

O, what a world of unseen
visions and heard silences, this
insubstantial country of the mind!

What ineffable essences, these touchless
rememberings and unshowable reveries!
□

And the privacy of it all!

,,,This consciousness that is myself of selves,
that is everything, and yet nothing at all,,,
What is it?

And where did it come from? And why?

Julian Jaynes had not expressed these thoughts in public at the time that I had that conversation with Gilbert B..... Even if he had, I doubt whether they would have exercised my mind for very long - definitely not in the context of what it was that Gilbert wanted to tell me. I certainly could never have dreamed - not even in my *wildest* dreams - where this conversation would ultimately lead me, or by what strange paths. That it induced such a major change in my life may be judged from the fact that at times I am glad that it took place, but that at others, I curse it profoundly. Yet, at the time, an interesting conversation and demonstration involving two practical and pragmatic engineers did not seem all that significant. It happened like this...

One afternoon at work, I was passing Gilbert's office when he called me in - "I've just had a rep. in from K..'s Fire Detectors, and he showed me this... (producing a pair of thin welding rods bent into the now familiar L-shape). He got me to hide things under the carpet, and he found them by holding the rods in his hands. Then, when they swung and crossed, the hidden thing was immediately below...like this", and he demonstrated.... Of course, I had a go and lo! - it worked for me also - my first encounter with practical dowsing.

At that time, (1971), dowsing did not have the exposure that it enjoys today - I had, indeed, seen only one other person use rods, and he was a professional surveyor who used properly made telescopic ones with balanced pivoting handles. Even though he was successful in locating drains, the significance of what he was doing did not register with me. In my own case, I did very little then with this newfound skill, other than finding drains and pipes for farming friends and showing them how to do it themselves.

I watched very little television at the time, thus the rapidly expanding use of rods and pendulums for archaeological dowsing, and by people seeking so-called 'earth energies' (largely and, as I keep protesting ad nauseum, wrongly called 'ley-lines' by many) in the main passed me by. It is quite probable that my interest would have waned completely had I not chanced upon a significant book, *The Practical Pendulum*, by Dr. Bruce Copen.

It was a seminal moment when, in the local library, I took out the slim book, that I could so easily have passed. As its title suggests, it was very practical, with much 'how-to-do-it' information. It also attempted, through a sort of pseudo-science, to explain the

mechanism of dowsing using a short pendulum. And so it was that I made myself a pendulum as the book described, and soon found that all that was suggested in the text worked for me. The acquisition of a catalogue of new and second hand books on esoteric subjects took me one step further, for I found there a second book by the same author - *Dowsing from Maps* - which I bought, together with a professionally made Perspex pendulum. ***What I didn't know was that I was about to set out on a very perilous journey on which, literally, I could have lost my mind.***

Very detailed instructions were given on how to dowse from maps, while included in the text were several charts and diagrams that one could use in a variety of analytical functions. Everything worked for me just as the book described, and the pendulum became a constant companion. What did not 'work' for me were the explanations offered for the way in which it responded. The concept of subtle energies, and even more subtle muscle responses, carried no weight, particularly when one considered that the pendulum was hovering over a piece of paper and not a piece of real-estate.

To explain why I made my next move it is necessary to describe some of my background and beliefs...

As you have read, my working life as an electronics engineer in the field of measurement and control had been cut short some three years earlier (1976) by a serious depression that had been caused, originally, by the completely unnecessary and, now professionally acknowledged, inappropriate prescription of Librium. That was now behind me, and I was beginning to revel in my total freedom in my tranquil rural home. It was a mind that was curious, but not much more, that led me on to explore and experiment with the book as a guide; a mind obviously coloured by experiences and events that stretched back into childhood.

One side of my family had been very actively involved in spiritualism. It had never drawn me, in fact the reverse, and I had not been personally involved, except to be aware of beliefs and practices. What I did have was a firm belief in *the actuality* of spiritual beings, which, when one boils it down, is the basis for all religious belief. The little experience that I had had of spiritualist practices, had been with direct voice trance mediums, nothing more. By extension, however, I knew that there was a potential for spiritual intervention in other ways. To me, it was a logical deduction, correct as it turned out, that the pendulum was being controlled directly by spiritual means.

The moment one uses the word *spiritual*, one releases in one's hearers or readers all their own attitudes, beliefs and prejudices

about spiritual concepts that form the basis of the religion in which they have been brought up, or which they have later espoused, or which they reject. Ideally, I would like to proceed without the preconceptions of *any* religion, but only with the understanding of the existence of a spiritual 'dimension' and the reality of individually acting spiritual beings.

As I have written, my own spiritual life and religious practice had been virtually extinguished in the void of the depression; but from whatever cause, vague stirrings were being felt. For reasons that completely escape me now, I began to think in a minor way about Buddhism, and in particular about the possibility of reincarnation. At the time, (1979), there was a resurgence of the threat of nuclear war that would inevitably create worldwide desolation. In another field, the 'experts' were predicting an imminent mini ice age. My reasoning went thus: if there is going to be nuclear desolation *or* an ice age, I did not want to reincarnate. So what did I have to do *not* to have to return? This was not *obsessive* thinking, rather was it a series of vague stirrings, and the beginning of exploration. In every respect I was buoyant and my mind was active - friends call me 'the ideas man', very much a lateral thinker and seeker of practical ways and logical solutions.

Thus, what did this pragmatic engineer do with his knowledge of a spiritual state of existence and his belief that the pendulum was being controlled by a discarnate spiritual entity, in ways that he could not determine? He did what many have subsequently insisted that he should not have done, he made an alphabet and numeral chart!

This advice should be heeded by anyone thinking about doing the same, as the experiences that follow should show.

