

My Faith-Based Life and the Language of Heaven

I.

I have a faith-based life. I have always been faith-based, but have not always based that faith on God. I was a pagan until fourth grade, around 1957, when my Dad got religion by returning to the faith of his German Catholic mother. I was then baptized a Roman Catholic at St. Margaret Mary's in Omaha, Nebraska. I had a tutor for awhile in the evenings to teach me my catechism to get me up to speed before I was dropped into Sunday catechism class for public school kids.

With Sputnik still in the nation's short-term memory, I was encouraged in high school in Nebraska to develop my talents in math and science. In the summer before my senior year, 1965, the National Science Foundation gave me the opportunity to study physics and chemistry at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island with high school students from all over the nation. The Brown hosts provided a well-rounded experience. In addition to teaching us all to program a big IBM mainframe computer with Fortran, and giving us access to the expensively equipped labs, they took us to cultural events.

I don't remember the physics and chemistry, but I do remember seeing Bob Dylan walk on stage at the Newport Folk Festival with a guitar and ask if anyone in the audience had an "E" harmonica he could use. Later, he invited his band on stage with electric instruments for the very first electric performance at Newport. I do remember people booing.

We were in the back of the crowd. It was all new to me. I had never heard of Bob Dylan until that summer when "Like A Rolling Stone" played repeatedly on my transistor radio.

Our Brown hosts also took us to see King Lear at the Globe in Stratford, Connecticut. I remember Lear better than the physics, and especially remember seeing Jackie Kennedy with Caroline and John John playing in the grass at the nearby picnic bench outside the theater surrounded by their Secret Service detail. We went to Cape Cod and I saw the ocean for the first time. I lost my high school class ring in my first ocean wave.

Although I am grateful now, I was not then grateful to God or my parents or to anyone, not even Brown, for the wonderful privilege that summer was, but was in retrospect, sinfully self-absorbed with my ambitious effort to get to Harvard, Princeton or Yale.

The more I studied hard science and math, the less interest I had in the Catholic God. When I went to Yale in 1966 to learn more chemistry and physics, I was relieved to be loosed of the weekly requirement to go to church because I did not believe anymore. My Dad was reminding me weekly to get to church. I went to the Yale Newman Center where Catholics centered and asked a priest there to write a letter to my Dad telling him that I no longer believed and to leave me alone about religion. The priest

politely declined and said to me matter-of-factly, "Faith is a gift. You don't have the gift." My immediate emotional reaction was disappointment that I didn't get a gift, but gift or not, I was an atheist, or at minimum, an agnostic.

While in high school, my friend Jeff, who wanted desperately to go to Yale but was accepted by Princeton instead (and never forgave me), told me that his dad was an "agnostic." That was a new word for me when he used it. He explained that his dad, a lawyer, didn't have enough evidence, but he wanted to leave the door open in case God did exist. That is how I learned the meaning of the word that I later adopted for my own spiritual stance.

My faith-based life was faith in myself for a few years. There were those who tried to propose another base for my faith, the God Squad, the campus evangelical Christians, of course, and others. We lived in an time when LSD was not illegal and the new mass of expanded minds were looking at exotic Eastern Religions.

In the fall of 1968, revolution was in the air. The local Yale chapter of Maoists made an appointment with me when I was Station Manager of the Yale Broadcasting Co., the Yale AM and FM radio stations. They met me in a studio as a gang of three. They brought me a little red book of aphorisms, Mao Zedong's Little Red Book. They thought I should read the book. I said that I would and I did. They met me again at the radio station studio. Apparently, this was an informal attempt to gain control of the radio station by capturing the mind of management. I told them that what Mao wrote was very

interesting, but I would have to accept his underlying assumptions to accept his system. Why should I accept his assumptions? On what basis I asked? They could not answer me. They accepted it intuitively as a matter of faith. They had the gift. I was too cautious to commit to a faith centered on a man in China and his cryptic Little Red Book.

The sciences were no longer interesting to me, especially the long afternoons with data in the lab. I moved my major from one social science to another and eventually settled in the humanities, philosophy. It became apparent that my interest in philosophy was as a means to an end, namely, finding an operational value system that I liked better than my faith in myself, which was becoming more and more fragile and unreliable.

