

Institute for Conscious Evolution and Human Development

Lesson Number ES001

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THE ETERNAL SEARCH FOR GOD©

Friends, at the present moment of time each one is paused in time and space, standing upon familiar stones—stones forming the bedrock of a personal pathway traveled mechanically since physical birth. Immediately ahead, the path bifurcates—each separate segment leading onto a different and currently unknown future. Which path will you choose? Will you step boldly and confidently onto the path less familiar? Unfamiliar, though necessary if you are to experience the beginnings of a new segment of human evolution and a new direction of Work. A path demanding from you a thorough and merciless reevaluation of your previous life and goals? Or, will you choose to continue as always? You must choose your future path! Indecision is a choice—a choice of default to the path of mundane existence.

This first lesson is provided so to help clarify the nature of the choice you have asked to be given. I call this bifurcation point in the life of a man or woman, the moment when a person commits to THE ETERNAL SEARCH FOR GOD; a subject of special interest to every student in the great Work. After all, the purpose of consciously traveling the pathway to immortality and the formation of a soul, or higher being body, is to uncover an avenue for escaping from our worldly prison and reuniting with the One Super-Substantial Source responsible for creating and maintaining not only our Ray of Creation, our Universe, but all other Rays. In order to discuss this goal in a meaningful manner, it is necessary to understand the significance of each word contained within the title of this discourse. Therefore, I am going to ask each of you to consider what each word means. Try to see what you really know about each of these words; see what sort of life experiences are brought to mind when you contemplate each word. Don't limit your

understanding to definitions others have told you or you have simply read in a reference book; for you can only claim right understanding after expending conscious effort; in other words, there are no free lunches in the Cosmic.

Let me give you an example of what I am suggesting. Suppose we take the subject of the influence of the Sun in our life. For myself, an influence is a motivating force which induces me to think, feel and behave in a certain way. An influence may be external or internal, I may or may not have much control over it or my response to it. Fortunately, I realize that I do not have to automatically be controlled by these influences, I can learn how to exhibit choice, learn when and when not to respond to a particular influence. I have learned that I am not, and can not be, the originating cause of influences, for influences are simply the flow of energies controlling the probabilities of certain actions coming to life in God's Universe. All actions come from God because God is the Sole Creator. All I can do is to consciously apply will so to redirect some of these energies contained within this wonderful Creation so to aid in the fulfillment of God's Hidden Plans.

Second, what do I know about the Sun. What have I learned through my own efforts and experiences? One thing I know is that the Sun is the center of our Solar System and serves as our source of light and life. I know that the earth revolves around the Sun because I perceive the cycles of the seasons. The Sun provides warmth to the earth so that water can exist as a liquid; for it was in liquid water that life first began and it is liquid water which maintains the health of a living cell. I know this because I have studied the fossils left by early life forms. I know that the mummified remains of the Pharaohs are dry and lifeless. The Sun bathes the earth in visible light which is utilized as the energy source for plants producing carbohydrates and oxygen by photosynthesis. I know that plant carbohydrates and oxygen are necessary for metabolism to occur in plants and animals. I know that all cells must have the capacity for metabolism to be

considered alive since plants die in the dark and I lose weight when I don't eat enough. I know that metabolism of organic compounds produces energy for movement, reproduction and mental activity. I know that mental activity eventually leads to more complex forms of consciousness and that advancing consciousness and understanding will be the bridge allowing me to return to my God and even Beyond. I know that the Sun is the source of light and life for our world and that experiencing light and life teaches us love. Therefore, the Sun is our closest representative of the Light, Life and Love of God Who is the real Source.

I trust each of you is beginning to understand what I am asking you to do? Important questions to ask yourself in such situations are: What do I already know about this word or concept? What is my ordinary understanding of it? In what connection have I heard it used before. How has it affected me? What do I want to find out about it?

Let us begin to see what we understand about the expression--*the eternal search*.

To begin, I am going to ask you to try and separate yourself from what you have heard or been taught concerning eternity, the act of searching and God; ask yourself what kinds of internal images actually come to mind from your own being when you use these words or when you hear them used.

For me, *the eternal* represents something which exists outside the ordinary boundaries of Time. Eternal means forever--without a beginning or an end. Eternal is something that is perpetual. The word eternal comes from the root word Eternity. Before I can understand the eternal, I must understand Time. But since Time and Eternity seem exclusive of each other, I know that Eternity exists in a dimension perpendicular to the flow of Time.