I had never thought much about, and had certainly never experimented with, a planchette or ouija board, nor had I tried any other forms of divination. I was certainly not looking in any way whatsoever for deep insights nor for predictions. I was just *looking*, in total innocence and without expectation. The spiritualist activities of my parents and grandparents had always appeared to have assumed the presence of *benevolent* spirits. If they had any concept of, or protection against, the intrusion of spiritual malevolence, I was not aware of it. The possible existence of such never even entered my mind. (Recent conversation with my brother, who was a much more active participant than I was, has informed me that there were indeed careful and stringent precautions and practices aimed at guarding against such intrusions.)

I cannot recall in any detail the particular day in the spring of 1979 when I first sat down with the pendulum suspended from my right hand and hovering over the centre of the alphabet chart. What I do know is that immediately names started to be spelled out, names that slowly and laboriously I wrote down with my left hand; being right handed it presented something of a difficulty. I responded in my thoughts and in no other way. I would ask when and where the alleged person had lived, and how and when they had died, together with such ancillary detail as seemed appropriate - information that would, in the main, answer specifically my mentally posed questions.

In their spiritualist activities my parents had participated in a so-called 'rescue circle'. To such a 'circle' the spirits of people who had died in trauma - accident, suicide, homicide, war - were alleged to be brought by the medium's 'guides', in order that by continued, but regulated, contact with still living people they might ultimately be reconciled to the reality of their death, and then make progress in their spiritual domain. It was in this manner that I reacted to the names and circumstances spelled out by the pendulum. Always my thoughts were of reconciliation with their circumstances and the manner of their dying, and encouragement to progress spiritually.

As I look back nearly twenty years, I marvel at my 'innocence', lack of awareness and, I cannot emphasise too much, my *gullibility*. No, I was not controlling the pendulum in any way, nor had I any pre-conception of what would be spelled; and yes, the pendulum *was* spelling logical responses to my thoughts - and not solely to *my* thoughts. A visitor at the time used to sit beside me, and as I held the pendulum, would ask questions or make comments in her own mind, and to which I was not party. I remember quite distinctly the occasion on which the response to her was "We are not fortune tellers".

On another occasion, my friend and I had been debating aspects of abortion and euthanasia in consequence of some high profile cases proceeding at the time. When I sat that evening, the pendulum spelled out "Read Leviticus Chapters 18 to 22". I obviously knew that Leviticus was a Book in the Old Testament, but I can say, with almost 100% certainty, that I had never read it. When I did read the prescribed chapters, I found that there were elements that could be interpreted as having relevance to the debate. However, on re-reading the text to refresh my mind as I write now, it could be that I was being warned against *...those that have familiar spirits...and ...wizards...who*, it was ordered, should be stoned to death. I shall never know! What these accounts *should* show, however, is that I was not exercising any physical or mental control over the pendulum, but that it was being controlled by a 'mind' that was separate from mine.

I was fully aware of the spiritualist concept of 'guides' - attendant spirits, whom, it is believed, have access to the mind of the

medium and control the admission of other spirits. Thus, I was not surprised when a trio gradually identified 'themselves'. The identities that they claimed were, in turn:

1 *Ibn Ubar* - mid- to late nineteenth century, well placed (chief) in Masai-type people of North East Africa. Claimed that when he was old and infirm, he had deliberately set out to kill a lion knowing that he himself would probably be killed - almost in reparation for the lions that he had killed whilst protecting his cattle.

2 *Degef Gayad* claimed to have been a monk on the Tibet/Nepal border; had held a lowly position as keeper of a beacon for travellers; said that he had been killed by a bear whilst tending a remote beacon.

It is difficult to explain how a *presence* or *ambience* could be experienced whilst simply holding a pendulum, but it was actually the case in that a seriousness or portentousness accompanied the third member of the trio -

3 *U Gedafad* who, it was said, had been a Buddhist priest in Burma in the late eighteenth century. As I remember, his life and death were never discussed.

I am writing as if these were the actual spirits of real people. It is difficult to do otherwise, for while I have a different understanding now that qualifies everything that happened to me, it is something that I cannot at this stage anticipate, but must try to write of the experiences and beliefs of the time when they happened, and in the sequence in which they happened.

The Buddhist began to encourage me to study Buddhism. When I asked why, I was told, "every priest needs a pupil". I was encouraged to join the Buddhist Society, which I did, and to get hold of a book, *First Steps in Buddhism* by W.V.Trapp. Written in German, it was said, and translated into English in 1927 by Lionel Fellows, the translator being inspired by U Gedafad. When I asked the Buddhist Society Library for the loan of the book, I was told that they could not obtain a copy; I was never told that the book did not exist - whether or not it had ever existed, I shall never know.

I did not persist with the Buddhist Society for more than a few months. Many of the concepts and much of the terminology I found alien to my existing beliefs. Also, as with many Eastern religions or philosophies translated to the West, much seems to revolve around a particular guru or group of 'in' people, with which again I am unhappy. Something that I was asked to do and which I did adopt and persist with, was the setting aside of a quiet time at 11 a.m. each day, during which I practised a simple form of meditation.

As the spring merged into summer, hardly an evening passed without its time with the pendulum and chart. No longer did I need to write down each word as it was spelled, for the pendulum darted, almost just hinting at letters. 'Conversation' became very rapid - so much so that a time was reached when I really knew what was going to be said in advance of the spelling, and I was being well prepared for the events of an exceedingly significant day.

My 11 am sitting place was in an upstairs room looking north east to the nearby mountain tops - Scafell, Great Gable, Yewbarrow and others. I settled into my chair, easing my neck onto the high wingback, and rolled my head gently from side to side to smooth out any tensions, and then something happened that was so dramatic and far-reaching, and yet, paradoxically, was totally devoid of drama. A 'presence' that I could not see, moved from the space in front of me, *into* me, and immediately my mind was charged with another 'voice' or provoker of thoughts, thoughts over which, then, I had no control, and which were not initiated by me. In my head began conversation as between two separate people, one of whom was me.

