

Chapter 5

All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter another.

-- Anatole France

We took a short break. I needed to stretch my legs and get some water. Samuel threw a couple of logs on the fire. The sun had risen and taken the chill out of the air. We really didn't need the warmth of the fire but it did create a cozy atmosphere. From our discussion, it was obvious that Samuel had already been on the journey that I was now taking. He seemed to know in advance what my questions were as if he, himself, had struggled with them in his own life. Sometimes we go through life thinking that we are the only ones who are experiencing a certain feeling or problem when, in fact, there are many others who are in the same boat as we are; others who have already been there can help us in our time of need if we'll only ask. When I returned from the kitchen Samuel was still leaning over the fire.

"Derrick, what do you hope to accomplish with this discussion?" he asked as he poked at the burning logs.

"Somehow, I'm hoping I will find answers." I found my seat and sat the glass of water on the table. "I desperately want to find out that what I have believed all of my life is true. I want confirmation of my faith. I want to know that what I believe is the truth!"

"It sounds like you've already made up your mind and what you're looking for is validation of what you already believe. If that is what you're seeking then you've come to the wrong place. You can find justification and rationalization from any number of places. If however, you are looking for truth no matter what that turns out to be, that's a different matter."

"You're right. While I do hope that what I find will validate what I already believe, I am searching for truth."

“And what if you don’t find validation? What if you find something different? Are you willing to open your mind to the possibility that you have been mistaken?”

“Samuel, as you’ve already stated, the truth is powerful and will surpass untruth. I, also, believe the truth will never be threatened by untruth. There can only be peace in my life when I finally discover the truth, whatever that might be. But I must add, that at this time, even though I have serious doubts deep down in my heart, I can’t believe that my religion is not true. I think it’s just a matter of my lack of understanding.”

“There is much deception in the world.”

“And you think I have been deceived? How is it possible that the millions of people who have been involved in religion could have been deceived for thousands of years?” I asked.

“People are basically very trusting. Many live their lives eager to believe whatever they are told. If the person doing the telling sounds convincing and the majority of the population seems to agree then people tend to jump on board buying whatever snake oil is being sold. Our lives are inundated with untruths that we readily accept as truth. Theories from the scientific community we accept and teach our children as if they are factual even though there may be little or no evidence of substantiation. Religious theology is accepted sincerely without question or skepticism even though that theology might prove to be harmful to those who put their trust in it. It can even be destructive for the world. You have already mentioned the atrocities that have occurred in the name of God and religion. History provides proof that we are ready to accept lies out of respect for tradition or fear of the things that we don’t immediately understand. If someone calls himself a scientist, or an expert, or a scholar our skepticism crumbles like old stale bread and we accept, without question, their opinion or teaching as if it is truth.

“You’ve already mentioned some events that illustrate how the masses can be misled. The Crusades, the Inquisition and the witch-hunts of earlier history are evidence of how good people

can be led to do bad things. More recently, during World War II, millions of well-intentioned Germans followed the leadership of Hitler. Trusting in his words and his leadership, they were convinced to march across Europe killing millions of innocent people, slaughtering a staggering number of Jews. Dedicated men sacrificed their lives for the 'cause' that Hitler so eloquently advocated," he continued. "Think about Jim Jones, the founder and leader of the People's Temple which is best known for the November 18, 1978 mass suicide of more than nine-hundred Temple members in Jonestown Guyana. They followed their leader to the death. Remember David Koresh? He claimed to be the final prophet. He called his organization Branch Dividian. He gained a small group of dedicated followers. In 1993, fifty-four adults and twenty-one children gave up their lives for their leader. Today, in Africa, men are attacking villages, murdering men, women and children in the name of their god."

As he spoke, I thought about recent news stories concerning Warren Jeffs, the president of a sect of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints who was convicted of molesting two young girls, telling them that it was God's will for them to have sex with him. This religious organization continues to have a very large membership in spite of this travesty.

Samuel continued. "Even now, in the 21st century, the most technologically advanced civilization in history, we are experiencing horrific violence directed toward innocent people at the hands of religious zealots who are following the guidance of charismatic leaders. Religious groups, convinced they are acting in the name of God, now called Islamic terrorists, are threatening the world, killing thousands of innocent humans. In each of these situations the followers, for the most part, are not evil people. They are simply trusting the teaching of those whom they respect; doing what they believe God wants them to do." He paused. For a few seconds there wasn't a sound.