From speaking with other persons, I understand them to believe that Time represents a measure of the directional flow of events occurring in a particular Space. This flow is perceived as being directional as the result of causality operating in the Past;

that is, events which have occurred before the current moment of mind activity are thought to have lead to the events of the Present. This chain of causality seems to project back into the very beginnings of Creation and generates the notion of the Future, that is, the expectation that a novel set of events will manifest. Such persons firmly accept the law of cause and effect; and if introspective, will spend much time trying to relate Future effects to Past causes.

An analogy might be helpful. Try curling the fingers of both hands into your palms so to make two tunnels through which you can see light. Place your hands so that the two tunnels are aligned in sequence and hold both hands up to either your right or left eye such that you can peer through the tunnel to the room ahead. As you sight down this tunnel you quickly notice that only a small portion of the room ahead is visible to your eye. This situation is representative of how most persons perceive the flow of Time in their lives, that is, they continuously are looking into their Future along the tunnel of the Past. Consequently, they introduce a number of erroneous beliefs into their lives.

As a result of the "tunnel effect", such persons perceive Time as a linear sequence of narrowly prescribed events for which Future possibilities are limited at best. Therefore, they become discouraged about the Future since they perceive that even though life is causal, their ability to be consciously causal is virtually nonexistent. They fail to grasp the notion that in actuality the Future determines the Past.

For the general man and woman of the day who is asleep as to his or her actual presence, life is composed solely of the his or her personally recorded events of the Past and his or her expectations of the Future. Instead of being simultaneously Present to oneself and one's activities, such persons exist only in Imagination and Fantasy, prey to the Automatic Laws of the Universe. Such persons are impotent in directing even the smallness of their day to day Future, they cannot be entrusted the task of directing the greater Future of Adamic man's spiritual evolution.

Since the average persons lacks the appreciation and the ability to be in the Now, they are unable to see that Time is not a linear sequence of Past causes leading to Future effects; but in reality represents the order of actualization of events occurring in the Now. Consequently, such persons fail to grasp the fact that Causes can only exist in the Future, that Future causes manifest as effects only in the Present.

Subsequently, while hindsight may show the tunnel effect as described previously, this new notion of Time constates that the tunnel is only an illusion--the flow of Time is better perceived as the eye of a needle being moved through an infinite set of causes. Once we understand that the Future more appropriately represents a set of causal possibilities rather than the effects of Past causes, we understand how we can insure the continual renewal of our Beloved Order through Work such as that now being done. Because we are taught how to be present in the Present, we can develop an inner unity which is eternal and which has access to the power of the Cosmic necessary to accomplish such ambitious goals.

Based upon the above, my perception of the eternal must be related to my perception of the changeless Now. Regardless of the details of my environment, Now always feels the same. Therefore, any consciousness existing outside the confines of Space and Time must be in the Now. I am in the Now whenever I stop looking at the details of the actualization of events in my immediate surroundings and just be. Sometimes I think that being in the Now must be the feeling of awareness one has whenever one's attention is directed to the gaps existing between our normal thoughts rather than to our thoughts themselves. I have never found sadness in the experience of the Now, only in the experiences of life events. Being in the Now leads to eternal awareness, eternal bliss and eternal existence.

The word *search* is derived from the Latin words *circus* and *circare* which mean circle and to go about. Therefore, a search must be an activity involved with looking for

something or examining something in an organized and complete manner. Searches come in different flavors. For example, I have learned that oftentimes when I search for a lost object, I experience distress and anxiety. Whenever, I find the lost object I experience happiness. Consequently, one aspect of at least some kinds of searches is to eliminate pain and increase pleasure. Usually, however, it is elimination of the suffering which fuels my searches.

Another kind of searching entails looking for an explanation to explain how some process works in Nature. Even though, such searches are not dysphoric, suffering is involved because I have to dedicate time for exploration and make conscious efforts. Sometimes other persons interfere in the accomplishment of these searches because they are threatened by new knowledge. In these cases, one obtains pleasure by answering the question posed.

In both types of searches, only ignorance and lack of conscious effort prevent me from immediately obtaining the desired fruits of my actions. Maybe the act of searching, the act of relieving pain and increasing pleasure, are responsible for keeping me trapped in the world. Perhaps, my ignorance and my lack of conscious effort are keeping me from God?