I began to 'hear voices'.

That same evening, I settled with the pendulum and, as I held it over the chart, it started to whirl around rapidly and horizontally at its fullest extent, faster and faster, and continued whirling for several minutes. When it finally stopped and settled it spelled out "**we've won we've won**". Who had won and what had been won, only time will reveal.

I have never used the pendulum from that day to this; it simply does not respond!

The fact that I was not wary or apprehensive about the events that were taking place may surprise some, but it can be explained by the reasoning that such limited contacts as I had had with spiritualism had always been of a benevolent nature, and indicated a caring practice. As an example let me quote an incident that occurred in 1950 in my home in South Wales very shortly before leaving to take up work here in Cumbria.

Quite by chance, we had a visit from the medium who presided at the meetings held at the home of one of my aunts. After chatting for a while he went into trance and I was spoken to. Comment was made concerning a proprietary medicine that I was then using to counter a sinus problem. I was advised to stop taking it and instead to use Morton's 'Nervatogen'. When we obtained some it turned out to be an herbal tincture that had the most benign and relaxing effect. My sinuses cleared, and I subsequently took the drops

whenever needed for other reasons until all the bottles that my mother had bought were exhausted. After a number of years, I tried to obtain a further supply, but it was no longer available.

Essentially, I believed that the named individuals had previously existed, and now, in spirit form, had access into me and my mind. Thus, when a further contact was made who was alleged to be my late father, I had no reason to doubt it.

Many of the conversations were about very practical matters. My concerns regarding the desolation that would follow nuclear war, or a returning ice age, were developed, and I was encouraged to believe that there could be survivors in such quiet places as that in which I live. It was suggested that I should learn as much as I could about basic survival techniques that would be needed if I survived, or which, if I died, I would be able to pass by inspiration to such survivors as there were and to their descendants. This seemed all the more logical as I began to appreciate that already, worldwide, there were individuals and small groups living remotely and learning and practising these skills; indeed, I came to know of one such man living not ten miles from me! Myself, I was encouraged to acquire a lurcher pup from a neighbour's litter in order to learn the skills of training a hunting dog and using it to obtain food. Many other topics were introduced for study - an activity in which I found no hardship, for I had long been active in many outdoor pursuits such as fishing and wildfowling.

As well as my physical survival, or the survival of knowledge with me, much thought was being engineered concerning my spiritual survival. My exploration of Buddhism was short lived; nevertheless, there was strong argument that I should become morally impeccable, but that I should not choose a philosophy or religious affiliation because it allowed a degree of moral latitude. It was put to me that as, at an earlier time, I had elected to be a Catholic, I should 'return to the fold', or, if not, then my rejection should be for sound reasons of belief, and not because I was looking for a path with less exacting moral standards.

I was encouraged to adopt a sincere prayer life and spent long periods in prayer each night. More and more the theme of the 'Second Coming' of Jesus was developed, and then, quite bluntly, it was put to me that He would return in a more mature person than was generally expected, and that I was a suitable candidate within whom He could manifest Himself. I cannot remember exactly how I declined such an offer that, it must be thought, no one could refuse. I do remember that I declared that I was too much of a coward to be able to accept such a high profile role.

Equally with the encouragement to be morally and spiritually 'clean', I was being urged to be most punctilious in my

physical cleanliness. My underwear and socks I washed each night, and daily clean clothes became the norm, while bodily I entered another dimension. As an example I was encouraged to wash my anus each time I defecated, following, allegedly, Middle Eastern and Oriental practice. I was even schooled in how to be able to do this in a public loo. There was not an aspect of my life and thought that was free from scrutiny, for I was even counselled against a normally accepted practice that had developed in my heterosexual love life!

By a sequence of happenings that are too complex to relate, the spirit of a young (twenty-ish) woman was introduced into my 'coterie'. Her physical presence in me was most noticeable in ways which can only be experienced and not described. It was particularly apparent when any music was being played. I normally respond to dance rhythms with movement, having always enjoyed dancing. Now the 'feeling' of the movement became subtly different - feminine and sensuous.

Little by little, I was being accustomed to what some might find difficult to accept, namely the actuality of spiritual-physical contact. Thus, when I adopted my usual late-evening stance, leaning against the rail of my Rayburn cooker in the normal bum-warming posture and musing before going to bed, it seemed to come as no surprise when my head was moved by external influence: gently, from side to side, back and forth, easing tension out of my neck. Each day the interventions became more positive and, ultimately, I stood away from the cooker. 'Hands' pressed on my shoulders and I was 'eased' into a back-bend posture, where I was held for as long as I could tolerate it. When I stood up, I was eased into a forward bend as far as, and for as long as I was able to bend. Subsequently every evening I went through this routine, being bent further and held longer as time went on. My thigh and abdominal muscles became rock hard, my breathing improved, and, coupled with the dietary advice that I had been given and followed, I became as fit and healthily slim as I had been for a long time.

Again and again I have to emphasise that all that was happening I saw as being entirely benevolent, and I was a willing participant.

The culmination of this 'body tuning' came one evening and without preliminaries. My body began to be manipulated as if by two skilled chiropractors. I was then fifty-five and my frame had acquired its share of the residue of past accidents and strains - playing rugby, being mined at sea, riding horses, plus all the rest that can be classed as fair wear and tear. Over the course of that evening and the one that followed, every one of the affected areas was worked on with consummate skill. I was stretched and manipulated as must be someone on the rack, but while it was happening, in the words of the Scottish Bard, McGonagle, "He felt no pain". Somehow my pain

centre was inhibited, although there were body reactions which seemed to indicate that a natural response was taking place - towards the end of the second session I felt as if I was going to faint, while at the same time my feet were performing a little 'drumming' dance.