Some professor at Yale assigned me to read, Youth, Identity, and Crisis, by Erik Ericsson. Ericsson proposed a life stage, "Youth," which he placed between adolescence and adulthood. The adolescent needed a value system to become an adult. For many, the adolescent would adopt the value system of his parents and move directly into adulthood. For some, Ericsson proposed, time was needed for an independent search for a suitable value system, self-developed and adopted. This was a period of "youth" where the individual struggled and experimented, eventually, after a time, graduating to adulthood with an evolved or self-determined working value system that was not necessarily the value system of his parents, although it could be.

Ericsson used William James as a prominent example of someone who spent nearly 15 years in “youthful” development of a personal set of values. Once developed, James became a mature thinker bearing fruit as a prolific writer. His magnificent work speaks for itself. His own broad experience, his personal search for values, is displayed in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*. The introspection in his search for meaning and values must have been the groundwork in 1890 for his path-breaking two volume *Principles of Psychology* as he almost single-handedly extracted a new scientific discipline from philosophy.

Most of the philosophy I read, especially the modern analytical philosophy and nihilistic modern existentialism did not move me. A.J. Ayer, the British empirical philosopher, told me in *Language, Truth and Logic*, that if it cannot be verified empirically, it’s meaningless. So, he said, all metaphysics is meaningless because it cannot be verified. What was verified with an inductive process of verification? Whatever you were willing to put your money on as true. At least that’s what he told me. This was the state of the art of philosophy at the time, but there were rivals from times past, of course, and the reprise of grand theory was just around the corner of the decade, marked by John Rawls’ *Theory of Justice* published in 1970. I was introduced to the formulation of his theory in a Philosophy of Law seminar in 1969, but did not have the privilege of reading the full theory until thirty years passed.

Nevertheless, in 1970, reading Kierkegaard gave me some hope and

curiosity for a change in direction. Fear and Trembling was astonishing. I had never thought about what Abraham went through, if there was an Abraham, when he took it on faith that he was required by God to sacrifice his son. I was prepared to consider the story, though, by Bob Dylan’s rendition in Highway 61

God said to Abraham, “Kill me a son.” Abe said, “Man, you must be putting me on.” God said, “No.” Abe said, “What?” God said, “You can do what you want, Abe, but the next time you see me coming you better run.” Abe said, “Where you want this killing done?” God said, “Out on Highway 61.”

Kierkegaard’s retelling of the story several times to examine the concept of faith was genius, I thought. His philosophical characterization of God’s instruction to Abraham to kill his only son, Isaac, as the “teleological suspension of the ethical” was philosophically challenging. But Kierkegaard’s idea that it took a courageous “leap of faith” for the “knight of faith” to gain faith intrigued me. Faith was not obtained by rational choice, but by an irrational leap. Kierkegaard wrote with a pseudonym. The writer said he could not make that leap. Kierkegaard was known to be a Christian believer, so in good conscience, he must have necessarily written with a pseudonym to give the appearance of integrity to the unbelieving writer’s position. Missing from his rendition of faith as I read it then, was the Christian concept of faith as a gift by the grace of God, i.e., unmerited favor. He wrote of faith acquired by an act of man taking a

leap by an apparent free choice. I had no concept of grace at the time, having pushed the Yale priest's lesson into my subconscious. I was not persuaded to a Christian faith by Kierkegaard, but was persuaded to investigate "faith," which to me then meant "religion". I suspected that I might find there what I was not finding in philosophy.

II.

In addition to abstract curiosity, the psychedelic world of the sixties did open us up to the possibility of a supernatural reality. No one that I knew was unable to distinguish between hallucination or delusion and reality. However, we were interested in coincidence. The simplest occurrence might seem improbable under the influence of hallucinogenic substances. "Faaaar out!" we shouted. But there were some events that seemed too improbable.