"It's just hard to believe that so many could be deceived. We are talking about millions and millions of people," I said quietly.

“Derrick, you have to remember that to some extent each one of us is a product of our environment. When a person has been raised in a particular faith, especially when that faith is the most widely accepted religion in the community, it’s easy to see how it can become ingrained in that person’s mind. It becomes his tradition. Elements of the faith are accepted without question, especially if his indoctrination began in childhood or early adolescence. You, yourself are an example of that.”

He was right. The things that I was taught as a child did have a great impact on my life and still does to this day. I remember well the stories I was taught in Sunday School. Those stories were the basic building blocks for the things I would eventually accept as part of my creed.

“A person who is born in the Far East is likely to be a Buddhist or a Hindu,” he observed. “Those born in the Middle East are more likely to be Jewish or Islamic...”

“And, traditionally, those born in the United States or Europe will probably be Christians,” I noted.

“Exactly. The individual born into that religion, so to speak, assumes, as you mentioned earlier, that if the ideology of their religion were not true then it would not have survived. So he learns from an early age to overlook or justify or rationalize inconsistencies and contradictions, if he notices them at all, and continues down the path that his father and forefathers have traveled. However, when and if an individual does take the initiative to carefully examine those principles objectively, I truly believe he will come to the same conclusions that you have: that there are problems with mainstream religion that have not been addressed; problems that require us to examine what we believe and why we believe it.”

“You’re right, I guess,” I had to agree. “I just find it hard to believe that if what we believe wasn’t true, someone else long ago would have brought it to the world’s attention.”

“Maybe they did. But remember, such accusations would not have been popular. In fact, for hundreds of years any kind of

skepticism was considered heresy and was suppressed by those who had the power to squelch such opposition. During the Inquisition, people were burned at the stake for simply making a statement that could be interpreted as opposing the doctrine of the Church. Even today, in the Islamic world, anyone who speaks out against the Islamic faith will find themselves in deep trouble.”

“So is it your opinion that religious leaders are deceiving people intentionally?” I asked.

“Not in most cases. As I mentioned, most people are trusting by nature. We want to believe that those who seem to know what they’re talking about actually do. Today, we tend to believe whatever we hear or see on television or on the Internet or read in books or newspapers. We want to think that the people who speak and write are actually telling us the truth. But that’s not always the case. In fact, today it’s quite the contrary. There can be no debate that even the various news reporting services are biased in their reporting. Objectivity is rare. Finding the truth takes time and enormous effort. We’d simply rather have someone else do it for us or accept, without question, what has already been accepted over the years. If the truth were known, very few of those who claim to be ‘in the know’ have sought the truth for themselves. They are simply stating their own opinions and theological philosophies, or spouting off traditional rhetoric that they have been taught for years but never questioned. Some people who hear these self-proclaimed experts turn away, realizing that what is being taught is inconsistent and harmful, while others take hold of it and attempt to make it work in their lives in spite of the misery that it causes, not only to them but also to the world. The atrocities that have occurred and continue to occur in the name of God and religion can only happen because people, well-intentioned people, are not seeking the truth, but are blindly following the loudest, most accepted or most charismatic voice; or following the path of least resistance; that of tradition.

“To answer your question more succinctly, I don’t believe most ministers and priests and rabbis or monks or Imams are out

to intentionally deceive anyone. Many of them have been raised in the faith that they preach. Others have been trained in seminaries and universities that teach a one-sided view of religion. Still others believe that they have had a life-changing experience that they want to share with the world. Whatever the case may be, many are simply following the tradition of their religion without adequately examining the doctrine of that faith.”

“But if a person is satisfied with what they believe, if it is comfortable, maybe that’s enough. Maybe it doesn’t have to be true.”

“Maybe it doesn’t. If what you believe provides you with happiness and gives you security and peace, then why rock the boat?”

“Yeah, why? If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

“That’s right,” he said. “After all, is truth really that important? Since we cannot know the definitive truth about God, why not believe what you want to believe and not worry about whether it’s the truth or not?”

“Not long ago I was involved in a Facebook discussion that was sponsored by a religious group. They boasted that they were not afraid of the truth. So I joined the page. It didn’t take long for me to ruffle some feathers of those who were engaged in the discussion. Finally, I asked the simple question, ‘If it were proven emphatically that the Bible was not the word of God, would you believe the truth or would you continue to believe as you presently do?’ The overwhelming response was that when it came to issues of religion, truth was not as important as faith.”