Yes, I felt no pain while it was happening, but as soon as it stopped my whole body screamed in agony. I literally climbed the stairs on my hands and knees, and had to take an analgesic to be able to sleep. On the morning of the third day, I was carrying a bale of hay to the stable adjoining my house when I had to put it down. It was large and was bearing against a knee that for some time had troubled me intermittently by filling with fluid. Still very much aware of the two previous evenings, I looked up and said in my mind, "You have forgotten my knee". That night I woke in bed to find the knee being worked on 'ethereally', and happily, it has never bothered me again in over twenty years.

Life carried on in the same general vein for some little time, though it could not be said that it continued 'as normal'! There was an episode of automatic writing that recorded nothing of importance, and the presence of the young woman became almost tangible, to the extent that I found myself reaching for a hand when about to cross the street.

It was an extremely wet autumn, and the work of keeping a horse stabled at night was becoming very tedious. Gradually, over this and other activities, I found myself being 'needled'. Criticisms began to invade the previously harmonious exchanges. It is, indeed, very hard, in retrospect, to recreate those particular days, and to understand how it became possible for me to be dominated by an altogether different group (or the same group acting differently). Living alone, enveloped in a foul early winter, everything outside soaking and muddy, it was fast heading for a 'bleak midwinter'. Certainly, and principally, the lack of association and the inability to put the events in perspective and discuss them with people living more varied lives completed the isolation. It was thus that I found myself being alternated in my mind between two groups - the one needling and critical, the other supportive and encouraging. (I discuss the strategies and ploys used to dominate and torment people later).

The two areas of attack were the religious practices and the horse. It is quite easy for religion to be used as a source of criticism and torment. Once one has undertaken to engage in intense practices and a highly moral life, the possibilities of being accused of backsliding and lack of devotion or compliance are endless, and need not be enlarged upon.

The way that the horse was used was interesting and quite unique. In Britain, the horse has a special place allegedly going back into early culture and worship. The linkage with the past nature/horse

devotion was now being quoted at me as predating any modern religion, and which, without fail, should govern *my* treatment and care of my mare Bokhara. In reality, my care was very good, as my friends commented when later they had to take over, but because the newly introduced concepts of 'the old ways' were being cited, it was being demanded that the mare should be treated with an almost *religious* devotion, and that my management of her should be impeccable. This attitude was brought home forcibly to me in a way that, looking back, is reminiscent of attitudes and incidents from some of Grimm's Fairy Tales. If my mucking-out and remaking the bedding were of a high order, then the barrow load of dung and straw was as light as could be and was whisked along as if I had a host of helpers. If, however, I was skimpy in my work, it seemed that the barrow was filled with lead and that its progress was being actively resisted and my work impeded.

When one's family has fragmented, and there are no longer children at home around whom the celebrations of Christmas normally revolve, the ways in which it is observed away from the religious context are normally somewhat contrived. Thus, I found myself 'contriving' a merry Christmas but being pulled in several possible directions; no one else was actively contributing but all were relying upon me to 'provide'. My lack of commitment must have showed, for one by one the others found alternatives.

I am writing this over twenty years later. The sun is shining, the trees that were bare then are full of leaf and birds, the field that contained my mare is rich in grass awaiting mowing for hay and not the sea of mud and icy rime that it was then, and the mountains are hazy and cloud-shadowed not stark and snow topped. In spite of that, as I look out towards the mountains I have only to let my eyes go out of focus, and I can 'see' the reality from all those years ago, and even though I have pages of notes that I made soon afterwards, I do not need them, for every detail is as real as it was then, but now, fortunately, without the terror and torment that were building up. It may be wondered why I did not share with others at the time what I was experiencing, and ask for help. All I can say is that, exactly as I found later when I did need real help, - it is virtually *impossible* to convey or even hint at the reality of these events, just as many people, in broad daylight, cannot relate the torment and reality that were theirs at three o'clock earlier that morning.

Many times over these intervening years, I have retold my story to a variety of people in a variety of situations. What has remained with me after these various tellings has been the fact that almost no one has returned to the subject, asked supplementary questions, or followed through with any analysis, except for those in

two groups. The first is the group of people who have had deep spiritual experiences of their own - they recognise and accept all that I say, and then there is nothing more *to* say, but only to empathise, with the understanding that can only come with shared personal experience. The second group is composed of one individual, one of the several Rogers amongst my friends. He used to come to stay for a few days at a time to talk and derive the healing that the house and environment provide. On one occasion, he harked back to his previous visit and what he had discerned within me, namely my anger, albeit unexpressed. In an effort to help Roger from insights derived from my own experience, I had recounted in detail all that I am writing in this and the next two sections. *His* response was to begin to analyse *me* to *myself*! He was very much 'into' Jung, and all the Jungian jargon came pouring out in the convoluted analysis of which only he amongst my friends was capable. In the 'let me be your counsellor' role in which I found myself, I could not let my anger manifest itself, but internally I was seething, and it must have showed; with his perception of it, I was able to take off the string that had been tying down the safety valve, and *express* myself.

Which really is me getting to the point of saying to you that if you are reading in a state of total disbelief or with the intention of 'doing a Roger' on me, there doesn't seem to be much point in your reading any further. What I am writing does not *allow* of any interpretation. It all *happened*, and in the manner and ways that I am describing. If you are reading with the intent of *using* what I am writing for the benefit of others, well 'welcome', be my friend; while I live I'll talk with you, enlarge, tell you all that you want to know. But now, stay with the narrative - things are getting *really* serious!

The final departure occurred three days before Christmas Day itself, a Saturday, and as I drove my last remaining visitor to the station yet more strange things began to happen. Making my way along narrow roads, I found my driving was being interfered with - at times my vision clouded spontaneously and I had to stop; on some corners I was forced to mis-steer and likewise had to stop to avoid crashing. At the station - well, you may have guessed - Saturday service; the next train was not the next train, but the one after that.