Therefore for myself, *the eternal search for God* has similarities to the transient search for a lost object or the process of answering a scientific question. If I want to regain a state of Unity with God, assuming I had such a state previously, I must allow myself the experience of intentional suffering so to uncover the Path of Reintegration. My suffering and my acceptance of it will provide the inner strength necessary to accomplish my search. I cannot grow without consciously applying super-effort. I cannot let the unpleasant details of life's experiences and the resulting dysphoria to rule my life. Since I continue to search, for me, the act of searching is best portrayed by the geometric figure of the spiral, rather than that of a single circle.

I have observed the following statement to be true in my life: happy is the man who has not tried to develop a soul, miserable is the man who attempts to make one. Fortunately, and as you will eventually come to know, direct experience in the matter tells us that the man or woman with a fully developed soul is in an unperturbed state of peace, joy and clarity, happy in his understanding of what Existence Is and his or her place in It.

Let us now direct our attention to our individual understanding of God.

When we begin to speak about our personal concepts concerning God, we must remember the mystery school adage, "God of my heart, God of my realization". In other words, we are being instructed to look within ourselves for our personal Sacred Image of God, to seek our answer from experience and understanding available from our higher emotional and intellectual centers. What you can expect to find when you follow this advice is not God the Actual, but God as a personal Sacred Image. Let us explore this notion further; first intellectually, then emotionally.

Since I am asking each of you to search for your own personal understanding of the Sacred Image of God, I expect to hear many different views and beliefs. Whenever these views are based upon your own hard won efforts and suffering, I know they are sincere and it would be a mistake to think that some views are true and other views are false. Many different views exist because no one is able to experience God broadly enough; therefore, each of us calls a partial truth, the whole truth. For it is impossible for us to conceive of an impossibility. Perhaps we can overcome our individual limitations by creating a composite picture that will show where all these different and quite conflicting views fit in?

First, there is the materialistic or atheistic view that God is just superstition. Proponents of this viewpoint see nothing in the universe, but the working of material laws. They feel that the only successful way to deal with the world is to know the laws better.

Such persons believe it is possible to structure their lives into a perfectly satisfactory order by learning to know enough of the laws and how best to adapt themselves to them. Therefore, the problems of life are ones that we alone can solve, and if we are clever enough, we can go a long way to solve these problems. If we are not clever enough, we will make mistakes because of individual and group ignorance.

Another, equally simple kind of belief held by many people is that God is a person whom we can picture like ourselves, only much better, infinitely greater and wiser. He is infinitely loving and compassionate. Moreover, God can be spoken to, and is spoken to, in prayer in the form of Christ or Krishna or Zoroaster, beautiful persons symbolic of all that we love and worship.

There is another kind of belief about God, which is expressed by St. Paul, who says in *Corinthians* that God is a spirit and can only be worshiped in spirit and in truth; no man has seen God and no living person can see or understand God; for God remains altogether different from anything that can be experienced directly. However, as the result of His Endless Love for His Creation, God reveals Himself through the prophets, through sacred books and by incarnation as an Avatar or Savior. In the *Baghavat Gita*, Krishna is an incarnation of Vishnu. Krishna is a man who can be seen by everyone, but differs from ordinary people in his perfect wisdom. When Arjuna asks him to show himself in his real form, he appears as the terrifying all-devouring power that swallows up all Nature--Arjuna sees God as time. Many descriptions in the Gita refer to the Unknowable Being that can be manifested in many forms.

In most religious belief systems, behind everything is an Unknown Being who can be known only through His manifestations. For Muslims, God can be known because the Koran is his own utterance. When you listen to the Koran, you listen to the Word of God. For Jews, God revealed Himself to Moses giving him the Commandments. In the Hebrew prophetic period, the Word of God was transmitted through the prophets. Even though

some reported they saw and spoke with God, still there remained the feeling that God was something mysterious and completely out of reach of man's intellect; that God was utterly different from any possible image a man could conceive.