“Really?” I couldn’t believe that people would choose faith over truth.

“You see, religion has its own truth. All religions. It’s a truth that is founded in faith rather than reason. Here’s why. Religion deals with the supernatural. That means that things like God and miracles are beyond natural. And since they are beyond natural, they cannot be proven or disproven by natural means. Since they cannot be disproven, they become matters of faith.

We can believe they exist or occur simply because we want to. It is a matter of faith.”

“But some supernatural things can be considered more reasonable than others, right?”

“Of course. As we will discuss later, in some cases, it’s more reasonable to believe that some supernatural things exist than to believe that they don’t based on evidence and reason. But some people do not need proof to believe. If they want to believe, all they need is faith and that makes what they believe truth.”

“But what about situations where there is evidence that what they believe is not truth?”

“In many instances, they simply ignore or discount the evidence altogether. This might surprise you, but some religious leaders have created a new term. We all understand what knowledge is but there are those who have invented something called “faith knowledge”. This is defined as knowledge that can only be obtained through faith and it has nothing at all to do with reason.”

“Okay, explain that can you?” I begged.

“Sure. It was an idea proposed by Pope John Paul II in a letter presented to the Bishops of the Catholic Church in 1998 in Rome¹⁹. He was addressing the many questions that dealt with the conflict between reason and faith. In this letter he states that there are two kinds of knowledge: there is the knowledge that comes from reason and is supported by some kind of evidence, and a second kind of knowledge that can come only by faith and revelation.”

“Elucidate, please!”

He explained.

¹⁹ Encyclical Letter, *Fides et Ratio*, of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the relationship between faith and reason. Given in Rome, at Saint Peter’s, on 14 September, the Feast of the Triumph of the Cross, in the year 1998.

“What he was saying was this: that there is a kind of knowledge that comes only through revelation from God or one of his messengers. As you will remember, Moses had a revelation from God at the burning bush, Mohammad had a revelation from God by way of the angel Gabriel and Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon religion, had a revelation from God by way of the prophet Mormon and some golden plates. The Pope was saying that revelation-based knowledge doesn’t need proof or evidence nor is it required to meet any measure of reason. Of course there are several apparent difficulties with this concept of knowledge.”

“Yes, I think I can see one immediately,” I responded. “If only one person has the revelation or the vision, then who’s to say that it really was a message from God and not just a dream or an hallucination?”

“You’re right,” he replied. “And if the revelation comes to only one person then it becomes a subjective experience subject to personal interpretation. Thomas Paine said that a revelation is only a revelation to the person who claims to have received it. When the revelation is shared with others it becomes hearsay because no one else was privy to the experience. And so the revelation might not have occurred at all.”

“And,” I continued, “what if more than one person has a revelation on the same topic and yet they get a different message?”

“That’s what happened with all of the revelations that I mentioned. Moses was told that the law was the way to salvation, Mohammad received a different method, and Joseph Smith received yet another,” he said.

“It doesn’t sound like revelation-based knowledge is very dependable,” I concluded.

“No, not at all,” Samuel agreed. “In fact it really doesn’t sound like knowledge at all. However, it is one example of how some religious leaders will justify teachings that have no basis in reason. The argument becomes, even though there is no reason,

since it was a revelation from God it is truth and it should be accepted on faith.”

“I guess there are a lot of people who will accept that,” I replied.

“Millions have and millions continue to.”

“But don’t you think there comes a time in most people’s life when there is doubt?” I questioned. “A time when they wonder if those things that they believe are really true?”

“I think there are some,” Samuel agreed. “But most people are content with believing what they are told or what they read, traditional religion. And many of those who do experience some doubt simply put it on the back burner and never do anything about it. Very seldom is that doubt strong enough to cause a person to begin the laborious task of searching for answers. Doubt can be rationalized away simply enough. A good justification for doubt is that sometimes we have situations that cause us to be skeptical or unsure, but those times will pass and when they do the old dependable theology will come shinning through and everything will be okay again. You see, doubt can be shoved into the background until it disappears.”

“I guess.” He was probably right. Why rock the boat?

“So why didn’t you just shove the doubt to the back of your mind until it passed?” he asked.