In the summer of 1969, Woodstock summer, I shared an apartment in Cambridge, Massachusetts with some Yale classmates. One weekend, my roommate Jon's cousin visited us from Toronto. We were also joined that weekend by another Yale friend Rusty, who drove up from Pennsylvania for the weekend. Jon, Jon's cousin, Rusty and a couple others spent the afternoon on a boat in the Bay. I stayed at the apartment to learn how to play the Travis pick on the guitar for 13 hours straight. Anyway, Rusty reported a year or so later after a trip to Asia that he had been riding on a train in Nepal, and who did he find sitting across from him in the train compartment, but Jon's cousin from Toronto that he had

met on the boat in Boston Bay that previous Summer weekend afternoon. Small world.

In 1974, I had been living in Honolulu for a few weeks. I had been staying at the YMCA and had a job working as a fry cook in Waikiki. I wanted to find another place to stay, for although the fellows were nice enough to me, I was straight and except for about seven of us, the rest of the residents were gay. I didn't fit. I was across the street from the Y in a music store at the Ala Moana shopping center one day, playing "Stairway to Heaven" on a Takamine 12-string guitar. A woman walked up and gave me a kiss. It was someone I knew briefly three or four years ago in Connecticut. She told me that she was living in Honolulu with her Yale boyfriend, "in a big house up on Liliha Street owned by Senator Hiram Fong's son." There were nearly a dozen people living there, she said, several artists and there was a room available this week. They could use a musician in the house as well. That house and what happened there is another story, but had we not met by chance in the music store, I doubt that I would have found her and a better place to live. I had no idea that they were living there. Small world.

Around 1981 or so, I was living in Phoenix, Arizona. I had completed law school in Kansas and had spent two years acquiring experience as an accountant, including a year with the now-deceased Arthur Andersen & Co., in order to add Certified Public Accountant to my resume. Now an attorney in my own fledgling private practice, I kept getting

mail for another David Larkin. Out of curiosity I called him to introduce myself. He was getting my mail as well. We decided to meet at the Arizona Club in Phoenix for lunch. He was a marketing man from Manhattan, a couple of years older than me, who had relocated to Phoenix for the weather. He was working for a market research company, but was planning to start his own marketing company. A year or so later after Marketing David Larkin had gone out on his own, we formed a computer hardware company with a client of mine. One night I was describing our new venture to my doctor Dave in the parking lot of an Italian restaurant in Phoenix. I was telling Dr. Dave about my partner who had the same name as me, David Larkin. Just as I was telling him about the other David Larkin, a guy walked up to us in the parking lot and said, "Yes?" I said "Yes, what?" He said, "I'm David Larkin." He was another David Larkin. I said, "I'm David Larkin, and I was just telling my friend here about my partner who is also David Larkin." We all laughed. This new third David Larkin was a professional masseuse. Small world.

Coincidence by itself does not prove anything. Depending upon the magnitude of the improbability, coincidental events raise an inference that something may have influenced the course of events to lead to the improbable result, the invisible hand of God, perhaps. The Twilight Zone event in real life opens the door to thoughts about a supernatural or spiritual realm. It is difficult to find a rational point of demarcation between the historical event that is strangely improbably, like the coincidental second meeting on a train

in Nepal, and the event that is so much stranger than fiction that thoughts of spirits or God or alien presences occur naturally.

Crop circles seem to cross that line. Crop circles are the type of event where an unknown agency is evident in the natural brute facts of the event itself. The crops must have been matted to the ground by some type of agency. Natural physical phenomenon cannot account for the multiple and elaborate designs around the world, nor can pranksters of a nature we can fathom.

Often the timing of an event alone gives the sensation or thought of a higher power working in our lives. In 1970, I was told by my roommate in Cambridge that I had to pay the rent the next day or he would ask me to leave, a polite eviction. The rent was \$40. I had no idea where to get the money. The next day I went to get the mail and there was a last paycheck in the mail from a prior employer that I had not expected in the amount of \$40.35 – rent and a pack of cigarettes.