For the student of Hermeticism, God is a reality beyond comprehension; for man cannot know God in the way that man is able to know Nature. For God is beyond Nature and is the Source from which Nature comes. For the conscious being, the ultimate image of God is not as a personal deity. In Buddhism, the liberated man is able to know the *Dharma* and reveal it to other men; but all beings, even gods, are limited and subject to the laws of separation and transience belonging to the finite and time-limited universe. When the Buddha was asked the question, "Are there gods?", he replied, "Of course there are gods. I know very well that there are spiritual beings." Again and again in the Buddhist scriptures, the spiritual beings, even the supreme deity *Brahma*, are represented as appearing and talking to the Buddha person to person. They are also shown as being limited, and after the completion of an age having to be reborn. But the *Dharma* is beyond time and renewal; it is the Source of Everything.

There are many notions of the Absolute Source, which is beyond Being, of which nothing can be known. An impersonal character is always ascribed to it, because if it were personal, it would be knowable and would be too much like us to be called Absolute.

Now what are we to make of all this? Can you see that all these things are true, providing you look at them in the right way?

First, one can say that so long as one's attention is confined to the existing world of objects, then the materialist view is correct. If it were not so, the laws wouldn't be invariant. This is the world of law which can only be known through its laws; it is a world of separation for its very structure manifests discreetly as explained by quantum mechanics. It is a world of transience in which everything perishes.

Even the personal Image of God is not incorrect. For we are taught that our material universe is the work of either a Sole, Manifested, Creator God such as the Hindu supreme deity, *Brahma* or of the Manifested Agents of the One God, the Hebrew *Elohim*. Such happenings provide an explanation for how can it be that God is a person Who can be talked to, Who will listen to us and do something to help us because He cares for each one of us as individuals? This simple belief may not bring one to Cosmic Consciousness, but provides assurance that takes away anxiety and many other things for many people during their early stages of spiritual development. It would be terrible if that were to be disturbed by someone saying that it is naive to think that God is really like that and that he or she listens to silly little petitions and so on.

Now there is a tradition in the mystical literature of the existence of two quite different Gods in the world: one God that has created this world and rules it according to law and justice; and another God who is beyond this world, who has no power and authority in it, but whose characteristic is love and compassion is an ancient one. Knowledge of this distinction is preserved in the Ancient Egyptian texts, in the monasteries of Central Asia and through certain Buddhist and Sufi traditions. The God of Love and compassion is concerned with the consequences of the Creation. It is this God of Love that incarnates as an Avatar in order to compensate for the consequences of the God of power having created the world.

What we have to understand is how our limited world is connected to the Unlimited Expanse of God the Unmanifest. For that we must study the nature and content of our Sacred Images; for these Sacred Images are our personal mental and emotional pictures of God. They are the fruit of the closest personal experiences we have had with God.

Unfortunately, the difficulty with thinking about an image is that an image appears less than the object for which it is the image. Whenever we see an image in the mirror, we don't think of it as really being there; what is "really there" is ourselves standing in

front of the mirror. Our preprogrammed attitude towards images is that they are somehow less than the reality they depict. But looked at it in another way, you can see how powerful images are. Even in the simple case of an image in the mirror--if you are shaving or brushing your hair or arranging your clothes--it is the image that is the source of your actions. You see your hair is untidy and this makes you move your brush in a certain way. It is only because you are able to see the image that you can do something.

This principle can be applied a great deal further. For example, whenever you have the image of somebody as being wise or as able to do something, it is this image that makes you ask for help or advice. If a doctor doesn't present to you the image of a man who is able to heal, he will have very little power to do something good for you. A great part of a physician's work is to create for the patient the image of a healer in whom they can have confidence. Such images do more to heal than all the medicines given. When you really analyze the situation, it is that the image of the doctor which attracts you, not the man. Many people are alive today, who would otherwise be dead, because they really believed in the power and truth of an image. This enabled the doctor's treatment to have a power over them that in somebody else's hand the treatment would not have had. The contrary is also true, persons who see the doctor's weaknesses and foibles destroy their image of a good and wise man and the medicine ceases to work. Therefore, you see that the details of our own Image of God determines the path we take in life and the place we end up.

The importance of an image can be immense when it is a really sacred image. Even though, Saint Theresa, the little blossom of Jesus, was not seen by anyone during her life to be at all extraordinary, through her writings and actions, an image was created that had an extraordinary power after she died. Her image was so powerful that for a long time thousands of people were converted and healed simply by visiting her shrine. The power wasn't in the girl that died young and more or less unknown, but in the image

that was created by the intensity of her own faith and love and complete conviction that she did converse with and know Jesus as a person. This was so powerful that the image that came out of her conviction had really extraordinary power--literally the power to perform miracles.