When I finally got home it was mid-evening, very dark, very cold, very damp, and there was still Bokhara to be seen to. First, I had to muck-out her loosebox, and here again I encountered the interference or help with the wheelbarrow. Looking back, I am reminded of one occasion when I was about thirteen. I had gone fishing in a small trout river several miles from my home, cycling there with my rod tied to the crossbar of the bike. When I reached the river, I had to leave the road and push the bike over some terrain resembling a links golf course. I had been joined by some lads whom I

knew by sight, who lived locally and were about a year or two older. They helped me negotiate my bike over a railway line that I had to cross, and then I started to fish. I had hoped that they would go on their way, but no chance, and after a while, they got bored and started interfering with everything and behaving provocatively. Fishing was pointless and I packed up and decided to head across the mixed grass and sand to where it was possible that my parents had gone for a drive. My tormentors I had hoped to leave behind; some hope! They pushed against me, pushed against the bike, grabbed it from behind and stopped me from going forward, until, in desperation, I lashed out with my rod that I was carrying. That did it. I was set upon, harried and punched to the ground, continuing while I was lying there unable further to defend myself against the onslaught. Finally, they had their fill and left me a sobbing heap on the sand. It is amazing how the detail has come back, and how exactly it matches the interference of those harrying 'imps' of the wheelbarrow, and the reactions that they provoked in me and me in them.

Whatever, I finally got Bokhara installed and dried and fed, in the midst of what varied thoughts I cannot remember, although I have no doubt that I was being forced to concentrate upon aspects of my moral life, and my fitness for a life of improving spirituality. Let me again emphasise, there was nothing in my moral life, past or present, with which I could reproach myself to any significant extent, but somehow, everything was trawled, examined, and even the most minor peccadillo could, in my then state of mind, be made to seem to be an enormous 'sin'. Gradually, the whole thrust of the 'catechism' and analysis wound around the 'Christmas story', and subtly, and by allusion, around all past relationships with my parents. Any misunderstandings, any 'wish lists', were extracted within the 'Holy Family' context, as if my parents were near at hand and conscious of all that was transpiring. Yet again, the wheel turned and there was being stoked a feeling that I should go to the local church on Christmas Eve, but only to stand outside, not being fit to proceed to join the 'good' people inside. It all sounds so ludicrous as I write it down, and I do so solely to show how ones sense of proportion could be made to be so distorted as to accept such dominance as reality.

What next I remember, is going into the storeroom side of the stable to get some hay to fill the manger. Before I could start to cut the strings of the bale, I found myself forced down onto it on my knees, and made to stare downwards, but it was not to look at the assorted feed bags and twine that I would have expected to see. No, I looked into a void, but not a void. Picture the most *drear, cold* landscape of your imagination. I was in a narrow steep-sided valley, and it was *grey*, and *cold*. A white, snow covered landscape has some charm, but not this that I saw. The wind blown, snow blown terrain and scree was so grey and lifeless; not a plant grew, not a creature

moved, not a bird flew, and it was soundless. And on my back was a great weight of ice, as if the whole of a glacier lay there, bearing me down. I was so *utterly* cold and alone, and I knew inside me that this could go on and on and on for ever. But in spite of that, I could muster the shadow of a wry smile, for I knew that this could in fact be a state that deliberately I had chosen, for, in essence, I was being shown what Hell could be. What I was seeing and feeling would be the equivalent of having once known and experienced the warmth of Divine love, and then of having deliberately rejected it, given it a derisive gesture, in full knowledge of what I was doing, and the remembrance of what I had lost by my rejection would be with me for eternity with no chance of recall.

I have no knowledge of how long my 'vision' lasted, though lasted it did sufficiently to have stayed with me unabated for over twenty years. Nevertheless, gradually the warmth returned and I was eased to my feet as my benumbed knees regained their function, and so, standing comfortably again, I turned and looked out over the half stable door. The clouds had cleared, and the sky was full of stars. So full of stars. And the reality of Christmas, and the *unqualified* unique love that it had brought with it into the world, swept over me.

It is impossible, and I will not even try to convey to you all of the sensations and reactions and emotions that engulfed me during this and the next day. Even now, when considering some of them, I only take a sideways look with half an eye, and I marvel that I could have become and been so embroiled in a situation that emotionally took me from feelings of deep and abiding love and commitment, to those of absolute despair and terror. I know and understand more now having lived with and thought much about the consequences, but *then*, then much was so incomprehensible, and yet it was all interwoven with the everyday functions of making meals, making the bed, doing what had to be done.

And so I did what had to be done during the following morning, a Sunday, and two days before Christmas Day. Whatever I did, it was completed by noon, and experiencing a total urge to escape from everything, I went to bed. But escape I did not. What a fertile ground is the mind; what a source of memory; memory that can be stirred and trawled by skilled spiritual inquisitors. The strange thing is, on reflection, that I did not question the *right* of this particular inquisitor who dominated the 'examination', for that is indeed, what had developed. And how strange it is, and awesome, to realise that *everything* is already known - everything that I had ever thought, had done was accessible - or was skilfully extracted. What a catechism followed! And all set by reflection within the Easter 'story'. For three hours I stayed, wide awake - held enthralled and being forced to confront *everything*.

It was only by conscious reflection sometime afterwards that I realised that I was being purged, stripped of any 'handholds' in my mind by means of which my composure or credibility could be undermined - just as a Greek wrestler of Classical times would oil his body and remove all hair to deprive any opponent of an anchorage for his grip. I am sorry that I cannot share with you what was being awakened within me - not awakened then for I was exhausted; the core of my being lay like a skinned animal and I was *sore* inside. The awakening came with time - the realisation of the *actuality* of the fundamental message and essence of the Christian faith, and the *reality* and individuality of the Holy Family. It is not that I do not *want* to share what I came to experience and know - I just find it impossible. To return to an earlier analogy - experiencing the summit of Mount Everest. One could go there with all of the sophisticated video and sound recording gear and give a detailed commentary, but never ever bring back one's own inner spellbinding thrill of experience, and of knowledge gained.