Years later when my wife and I were struggling to establish my law practice, we were very short on cash one day. We needed money for necessities: gas, diapers, and groceries. My wife spotted some papers in some blankets in the baby's playpen – just what we needed – about eighty dollars' worth of checks from clients that the baby had taken from my wallet on the desk next to the playpen months earlier that we had not noticed missing and forgot about. We needed it when we found it. Sure our accounting procedures were sloppy and the baby

accidentally saved it for us, but the timing was highly providential at the time. We were happily thankful to God for using our son to provide for us.

III.

In 1970, I found a nice cottage by the sea in Woodmont, Connecticut, near New Haven and Yale. I was living there when I found myself drawn towards religion and faith by Søren Kierkegaard.

I began working my way through the Eastern religions. I read Buddhist writings, the Hindu Vedas, Taoism – Lao Tse’s Tao Te Ching, Confucius, all of the Alan Watts books popularizing Eastern religious thought, the drug induced fantasies of Carlos Castenada, Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert (before he was Baba Ram Dass), and the Koran. I read them all. I threw the I Ching. Nothing seemed to strike me as believable.

One day I said to myself, in all the fairness I could muster, “Well, I guess I’d better read the Bible.” It seemed like that was all that was left. I had exhausted the major religions of the East. As an attending Catholic from 4th grade through High School, I did not read the Bible, but was only exposed to bits and pieces during the Mass.

I remember when my Dad brought home a big white Bible. He told the family that the Vatican had changed the rules and now lay people like us could read the Bible. I remember looking at it, but I did not read it.

There in my cottage by the sea, I started at Genesis 1:1 in a hotel King James Bible someone had given me.

I struggled through the Old Testament the best I could. I remember thinking how brutal and sinful God’s chosen people were. In Genesis 38, when the children of Jacob were avenging the defilement of their sister Dinah by Shechem, son of the Prince of the country they were passing through, they did not just kill Shechem. Instead,

“. . . the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister: And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us: But in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.”

Shechem and countrymen did suffer through a mass circumcision. Then,

“. . . it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem’s house, and went out.”

Wow, I thought, what brutal, but creative, revenge. These primitives were God's chosen people among primitives. I did not consider this to be lessons in brutality, but lessons in the fallen nature of mankind. God worked with what He had to work with.

I was surprised and impressed that God would forgive David for his great sin of adultery, and worse, the premeditated murder of Bathsheba's husband. His repentance was great and God forgave him. That seemed remarkable to me at the time that such great sin could be forgiven. It still does. True Repentance under such circumstances would seem to be improbable, considering our human pride, so that forgiveness would be a loving response to a broken heart. Moments of sorrow for my own wrongdoing were not frequent at that time in my life, but I could understand the concept.

The New Testament was different. It read easy. I was surprised at what I read. It begins with four accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus, the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. "Gospel" means "good news." I remember vividly my surprise at reading the words of Luke at the beginning of his Gospel in the King James Version:

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It

seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

These were not prefatory words to a fable or myth. It was a statement of a reporter, an eyewitness to events. He must have interviewed Mary, the mother of Jesus, I thought, in order to have the details of her relationship with her cousin, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, for example, an account missing from the other three gospels. That struck me as different from any of the religious writings that I had covered over the past several months. It was in the middle of Luke's Gospel that I believed it was true. Suddenly, I was standing in the middle of the living room of my cottage and God was alive and in the room with me. There was no leap of faith. There was no bells or angels singing, only a moment where before I didn't believe it and now I did. God was a living God and He was able to hear my innermost thoughts. I spoke to him. There was a moment also where I realized that I was becoming a "Christian." I did not like the idea for that moment. What would my friends think? Would I be ostracized? We made fun of the God Squad at Yale. However, if it was true, who am I to defy God for a good social life. Nor was I willing to accept a hellish eternal destiny, which I read about from the words of Jesus himself.

I was amazed that I believed it. I was also exposed by the Book as a sinful man.

Jesus commanded repentance and I repented. I knew about confession from my days as a Catholic, and I went through an exhaustive confession to God right there in my living room. I had plenty to confess, limited only by my memory.