Another form of a Sacred Image occurs whenever a Sacred Individual incarnates in human form with a very high and special mission, the working of which is not visible in this world and which can only be perceived by specially prepared disciples. This mission is not performed in this world, except insofar as the Being who is engaged in it is incarnated in human form. A certain possibility which was absent on this Earth is introduced from a realm where the impossible can exist. It is something new that doesn't belong to the previous filaments of cause and effect of this world, therefore changing the future. Though the doing of this and how it is done is unseen, it is necessary that something should manifest in the visible world amongst people with ordinary perceptions. To fulfill that second part of the mission a Sacred Image is created; an Image having near Unlimited Power, because its source is beyond the confines of normal existence. Men see the Sacred Image as the founder of a religion, as a prophet or as an incarnation of God, introducing new hope into the life of man.

The Sacred Image is more than an existing thing. The image of Christ is more than any man, because Power has been transmitted to the Image that is very extraordinary. It is something that is in the world but not of the world. To bring about such Sacred Images very extraordinary things have to happen. Often those involved with the promotion of a new Sacred Image have to pay for it with their own lives, returning to the Existence beyond this world by way of a violent death.

I think it is difficult for many persons to understand that which is more than this world doesn't have the same kind of existence that we have. If it had, it would be perishable, isolated, separated and subject to all the laws of our mundane existence.

Because the Source of the Sacred Image is beyond normal existence, it is possible for each individual to have direct communication with the Being through his or her Sacred Image. It is necessary to remind you of this fact I have experienced so that you begin to realize that this is not a matter of superstition, or something that is of comfort to people because they have nothing better. This presence of Sacred Images in this world means that there is Something that is beyond the laws of this world, beyond the laws of materialism.

But for us there is a need to go further. As students in the Work, we want to go beyond the confines of the existing world, that there is Something we have to Attain. This drive does not come from our objective faculties; it comes because we feel the pull of a Higher Source. There is an action in us coming from another sphere. This Something can only be understood and approached by working with and advancing our Sacred Images.

We of the mundane world are standing in front of another sphere where there is Being, Power and Justice; where there are no limiting factors as Time, Space or Plurality. Only Pattern exists. The Pattern itself has power and the God of this Creation is Pattern. Beyond this is a third sphere without form, where one can no longer speak even about Being; where the nearest word we can use is Will. There is a Sphere of Will that is not involved in Being, not involved in any particular Pattern or Purpose and not involved with achieving anything. All of this is beyond our understanding, but what is not beyond our understanding is that this sphere is so completely free that it is not subject to the laws of cause and effect, and it is able to override karma. This allows for the possibility for interventions of a certain kind, in which the consequences of normal action are averted.

Sacred Images arise from these incarnations. The Sacred Mission is the only thing that can give us hope in the present situation of our race on Earth. It is apparent to everybody that if we were subject entirely to the laws of justice and cause and effect, we

should be heading for destruction. For it would be impossible for man so completely to disregard his obligations on this Earth and not suffer retribution, if there were not for a Higher Compassion.

If the third sphere exists, it is from this Source that Compassion must come. For it is only from this Source that salvation can arise, where the consequences of destructive actions can be averted and the world given a new start. As students of the Work, contacting this Source through development of our Sacred Image is our duty and it is towards this end that we should pray and meditate. When we pray and meditate, we are creating our own Sacred Image because doing otherwise is impossible since we are dealing with subjects beyond our intellectual understanding. Each and every time we enter into communion with the Celestial Sanctum, we add light, life and love to our Sacred Image.

As you can see, creating a working Sacred Image is our Holy Chore and is the real purpose behind our years of Rosicrucian study. From the above we see that intellectual effort must be expended to create a Sacred Image. But the existence of a static image is insufficient, to be of use to ourselves and our fellow travelers our images must be imbued with life and love. In other words, we must use the faculties of our higher emotional centers to make our Sacred Images dynamic and purposeful. When this is done, the real power of the Divine will come into the Image and make it Live.

This concept was appreciated by the Ancient Egyptians who understood that the stone and metal statues of their deities, an intellectual creation, could be infused by the Light, Life and Love of the deity through conscious effort, focused attention and emotional intent. These Holy Relics represented to the Egyptian priests an objective presentation of the mental and emotional Sacred Images we have been discussing.