Always it is only by analogy that it is possible to convey the wonderment and awesomeness of an experience, and analysis is often banal. Yet, on another plane of understanding, it can induce further appreciation. Take the actual Everest. We know that what is now the summit was once at the bottom of the sea, and that the huge forces of tectonic plate movement have thrust it up to its incredible height. Likewise, by analogy, it might be said that Jesus has appeared as a pinnacle thrust upwards by the turmoil and pressure of human spiritual developmental forces, to become a focus and goal that the aspirant soul seeks. Opposing the height of the mountain is a deep core descending far below the Tibetan plateau which, in my analogy, reflects the core of evil influence and aspiration that the perceptive will know actually exists, and is allowed to flourish.

But Everest is composed of a type of rock that can be found in many places all over the planet, and likewise Jesus was/is human and, equally, can be found anywhere that he is sought. This was a reality that I found with the passing months, as I did with the other members of the Holy Family, each in their own role. The reality and its effect upon me will emerge as my narrative progresses - as has my experience and understanding of the opposing deep root core of evil which, had I but known, I was to experience in full measure, and soon.

Vulnerable and open to any influence, I undertook the chores of horse and stable management with all of the intrusive domination at its most intense. Detail is pointless, sufficient to say that I was threatened, and accepted and believed the threats of what would transpire if I attempted any of the escape routes open to me. If I was to take the car, I would be so influenced in my driving as to

swerve and cause an accident killing someone. If I set out on foot, I would find myself run down by someone else who had been forced to swerve. If, nevertheless, I did set out in the car to either of two possible refuges and arrived without accident, in each there were young girls and I was threatened that I would be found committing some sort of sexual assault. *And so much more.*

In spite of it all, I completed my stable work and went indoors, very bemused and not knowing how or where to seek help. How, or to whom, is it possible to convey the reality of what, after all, was unseen, and in my mind and body? Yet, for me, the physical presences that invaded me were oh so very real and potent. By a process and sequence that I cannot now recall, I was nevertheless encouraged to clean myself thoroughly and get into completely clean clothes - I can see myself now, white shirt, navy seaman's jersey, strong riding breeches and stockings, and slippers. The kitchen has undergone some significant changes since that night. The decor is vastly different, and the Rayburn cooker has gone, replaced by some gas hobs of my own design. The changes have been made for essentially practical and aesthetic reasons, but, withal, they have achieved a sort of exorcism of that evening. Then, the Rayburn was a place of refuge, an anchor.

I think that, possibly unconsciously, people choose this type of cooker for the ever-present comfort that it can bring - not just its warmth, but the focus and stability. But my stability was not to last for long. Back to the brothers Grimm, and the teasing tormenting imps, hobgoblins. Little puffs of air started to be blown on my face and head from all directions. Tugs and pushes from all around caused me to let go of my 'anchor', and I headed for the phone. I cannot remember who I was going to ring, but as I attempted to do so the dial achieved a life of its own and whirred randomly and tormenting. I stood, temporarily defeated, one hand on the phone shelf, the other on a high backed chair, and then found my head nodding up and down. You will perhaps have seen a braying donkey doing just that between brays. Well I became that donkey - *inside* the donkey, looking out through its eyes in a world of heavy loads and thoughtless beatings. Now, I knew that it was *me* within the donkey, but I had absolutely no way of letting anyone know, nor of getting out - and this could be another form of hell, I realised.

Then I was back in the kitchen. At one stage, I remember winding my wristwatch and seeing the hands, as I tried to set them, whirling round and round at their own volition, as had the phone dial. Next, totally trapped, I paced up and down, back and forth - you will also perhaps have seen polar bears in the zoo mindlessly to-ing and fro-ing on the terraces of their enclosure. This time *I* was the polar bear. I was inside the bear looking out through its eyes. I could look down the terraces at the deep pool and the wall and the people

beyond, and, as with the donkey, I knew all, and again realised that this also could be a view of hell.

I cannot now put a time scale on any of this, and I know that my writing is shortening the span. If I were writing a 'lost weekend' type of novel, I would enlarge and draw out every nuance of horror, for horror there was aplenty. In actual fact, it is all that I can do to recall objectively, and I only do so in order to inform, so that everything in its context leads to a logical understanding - that is if you are prepared to believe the actuality of what I am writing. If you are not, why, I thought that we had parted company long ago.

Somehow, and I cannot remember how or when in the sequence, I rang my GP friend Sandy. He, as I found out later, had been alerted by another friend who had suspected that all was not well, and, although I could hear the sound of a pre-Christmas party in the background, he promised to come at once. And so he did.

I let him in, but cannot recall what, if anything, I was able to tell him of my recent torment. The next that I remember is being seated in an armchair, while Sandy stood beside a small table to my left. He had longish side-burns and wore glasses that had fine gold frames; his bag was reminiscent of a Gladstone bag - and all of this conspired to make him look like a doctor from many years ago. He stood there filling a syringe, and I am sure that I was trying to talk to him, but I was aware of no response - and I could see myself, held in a time-warp, for ever trying to communicate with Sandy while he just stood, and could not hear my anguished calls. And this was another potential hell. It was odd, all these 'visions' of possible hells, for I have never ever thought about hell as a concept, nor as a possible reality - whenever I had had cause to think analytically about any spiritual belief or practice, I had always looked for the positive, the buoyant, never the downside. So this was new territory for me - and yet more was to come.