“Because this is a very important issue. What I believe might bring me peace and comfort but if that peace and comfort is a result of believing lies, then it really isn’t true peace is it? If the information that brings me peace is false information then the peace I’m experiencing isn’t real, is it? I mean, if I knew that the information that brought me contentment was false, it would not bring me contentment at all. Do you see what I mean?”

“I do.”

“I guess I’m not one who can stick his head in the sand and convince myself that everything is okay. I need to *know* that it is!” Samuel seemed to understand what I was saying.

“It is important, Derrick, to everyone, or at least it should be. When it comes to religion, no one should stick his head in the sand. What a person believes is of ultimate importance because it determines a person’s destiny and impacts the world. What I’m saying is that what a person believes dictates, or should dictate, their moral and ethical behavior, influences their relationships, and determines how they will react to situations that they encounter in life. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, a spiritual writing in the Hindu religion, it is written:

‘As a person acts, so he becomes in life. Those who do good become good; those who do harm become bad. Good deeds make one pure; bad deeds make one impure. You are what your deep, driving desire is. As your desire is, so is your will. As your will is, so is your deed. As your deed is, so is your destiny.’²⁰

“Our actions and desires are driven by what we believe. Most people follow a religion that includes belief in a supernatural being. Except for Confucianism, all popular religions profess the existence of one or more gods. It is what we believe about God, Its existence, Its nature and Its character that influences how we see the world, how we interact with others and how we construct our moral and ethical standards. It dictates what we believe about life after death, which, in turn, impacts the way we live life now. What we accept as our tenet for living can, in fact, affect our emotional, mental and physical wellbeing. I know this sounds a little bizarre, but it seems that researchers have found a link between people who are highly religious and an alleged advanced atrophy in a particular part of the brain called the hippocampal.”

“You’re kidding! That sounds like a story formulated by radical atheist!” I exclaimed.

²⁰ The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Verse 5b. Translated by Eknath Easwaran, Nilgiri Press, Canada, 2007

“I know it does, but a team of researchers from Duke University conducted a study that showed such evidence.²¹ While certain aspects of religion are healthy, there are also aspects such as guilt that can lead to stress and depression that are very harmful. So, the way we view God, what God is like, affects more than just our ethical and moral behavior. It can have an effect on our health.

“Another reason why a person should test their religion is that what a person believes might work for them but it might not work for society. It might bring them freedom but it might result in the oppression of others. It might be profitable for them but it might lead to harm for others. What a person decides to believe about God and life is the single most important decision they will ever make. It’s the most important decision *you* will ever make.”

“There are those who say they don’t really believe in anything,” I said. “What about them?”

“Everyone believes in something,” he stated. “They either believe that it’s acceptable to lie in business or unacceptable; that it’s acceptable to steal what belongs to others or it’s unacceptable; that there is a Supreme Being who controls the universe and has designed a purpose for mankind or that there is no god and perhaps no real purpose in life at all. These principles, what is accepted as being right and wrong, true or false, acceptable and unacceptable behavior constitutes a belief system and defines a person’s character. And, if a person really believes what he professes, that belief will impact every aspect of his life.”

“Doesn’t this process occur rather slowly and subconsciously for most people?” I questioned. “As we discussed, many people are raised in a home where a specific religion is accepted and taught. Therefore, believing comes

²¹ Religious Factors and Hippocampal Atrophy in Late Life, *Plus One Magazine*, March 30, 2011.. Reviewed by *Scientific America*, May 31, 2011, p. 59.

gradually as a child grows and learns the ways of their parent's religion or ideology."

"Of course," Samuel replied. "In many instances that's true. But in most cases, there comes a time when those beliefs are tested and a person is forced to reevaluate those principles in a very conscious way in order to make a more definitive decision concerning whether or not they will continue to make that doctrine or philosophy a part of their life."

"Where do you think the basic ideas come from that creep into our lives and formulate our belief system or our understanding of God?"

"They come from a lot of different sources. Certainly, as you mentioned, many come from our parents or other influences that touched our lives when we were young. For many of us our first lessons as infants concerned what is right and wrong: don't take that toy it belongs to another child, always tell the truth, don't hit the other kids. This basic education becomes the foundation for what we ultimately believe about good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Other influences are school, friends, church, and the media: television, radio, books and the Internet."

"Do you agree there are adults who never challenge those initial ideas and continue to adhere to those first precepts throughout adulthood?" I asked. "Are there those who never question?"