Therefore, let us now spend some time showing how our mentally created Sacred Images can be made to live through our higher emotions. Providing emotional life to our

Sacred Images is a simple matter and occurs whenever we allow ourselves to experience the Love of God. Such events can happen in meditation, in sincere selfless service or from listening with our hearts to stories of high purpose. Let me give you some examples.

In order to prepare yourselves for this experience, I am going to ask each of you to take a minute or two and simply pay attention to your cycle of breathing. Noting silently to yourself whenever an in-breath is present, whenever an out-breath is present, nothing more. If your mind wanders, simply bring it back to the breath, without mental comment. Be present without judgement nor expectation. You are in the Now with your current mind. No right way, no wrong way, just the Way (NB: allow about 3 minutes and continue with presentation).

Now I would like each of you to imagine that you are going to enter in a Sacred Place and call forth your current understanding of the "God of your heart, the God of your realization". Say to yourself as you mentally enter into this Sacred Place, 'May I enter into Communion with the Sacred Hosts and cleanse myself of all impurities of body and mind'. After entering, call up your Sacred Image and prepare to infuse it with light, life and love (allow three minutes or so).

Friends, let us begin refining our own Sacred Images, intellectually and emotionally, by considering two Sacred Images taken from the Egyptian Book of the Dead; first the hymn called, "Greeting Ra", second the hymn called "Becoming One of the Ancients".

"This day I am with you. Stabbed by the light of the great mind I wake. The sun crests the hill and the hawk, according to a higher will, whirls and circumscribes day. I am called from my house. I shuffle sand underfoot, but my heart leaps. I open, am pierced by light. A cry escapes my lips. I know not what I say; it is the language of soul beneath skin, the song of birds in acacia trees.

Beautiful is the golden seed from which the corn arises; beautiful the sun on the hill from which springs god's day. My body nourishes some unfolding time and purpose. I shine bronze as Hathor's mirror. My heart lifts like the sun. Passion and power quiver on the land, casting long shadows.

Now the people in their houses stir, yawning, shouting, stretching. Shot through with light, they glow and quiver. Stones of sunlight pile up in heaven. Emerald is truth when god draws near. Blessed are we by sun.

Ra is the child, a golden knot of flesh dropped from open air, bright star in the dark house of Osiris, heir to the ages, word edged into world. He grows a long beard and sits on the mountain, knowing its secrets. He rises from the flood. Drawing up water, he quenches the thirst of his people. They drink and enter the river. He sucks the breast of heaven, golden-haired, flesh on fire. Always burning, returning, always constant and new.

It is his breath we breathe, his love that endures, his power that moves the world. We are the quivering of his arrows, the stirring of his hands. We are his spirit moving in matter. May the eye of god pierce us and give us the grace of his will. We are held in god's hands. Like the ocean, we whirl and remain the same. We are bound by law and held by the truth of change, that all seasons return, and that which was once and is no more shall come again.

Sing then, rejoice and bind yourself to god's will. See how the seed falls from the tree and is buried. Die at once and live again. You shall grow like that sycamore, rooted in matter, bound for boundless sky. You shall be blown by wind. You shall see the storm and sing its praises. You shall lie in the fields and kiss the earth. Raise your arms. You shall see the fury and power of god and change forever.

Drink the cup of heaven. Let grace roll down your head like water. Drink in earth; take in the things of the world. The barley grows straight in rows; the young shoots unfurl according to a higher purpose. Truth rides visibly through the world. Have you not seen

it? The sun shimmers with the power of gold. We are breathless in golden air. Drink in the light and praise the cup of forever that spills out the threads of eternity.

Ra is an old man walking the world, as much with the earth as the skin of a snake. He is with us, the spirit, the gold, the god, the ebb of life, watcher over the world. We rise like swallows and fly up the ladder of heaven. We sit in his hand. He buries us in the blue egg of the world. We are pressed into the soil and rise. We grow in him. The world changes, and god and men. We spin and sing in the house of sun. The earth is glad. Cows chew the cud of light. We breathe the perfume of a golden flower. Old men and women rise, burst from their houses, arms lifted, dancing, crying, singing. Dawn is a lyre playing the song of day.