Suddenly, yet again I wasn't there; instead there were disturbing, tormenting voices - "Let's get him! What does he fear most? Hanging - yes, let's hang him" - and there I was, standing on a gallows, ready for the drop, staring down into eager, gloating faces, terror in my every fibre. "What is bliss?" - "Yes, Pentathol, that's it", and I was floating. "What does he fear more than hanging? Yes, beheading" - and the scene changed to the headsman - then back again to bliss. Once again back to terror and the prospect of being impaled, and then back to bliss. Finally, the prospect was of being frozen to death in some dark, alien landscape... Then I opened my eyes, only to look down at my arm and saw blood down the forearm. "Oh shit", I thought, "I've tried to commit suicide". In reality, Sandy had had difficulty in locating a suitable vein and there had been a dribble of blood. Finally, tranquillity arrived and I sat chatting with him, the

terrors subsiding. He wanted me to go in to the nearby cottage hospital, and I willingly agreed, and so, next, we were involved in practicalities. What did the horse need? Where were clean nightclothes? How do you turn the Rayburn off? How do I contact your brother, daughter? Who do you think will help look after the horse? Then the ambulance arrived and soon I was ferried off to the cosiness and security of a small room that I shared with a ninety-year-old rabbit catcher from a small hamlet near my own.

Living as I do in a fairly unsophisticated area well off the mainstream, it is not surprising that one's activities embrace a range of people who keep popping up in other guises. Thus, here was the nurse whom I previously had met in a violently mauve leotard, moulded to her every ample curve, in a yoga class. Then there was Dorothy, Bob's daughter-in-law, who lives not far from my home. Thus word got to Bob, and here he was visiting me and having good crack with the rabbit catcher, whom he had known for many a year. This was Christmas Eve, and a day mostly in bed, a bath and company having restored some equanimity. My daughter came with some presents, and life was becoming rounded again. Christmas Day, and well-decorated Dorothy and her colleague were in the room with a song and a dance and breakfast on a tray, with presents that they had acquired and wrapped for us. And thus there began for me a process of enlightenment, a process that has continued without cease to this very day.

During my stay in the little hospital, attached as it is to a retirement home, and during the events that followed over the Christmas and New Year period, I met at first hand the people who *care*. They don't figure in the pop-charts; their obituaries never make the national media; most don't figure in the New Year's Honours lists - in fact they get very little recognition at all, and most would probably get a little embarrassed if you went out of your way to praise or thank them. How about the Salvation Army musicians who brought carols and joy; the volunteers who had time and something for the older people in the next door home, many in temporary residence over Christmas, as their families had respite and a chance to visit elsewhere; the clergy of the different denominations; the man with the accordion who played while we danced? And many more.

Thus I danced my way to an appearance of normality, and as the beds were allocated by medical practices for their own emergencies, Sandy wanted his for the sorts of emergency that the time of the year frequently generate. And so it was, eventually, that arrangements were made for my departure and transport home on, as I remember, the day after Boxing Day, the 27th of December. I had not, in fact, been thinking very clearly, and had not forewarned my daughter, who had my house key, of what was happening. Thus it was

that I found myself set down by the ambulance in my slippers at the minor road junction adjacent to my house – set down into a light powdering of snow. "Woe, woe, thrice woe" he cried! Cursing myself for a fool, I went around to the back of the house, broke a window in a small conservatory, and managed to get into the house.

I will not labour you with the tedium of restoring warmth, rooting out food, and of getting myself organised, all with a mind that was again under attack. One event, however, deserves mention. I still had my practice of praying by my bed, and the next night I was thus engaged. I often held a bible as a focus and possibly to read a little, and I had not been on my knees for very long when the book itself was being 'attacked'. I found myself wrestling to hold on to it, while at the same time my head was being plagued by a horde of physical knocks and tugs - for how long, I am not sure. While this was happening, or just afterwards, it was put into my mind that this was 28th December, the Feast of the Holy Innocents, the day dedicated to the remembrance of the infants who had been murdered by Herod in his attempts to slay the infant Christ. Far from being honoured by the fact that their lives had ended so that, effectively, Christ could survive, frankly, they were not best pleased. Thus, on this day dedicated to their memory and honour, so I was told, they went world-wide creating as much havoc as they could, joined, one suspects, by the spirits of *all* the infants and young who are slaughtered or aborted for the sake of 'expediency'. Whatever the truth of this, I know for sure that I had not been in the least aware that this was, in fact, Holy Innocents day.

And so it came to pass that on the next day I spoke again to Sandy, and managed to put something into words to Peter and Tricci saying, as I remember, "I have more problems than I can cope with". Again, the wheels of caring started turning, and arrangements were made. During this time and that which followed, Klaus and Brenda had taken over the care of the horse and cats, and eased my mind of many problems, though, throughout, I was never able to convey even an inkling of what was besetting my mind, nor give adequate thanks for all the help that I received. Eventually, seeking refuge, I was taken by a volunteer driver, and delivered to the familiar scene of the psychiatric ward of the main local hospital, on Saturday evening, the Saturday between Christmas and New Years Eve, 29th December 1979, when the ward would probably have been expecting a variety of admissions, many the product of the festivities and the season.

On arrival, I was interviewed by the duty Consultant Psychiatrist. I cannot remember what I said to him, and I certainly did not know how he had been primed by Sandy. I know that I tried to describe some of what had happened to me - with what success I have no way of knowing, but, on a busy Saturday evening, with the bustle of the season and other new admissions, it was of necessity not a long interview.

I was allocated a fairly stark room - probably one used for all emergency admissions, some of whom would be the worse for drink or drugs. I was free to mix generally, but in that room when I went to bed, the sense of isolation and of being spied upon was intense. In the wall opposite my bed, was what remained of a chrome bell push, and in my state of mind, I feared that this was a viewing channel through which my behaviour could be studied. My feelings of isolation and persecution became almost unbearable.

