirm that God is Light and we are the children of light,” substantiated Bannus.

“You have been to the Source, and you drank from the Source,” attested Elijahu with a note of finality. “May the wisdom and light of the Source always be with you. Now you are ready to go to Jerusalem to fulfill your mission.”