"Certainly. As we discussed earlier, I think that's true for most people. Those first concepts are burned deep into our minds and they are very difficult to overcome. Even if we reach a place where we realize that they are not the best ideals on which to build our lives, it is difficult to replace them with new ones, especially if the new ideas are radically different from the original ones."

"I, myself, am an example of that," I admitted. "As I said, I came from a deeply dedicated family of Protestants. So when I decided to question Christian theology I suffered from extreme

feelings of guilt. Several times I quit the search for truth altogether, afraid that what I would find was not what I wanted to find.”

“At least you are seeking the truth,” he said. “Questioning ones faith is one of the most difficult things a person can do. So many people find it easier not to challenge those initial concepts of traditional theology even when they have doubts about its credibility. They will adhere to it as much as possible simply because it is the most popular and prevalent set of religious ideas in their community. Tradition is comfortable.”

I had to agree. Doing things the old fashioned way was comfortable. Singing the familiar hymns, participating in responsive readings, even sitting on those uncomfortable wooden pews gave me a sense of belonging; of being a part of something that had been experienced by millions of others like me for generations.

“What about those people who say they believe one thing but behave in a way that is in contradiction to those principles?” I asked.

Samuel gave it a moment of thought. “Once again, sometimes that happens as an evolutionary process. Rather than to actually alter one’s beliefs, the currently held precepts simply do not influence the actions of the individual. In reality, if what a person says they believe does not coincide with their behavior and lifestyle, then chances are they really don’t believe what they profess. If there is a sincere commitment to the ideology or those principles they feel are important, it will influence their actions. If it doesn’t, living a hypocritical life makes for a very unhappy existence, as you have experienced. How can a person profess one thing and live their life in contradiction to those principles and be content? And, whether or not a person chooses to make a Supreme Being part of their tenet is a very important consideration.”

“Why is that?”

“If we believe that a supernatural Being exists who is ultimately superior,” he explained, “One who created the universe and everything in it including humans then we must ask ‘Why’? Why create a creature such as humans that possess a higher consciousness and such a powerful intellect? There must be some reason for such a creation. Therefore, it should be our priority to seek the purpose for which we were created and attempt to fulfill that purpose if we plan to find satisfaction. If a Supreme Being exists then we should desire to know about that Being as much as we possibly can. Discovering our purpose and learning who this Deity is and what It is like will help us select the principles and ideals in our life that will mold our religion and build our spiritual character, resulting in our ultimate happiness. If, on the other hand, we believe that life is accidental, no more than a chance happening, then we really have no purpose. We just exist and our goal becomes mere survival and the pursuit of material possessions and transitory success.”

“So you think religion helps us find our purpose?” I asked.

“Definitely. The sacred texts that are used as the foundation for religious ideology should help us find our way. That’s why it is so important to test these sacred writings to be sure that the information they provide constitutes truth.”

“But, of course, all religions profess to be the truth,” I added.

“Yes, but as you pointed out earlier, can they all be true? If they make different claims regarding such things as the character of God then either both are wrong or one is true and the other is a deception. If they provide us with inconsistent information can they be true? After all, things are not always as they seem.”

“What do you mean?” I asked.

Samuel got up to freshen our coffee. There was a small table near the fireplace where a variety of bottles of wine and liquor were kept. Samuel had put a fresh pot of coffee on the table during our break.

“The older you get,” he said, “the more you realize things aren’t quite the way you imagined them when you were young.”

“I’m not sure I’m following you.”

He handed me the coffee and then returned to the fireplace. “How old are you, Derrick?”

“Forty-three.”

He knelt down over the fire. He watched the fire as it burned for a few seconds.

“I remember being forty-something,” he said softly. “It was over twenty years ago, but I still do have a vague recollection of that time. I think by that age I had figured a few things out, but when I was much younger I imagined all adults as being wise and knowledgeable in all matters. As I grew older and became an adult myself, I realized that my friends who were also adults certainly were not filled with wisdom or knowledge. In fact, they and most of the other adults that I knew were no more than older kids attempting to make it through life just like I was; doing the best they could by learning from their mistakes. It was obvious that my concept of adulthood was drastically incorrect. These adults were not the wise knowledgeable people that I had envisioned. It was then that I realized further that there is no magic age when a person suddenly attains wisdom or knowledge; that knowledge is something that comes only through great effort, and wisdom never comes at all to some. As I grew older, my dreams, yearnings, habits, and thoughts for the most part were the same as they were when I was young. There were some things that I grew out of and others that were modified, like the dreams that I once had that faded with the realities of life, but nothing really changed with age except the burden of responsibility and the knowledge that came with experience.”