Fortunately, after two nights, I was placed in an open ward with about seven beds, and my composure gradually began to return - very slowly at first as I started to realise that I was not being spied on, and then more positively as I began to observe and talk to my fellow inmates. I also had a second interview with the psychiatrist that I found difficult to respond to, the principal reason being that he was accompanied by a male nurse. Had he been alone, I am sure that my story would have flowed, but, for whatever reason, I simply could not talk about voice hearing and the recent terrors, and went along with the suggestion that I was suffering from a recurrence of my previous depression. And so, for the rest of the week I found myself being 'infused' with an anti-depressant via an intravenous drip. As I was not suffering from depression, it had no apparent effect, except to stabilise my bowels, which had become disturbed. Notwithstanding that, I appreciated greatly the care and concern with which I was being treated.

The care and concern extended outside the hospital to my friends, and soon I was being visited and supplied with items that I had not even begun to think about in my sudden departure from home. One friend in particular, Val, who had been my secretary at work, and who, because of a long-standing problem, was a frequent inhabitant of hospital respiratory wards, provided the practicalities of 10p pieces for the phone, writing materials and tissues. The feeling of 'normalness' induced by these everyday necessities, her thoughtfulness and concern and the similar responses of other friends, contributed greatly to the rebuilding of my self confidence and assurance, which was doubly strengthened by the arrival from London of my brother. His practical application was inspirational. Remembering that this was early January, he had driven well over 300 miles to arrive at a home that was bitterly cold and not as salubrious as it might have been. My brother cleaned the kitchen, cooked a good meal, discussed my affairs at the hospital and extricated me for the first weekend.

Although my financial affairs were essentially in good order, obsessive thoughts about such things as tax matters were being forced into my mind, and a whole ambience of anxiety was being engendered around me. Fortunately, again, my brother took

everything in hand and, in a comparatively short time, had the imagined problems examined and proved them to be non-existent.

Back in hospital for a second week, I was able to see more clearly and assess the thoughts that had begun to emerge during the first week, and to understand why I found myself to be so alien within my surroundings. I found that I was able mentally to detach myself from these surroundings and the reason why I was within them, and to look objectively at some of the others with whom I was sharing them. In time, I saw a pattern of individuals who just could not cope with the season 'of good will' and to whom it had, in fact, become a burden. There was, for example, the middle-aged bachelor, still living with his parents who had become alienated and depressed by other people's apparent enjoyment; the younger man, whose brother I knew, who immediately previously had been seeking spiritual 'enlightenment' at several isolated monasteries, and who had somehow 'lost it' in his own spiritual isolation at Christmas; the Evangelical preacher with a drink problem who found Christmas overwhelming, who, nevertheless, was able to make his mark with gentle 'preaching' to the young isolated man. It turned out that I was learning, as I had been in the cottage hospital, something of the nature of this particular time of the year, this particular season of celebration. I was learning of different peoples' inability to cope, and also was seeing the wealth of 'caring potential' that exists. From all of which, and over the intervening years, there has come my own determination to try to understand, and to be part of that same 'caring potential'.

All of my 'insight and understanding' lay yet in the future. In the sequence of events, I had encountered the Consultant Psychiatrist (MC) of my previous 'incarceration' and who agreed to let me transfer to his care. I was able to tell him that my difficulties were psychic rather than psychiatric, upon which he stopped the intravenous medication and just left me to take stock. The next weekend saw me being driven home by some good friends and starting to cope again, returning to the hospital solely to sign myself off. When I say 'cope', the word seems inadequate in the context of an entirely new ambience that began to be created around me, and seemingly within me. At all stages in writing this account, I am meeting many problems of communication; not with the mechanics of communication, but in finding suitable words with which to convey the reality of experiences that are not part of the everyday life of the majority of those who will read my work. Thus, and for example, how can I describe to you the exact nature and function of a wordless communication through which I was encouraged to achieve, and shown the means of achieving, goals for which my previous life had not prepared me?

It was not to be plain sailing. Once the door to the body and mind has been opened, it is most difficult, if not impossible, to close it again. One can learn or devise techniques to control access,

but one is dealing with immense subtlety and cunning. There is, however, the great consolation that the same routes, the same channels are available to, and can be used by, sources of spiritual help and 'goodness'. How to recognise each for what it is, minimise the potential harm, accept, and enhance what is good and profitable, is the subject of the chapters that follow.

Before I move on, I reflect on what I have written, and particularly on the three original 'characters' that were first on the scene. Of these, 'Ibn Ubar' is the one who has left the greatest impression. Following an interest that has nothing to do with the foregoing but more to my study of exploration and ancient routes, I found my thoughts and reading being focused upon the lost city of Ubar (or Iram, as it is referred to in the Koran). Long sought by explorers such as the legendary T.E.Lawrence (of Arabia, fame), it had eluded discovery until an American, Nicholas Clapp, had the brilliant idea of having taken from space-shuttle and satellite, visual and ground-penetrating radar photographs of the area of Oman where legend had it that Ubar was located. The city had allegedly been the centre for distribution of the frankincense that is produced in the area, and was fabled far and wide for its beauty and lavish water supply, and for its verdant surroundings. Until one day it, or a large part of it, collapsed into the ground, and the area was reclaimed by the desert.

The satellite photographs showed faint outlines of the arrow-straight caravan routes from times long gone, routes that converged on a place that an expedition later revealed as, indeed, the lost city of Ubar, called by some the Atlantis of the Sands. Built over a huge limestone cavern, the source of its abundant water supply, the city had fallen into the hole created when the cavern roof collapsed. Thus it was destroyed, and not by an angry God, as subsequent legend would have it. Just across the room as I write is a copy of Clapp's book *The Road to Ubar*, which makes fascinating reading. Now there are those who would make a big thing of the coincidence of the two 'Ubars'. As for me, well....