There was no one there to help me with this transformation into some kind of Christian. There was the creaky hardwood floor of the cottage, the easy chair, the hotel Bible and God speaking to me through the words in that Book. I had been told that I had to ask Jesus into my heart. I did that. I read in Paul's letter to the Romans that if I call on the name of the Lord and believe in my heart that Jesus was raised from the dead, I would be saved. I did that too. I gave myself a communion with bread and wine based on the account of the last supper. I read the rest of the Bible. When I read that Paul referred to all the believers as saints, I tearfully cried thanks to God for also making me a saint, still emotionally bound to the Catholic sense of sainthood as membership in a Hall of Fame. Later I learned that "saint" means simply "called-out one."

IV.

So, in March 1971 I became a Christian reading the Bible. Of course, it can be argued that I was needy for a belief system or a crutch. That is a only an argument against believing in anything. Or, perhaps I just arbitrarily took that one religion remaining, maybe to subconsciously conform to my parents' values. The unconscious determination of my beliefs is beyond empirical verification. I choose to dismiss that

argument because I believe that the conscious participation of my mind was necessary to the phenomenon of conversion. Further, believing as I do that a perspective of free choice is part of the phenomenon, it was not a decision that I would have made with the rational participation of my conscious mind. Up until then, I considered the Bible to be myth and fable, as we all did. Why would I choose a set of beliefs that required humility, that told me I was a hopeless sinner. Well, there was self-knowledge of my failings, something that has not diminished over the years. Now I have a catalogue of my failings. Just as one is under control or dormant, a new one surfaces.

Whether I can determine empirically the nature of my transformation myself, I nevertheless believed then and believe now that God changed me. It seemed like I had asked Him to save me with my free will. The Bible is pretty clear, however, as the Apostle Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther and Calvin all taught, that God chose me first. As Paul puts it in Ephesians 1:4-5 (KJV):

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, . . .”

I remember reading the several significant predestination passages of Scripture and thinking about the Puritans and

Calvinism. I could see now where they were coming from. It is difficult for a believer not to be a Calvinist reading a passage like that.

The contradiction between free will and predestination – the sovereignty of God and grace versus evangelism and willingly coming to Christ – is irreconcilable. It does not appear to us that a belief can be both predestined and freely chosen.

Jack Hayford, the Pastor who baptized me in Van Nuys, California 12 years later, said it well. When we are being drawn to God, we see an invitation on Heaven’s gate to freely choose salvation. When we do choose Jesus and pass through, written on the other side of the gate it says, “chosen before the foundation of the world.” I can only say that it seemed like I was calculating when I became a believer, making a rational choice, but I believed first. The only explanation for that is supernatural regeneration occurred first when the words on the page in the Bible I was reading suddenly came alive and God became real. It was a revelation. I consider it a miracle now because after careful consideration, I am convinced that I don’t know how to cause myself to believe anything. Beliefs happen. We can often trace the events or the information that leads to the belief, but the transformation from proposition to belief is not a matter of the conscious human will. My faith just happened.

I was determined to study the Bible, now that I believed it. There didn’t seem to be much else worth doing at the time. I wanted the best version to read. I went to the Yale Coop bookstore, to the religious book section, and found two Jewish bible scholars discussing a book there. I asked them which version of the Bible they thought was the most accurate translation. They told me that the New American Bible, a Catholic translation, was surprisingly faithful to the manuscripts. So I bought one and read it from the beginning as well.

I had to let God be the interpreter. Some matters are clearly meant to be symbolic, and some matters not. During the Reformation, Luther wanted to cling to the Roman concept of transubstantiation where the bread or “Host” is transformed from starch and becomes the actual body of Jesus. He believed that when Jesus said, “This is my body,” holding up a piece of bread, he meant it literally. Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss reformer, who met with Martin Luther at Marfurt to argue about this, disagreed, telling Luther that Jesus also said, “I am the door,” but He did not have a doorknob for a belly button.”

In 1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul the Apostle wrote:

“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Though I have consulted the experts and their commentaries, I have relied on God and prayer to find the interpretation at the moment I need it. Far from perfect, I confess that I have believed some far out things over the years, but God has been faithful to deliver me from the radically false doctrines and ideas that I considered at times.