Ra rises. He goes out into the world, a passion, a fire burning up night, making day. His light ennoble the face of heaven. He warms the belly of sky. He gladdens Nut, his mother. He walks the upper regions, his heart inflamed with love. The waters in the pool of the farthest oasis are calmed. He gathers the sand serpents to his breast. He fears no living thing. He made them, what is known and not known. He speaks their names and takes their venom. The snake who gobbles the world enters Ra. Burned in fire, he vomits the evil he has spoken. His words are smelted into gold. With a kiss, Ra turns poison into magic. He twines the snake about him. Now death lives on his forehead, side by side, with light. Let breath come and go. Let the great world change. Let men see that serpents entwine the god as the light of god entwines each man. It brushes his lips with sunlight, with kisses of life, kisses of death, kisses of joy, kisses of poison and magic.

The evening boat draws near. Ra comes to meet it at the edge of sky, the edge of river, the thin blade of time. It arrives and he steps from the shore of knowing. He enters. Small waves rock the boat and the stems of reeds are bowing. He sails off: north, south, east or west. He travels lightly toward the other shore of time. Infinity is his. Behold! a star has entered sky. The geese take flight across a waxing moon. Oh

substance, understanding of earth, creature of becoming making himself understood. Flames of fire lick his body like golden serpent tongues, like the mouths of women in love. The wind uplifts him. He sings a dark song gliding toward dusk in the boat of evening. We show him our hands, the magic he placed in them. His boat slices water. He passes towering papyrus. Three godlike ducks wade in and follow. They glide, turn and spiral. Three godlike sparrows swoop and spin above the banks. Even the frogs are dancing and singing.

Ra rules the air and the gods invisible. The book of law lies in his hands. The speech of his lips falls lightly into being. His word enters the world. "Creation," says he. "Destruction. Power invisible. Glory. The house of heaven is the house of man. No walls stand between heaven and earth. You are no farther from me than from your own hot breath." At any moment you enter heaven by saying, "I am a temple of Ra." Love is his light; compassion the light of the world. Ra is fire. Joy is the sky. His heart beats with forever. The white clouds of his thought pass over the sky and water.

Like a fish in water, like a lapwing among stars I breathe among the gods. I have lived among gods countless years. I am an old soul, a great man, one of the ancients. Many nights I have looked into the fire, felt the heat of their tongues, seen their faces, heard them speaking. Many days I have stopped behind my plow to gaze up, blind with the sun and the gods' power. In my times, and there have been many times, I have come to know the gods. By their silence I understand their presence. I have quivered beneath the power of their hands on my head and trembled in the powerlessness of their absence when they turned and left me to my destiny.

At dawn beyond the ring of trees, the great one comes like the golden eye of a hawk opening, like the wind that moves the boats, his breath caught in a tattered white sail. With invisible hands he tugs on the green shoots causing corn and wheat to rise. The first among us, he willed himself to be, then in his loneliness dreamed the company

of others. Because he willed it ripples formed on the water and clouds billowed in the sky. Because he willed it stars spewed from his lips and the sun and moon sprang from his eyes. Because he willed it he gave power to lesser gods the way a mother gives bread to her children. They, in turn to please him, made fish in the sea, birds in the air and wheat in the fields. Because he willed it men and women leapt forth and made children, tamed cattle, harvested barley. Because it pleased him he made these things and lay destiny upon them. What passes, what is and what will be are the stuff of the old man's dreams. One day he'll wake and all he has made to flourish will wither. He will coil round himself, a snake devouring his children, then slither away with us all in his belly. And we shall go away with him knowing what a good dream it was.

He sleeps. A new dream begins.

I am an old man, an ancient one, and I have been many things, lived and died many times, and loved as often as possible. And I tell you the gods exist within the limits of every thing--stone or vegetable, woman or man. Even the red clay the potter molds hides their essence. That a creature or thing exists makes it one with god. Blessed are we all. Because we exist we live for eternity as women or men, birds or fish, stones or wheat, dust in the wind. We shall be what we imagine though we know not yet what that may be. Blessed are we in eternal changing. We live among gods because we are gods. Blessed are the creatures and gods of earth, things of the air and water, flame from the fire.

I have lived in the midst of gods who knew not who they were. You and I are pure as dream, lasting as words, opulent as women. We were given the gift of becoming and the ways of it. After a time of forgetting, I come back to myself. I am as tied to my destiny as an ass is tied to its plow. Because the gods will it, the work is done, and our labor to become what we must is like the perfume of lotus and red oleanders.