“And how did this realization affect your thoughts on religious truth?” I questioned.

He walked back into the sitting area.

“That we cannot believe something simply because it has been accepted by previous generations; that tradition is not synonymous with truth. Just because something has been labeled as truth in the past does not make it true. Truth does not come easily. I realized that things aren’t always as they seem. People will be deceptive if they can profit from it. I learned that truth must be sought, diligently and sincerely, with an open mind if it is to be found. I also realized that we can come closer to the truth by improving our understanding of issues in the light of new discoveries and available information. Through the various sciences, archeological investigation and a better understanding of ancient languages we can be more accurately informed. This new knowledge can shed fresh light on ancient documents and primitive beliefs and behavior and help us grow in our understanding. They can move us closer to the truth concerning what these old documents are trying to tell us and what value the ancient religions might hold for us today.

“In addition, we are no longer bound by governments or other threatening authorities to accept religious ideology without question. We are free to examine and test those ideas that seem inconsistent. In fact, we are responsible for doing so. This includes science as well as religion. We must always be vigilant in our search for truth. Tradition does not always hold the answers. Humans are always coming up with new variations on old ideas. Religion is not immune to these variations. I understand that the documents and doctrines of the major religions are ancient. And I know that they have been trusted for thousands of years by many wise and intelligent people but tradition must be tested.”

“But aren’t all religions constantly being examined. Isn’t that why there are so many versions of the Bible? Aren’t scholars constantly trying to get closer to the original writing and meaning of the text?” I questioned.

“Yes, those things are being done. Maybe the quest is not just to try to re-interpret the text of these great documents. Maybe we need to get more basic. Maybe we need to examine the authenticity and reliability of those documents. If we are

going to discuss truth in religion, we need to examine the credibility of every aspect of religion: where it all started, why it started and the documents that have been used to formulate the ideology of those religions.”

“Can we actually do that?” I asked. “That seems like an impossible quest! How can we test the Bible?”

“And the Koran and all religious documents,” he continued. “We have to. It’s our responsibility. By doing so, we might succeed in answering some of your questions and resolving some of your concerns. And, if we find that there is truth in current religions then we will have reinforced your faith by giving you greater confidence that what you believe about God and religion is valid. Who knows, our research might even reveal something extraordinary.”

Once again the room grew silent. I was exhausted. I had never before explained all of the reasons for my doubt. Now, making the argument audibly to someone else, I realized how many concerns I had and how legitimate those concerns were. For the first time I was talking openly about how I felt without worrying that someone was going to judge me. More than ever, I knew I could not return to what I had believed before. Now, more than ever, I had to find answers.

I think there are a lot of people like me in the world; people who go about living but give little thought to the deeper, more important aspects of life. We concentrate our efforts on obtaining material things, which is natural since we need to have certain material things to survive, but when it comes to contemplating the spiritual facets of life we just don’t take the time. Perhaps we feel we don’t have the time. After all, dealing with the day-to-day challenges can easily consume every available minute of the day. Then again, maybe we feel that spiritual issues don’t need examination. I never did. We are comfortable doing what everyone else does and believing what everyone else believes. For me, it took over thirty years to realize the need to analyze why I believed the things that I professed. I think there are those who never make the journey.

Maybe the need to take this spiritual journey only comes with age and experience. Maybe it's not until we have obtained some of the possessions that we have striven for or reached our career objectives that we come to realize that those things don't bring lasting satisfaction. I remember always wanting a nice car and a big house. I was finally able to afford them. At first, I experienced great satisfaction just knowing that I had achieved my goals. I also remember how a year later I had my eye on a newer car. The one that was once new was no longer new. Now it was the old one. And the big house was no longer a novelty. Now I had to pay the cost of upkeep and maintenance. The house, too, had lost its luster. Perhaps it's when we reach that point that materialism becomes less attractive and we begin to look for something that will bring longer lasting satisfaction. We search for a greater meaning to life. Maybe that's what drives some of us to religion in the first place. However, for me, because of the legitimate concerns that I had just shared, religion, too, had lost its luster. Like the material possessions, the peace that religion once provided was gone. What I believed in, where I put my trust, had to be true. It just had to be.

Brenda broke the silence and announced that she had prepared lunch. It was time to feed the body and give the mind a rest.