“God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” The Gospel is a Gospel of peace. “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and preached the good news to the poor. The writers spoke of what they saw. The Apostle Peter wrote:

“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

The Apostle John wrote:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.”

John 1:1

These were eyewitnesses to His resurrection. I believe that these writers were real persons in history. I did not believe that they were lying. I could not

see a reason for them to lie about these matters. I still see no reason for fabrication.

Obviously, there are arguments against believing the Bible. Many of the arguments come from people who have not read the Bible, or even the New Testament, which is the story of Jesus. Others unreasonably seem to understand Christianity as contrary to their foundational beliefs in science. The Gospel is not what we see from the politically strident so-called Christians who publicly claim to be speaking for the living God while their utter lack of love and humility alone belies the claim. Jesus said,

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”

Matthew 7:21-23

That “many” will point to their religious conduct as evidence of their salvation and be rejected is sobering.

My conversion experience was not an intellectual experience, although my intellect was there to observe, ponder and formulate. I became a child of the God of the universe. For moments I experienced

communication with the Almighty, not through an audible voice, though I believe He will do that if necessary, but through the Word transmitted by the words of the Bible and through circumstances where He revealed himself then, and continuing to this day. These heightened moments of awareness are not constant. I am human, dulled by the day-to-day, by my shortcomings and by the work of the devil who tempts me.

Obviously, if people saw Jesus perform miracles they must have been persuaded by the supernatural power He exhibited. Again, as the Apostle Peter wrote:

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

1 Peter 1:16 (ESV)

I was heavily influenced by science. Yet, despite my grounding in science and physicalism, I must conclude that a supernatural intervention was necessary for my conversion, or any conversion.

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV)

Since that time in my Connecticut cottage, God has been gracious to give me

more than my share of experiences that revealed His presence. I do not consider this a reward, but merely a spiritual counterbalance to my scientific roots in materialism.

VI.

After conversion, it was difficult to make decisions at first, to discern the will of God for my life. Shortly after conversion, I was inclined to travel from Connecticut to Blacksburg, Virginia with the intent just to study the Bible. I had been there the summer before with my Yale friend Larry. I had fond memories of Blacksburg and the beautiful countryside and that it would be a good place to study. I read in the Bible that after Judas Iscariot committed suicide, the eleven remaining disciples cast lots to determine which of two candidates would replace him. According to the Old Testament history, the Jews used the “urim and thummin,” some kind of oracular device of which no physical description has been found, to divine the will of God.

I had used the I Ching. I suspected that it was not a Godly means by nature, but I decided that with prayer, God can use anything. I would let God speak to me through the I Ching about this seemingly important matter of travel. So, I said a blessing over my Wilhelm translation and my sticks and asked God to use the I Ching to communicate to me His will regarding a proposed trip to Virginia. It seemed Biblical at the time. I threw the sticks and read the hexagram. God answered my prayer. I threw number 46, the Shêng hexagram, “Pushing Upward.”

The “Judgment” of the hexagram was decisive:

*PUSHING UPWARD
has supreme success.
One must see the great man.
Fear not.
Departure toward the south
Brings good fortune.*

I thanked God for the help. I departed toward the south, to Blacksburg, the next day in my red VW Bug. Though it seems superstitious, it was convincing as it happened. I do not consult oracles today. It is not necessary for a Christian who trusts God to find the will of God in his life. It is supposed to be a natural result of “walking in the Spirit.” As Jesus said:

“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

John 3:8 (ESV)

Shortly thereafter, God confirmed that he had honored my naive faith in His divine guidance to head south in His answer to my request for His permission to resort to fortune-telling. When I was in Blacksburg, mostly studying a new Bible I had purchased at the Yale Coop bookstore a few weeks before leaving New Haven. As mentioned above, I had been in the religion section of the books overheard to professors discussing Bibles, obvious from their discussion they were Biblical scholars. I politely interrupted them, asked if they were and they

confirmed it, smiling that I could tell, I suppose. I asked them if they could recommend the most recent translation of the Bible they believed to be the most accurate translation. They both agreed that newly published Catholic Bible, The New American Bible (NABRE), was the most accurate and contemporary, published a year before in 1970. The NABRE is an English-language Catholic Bible translation, published by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. I asked them if they were Catholics, and they both laughed. “We’re Jewish,” one of them said.