I have taken pains to empty myself of the illusions of flesh, to accept failure, even success when it comes, but not to crave it as some men crave wine. I have looked into my heart and seen jealousy, pride and greed. I've seen fear and resistance to change. Even as I cast these off as a snake sheds skins, I've been tempted to congratulate myself. I have regretted the past and longed for the future, forgetting to notice the mountain of the present. But today, for this moment, I am here with you unburdened by thought and filled with joy. In this moment I regret nothing for the paths I chose led me here. I offer you my life. In this moment as the veil opens and before it closes, I see us as we are--that we are gods, that all that exists and can be named is god coming from the body of god. If I but touch the present, I shall know what lies before and behind for these, too, are holy members of his body. I am, therefore, a god among you, born in the company of men. I tell you in truth, here, in my field behind this sometimes slow and stubborn donkey, I am standing before god. It is good to be here.¹

Friends, let us add some additional life to our own Sacred Images, I want to tell you a wonderful story that will help you commune with the God of Compassion. This story is called the Giving Tree.

Once there was a tree...and she loved a little boy. Every day the boy would come and he would gather her leaves and make them into crowns and play king of the forest. He would climb up her trunk and swing from her branches and eat apples. They would play hide-and-go-seek. And when he was tired, he would sleep in her shade. The boy loved the tree very much and the tree was happy.

But time went by and the boy grew older and the tree was often alone. Then one day the boy came to the tree and the tree said, 'Come, boy, and climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and eat apples and play in my shade and be happy'.

¹Normandi Ellis, AWAKING OSIRIS

'I am too big to climb and play,' said the boy. 'I want to buy things and have fun. I want some money. Can you give me some money?'

'I'm sorry, boy, but I have no money. I have only apples and leaves. Take my apples, boy, and sell them in the city and you will have some money and you will be happy.' And the boy climbed up the tree and gathered her apples and carried them away. And the tree was happy.

But the boy stayed away for a long time and the tree was sad. One day the boy came back and the tree shook with joy, 'Come, boy, climb up my trunk and swing from my branches and play and be happy.'

'I'm too busy to climb trees', said the boy. 'I want a house to keep warm. I want a wife and I want children and so I need a house. Can you give me a house?'

'I have no house', said the tree. 'The forest is my home, but you can cut off my branches and take my trunk and build a house and then you will be happy.' And so the boy cut off all her branches and took her trunk and carried them away to build his house. And the tree was happy...but not really.

And after a very long time the boy, who was a very old man, came back again. 'I'm sorry, boy,' said the tree, 'but I have nothing left to give you. My apples are gone.'

'My teeth are too weak for apples,' said the boy.

'My branches are gone so you can't swing on them anymore.'

'I am too old to swing on branches,' said the boy. 'I am too tired to even climb.'

'I'm sorry,' sighed the tree. 'I wish I could give you something...but I have nothing left. I am just an old stump. I'm so sorry, boy.'

'I don't need very much now,' said the boy, 'just a quiet place to sit and rest. I am so very tired.'

'Well,' said the tree straightening herself up as best she could, 'well, an old stump is good for sitting and resting. Come, boy, sit down. Sit down and rest.'

And the boy did. And the tree was very happy. And the boy remembered how much he loved the tree.²

[my addition to the end]

The boy said, "Tree, I love you with all my heart and all my mind. You are the most important creature in all of my life. And I am happy at last, dear Tree. For you have taught me how God must love this world--even me with my selfishness.. Thank you, Tree. Soon I shall lie down in the ground next to you and we both shall remember our good times--forever."

To summarize, dear friends, *the eternal search for God* is the path we each have chosen, hopefully each is making progress. This search represents the ultimate chore which must be accomplished for each man and woman desiring to be Present beyond the Inbreaths and Outbreaths of Brahma. This is attaining to *Dharma*. To find your particular path of attainment, practice the techniques given to you today. Do not settle for the complacency of cursory knowledge, but find truth and understanding for yourself. Realize that only knowledge you have personally earned can lead to God.

I am going to say goodbye now realizing that our shared experience has become a part of my own Sacred Image, and for that, I love each of you. God bless.

²Shel Silverstein, THE GIVING TREE