In Blacksburg, I hung out at a bookstore, “Books, Strings, and Things,” owned by a man I met a year earlier when I had traveled there with my friend Larry, to look at some land in Blacksburg that had been offered to someone we knew. From the long-haired student patrons of the bookstore, I found out there was a concert on the campus of Virginia Tech University there. I went to the concert with my guitar, wearing my green floppy leather hat, and asked those in charge if I could perform. They agreed, and I went on after a hard rock heavy metal band. Several hundred students were gathered. Dark clouds were above as the metal band played. Many had been lustily rocking and dancing to the music. As I started playing acoustic more peaceful Beatles, Dylan, and other songs I liked, the sun came out, really, and the mood changed noticeably, as the young people sat down and listened. I saw them smiling at me. I spoke them about my recent conversion to belief in Jesus, and the Bible, between songs extemporaneously interpreting the songs I sang in light of the

Gospel the best I could, relying on the Spirit to give me words, obviously, since I had no preparation for this performance. I was a blessed time. At the end of my performance, I told the audience on the grass in front of me, that I would be at Books, Strings and Things Bookstore later, and if anyone want to talk to me about God, Jesus, and salvation, to stop by and we could talk. I did not expect anyone to show up. I had never done anything like this before. It was my first effort to share the gospel publicly like this.

Later that day, I was at the bookstore, and a young man came up to me. He said he had heard me perform at the concert and what I said about talking to him about God. He introduced himself as "Peter," and told me that he thought he needed to get right with God. He was an architecture major, and his architect professor was very critical of his work, and he feared he would fail his course. He wanted to be an architect. He thought he needed to get right with God, so he could achieve his life goal with God's help. He knew the basic teachings of the Bible from his upbringing though he had not believed. We talked about how I became a Christian and what the Bible said. I told him you need to recognize you are a sinner and separated from God. I said I called out to God, spoke with Him sincerely as if He was in the room, as He was. I heeded Jesus words, to repent from my sins, and believe to be given the gift of eternal life. I showed him the Scriptures, as we spoke. I told him that I told God I was sorry for my sins, I believed that Jesus had died for my sins, and called out to God to save me, as the Apostle Paul declared:

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:9-13 (ESV)

He asked me if he could do that now. I said, why not have something you will remember. Let's go out on the bridge on the lake on campus, and pray together for your salvation. We met by the bridge on the lake later that evening, and on the bridge I fashioned a prayer for him, like the "Sinner's Prayer," commonly used by evangelists. I had read about this in books in the prior days after my conversion. Peter did pray that prayer with me, declaring sorrow for sin, for ignoring God, and asking God to save him. I recommended he get a good Bible if he did not have one, and read it. I told him I would be at Books, Strings and Things, tomorrow afternoon if he wanted to talk more.

The next afternoon, Peter did come to see me at the bookstore. He was smiling with joy. He told me that he had his architecture class earlier that day, and his

professor who he thought did not like his work, came up to him and genuinely complimented him on his work. He attributed it to God, and providentially his faith was affirmed within 24 hours of his conversion experience on the bridge the evening before.

I still marvel at this experience, which I consider to have been providentially ordered by God, that I could be a part of his conversion, and that God would give Peter such important encouragement and affirmation so soon. I do not know what happened to Peter, but I hope he is still living like me, and still walking with the Lord. I was very blessed to have this experience so early in my walk with the Lord, and I am sorry that I could not have been more faithful to God in the years that followed to do more evangelism. But God orders our steps, and forgives us for our failures and sins when whenever we sincerely forgiveness. Over time, I have had time and opportunity since 1971 to make plant seeds of faith and witness my faith to others, of my God and Lord Jesus, as the Spirit has led me to do, though I confess that conforming my life to the words of Scripture has been a lifelong and progressive work in progress.

Significantly, for purposes of the illustration of God's guidance that began with the prayer in Connecticut, that God would use the throwing the I Ching sticks to give me guidance on whether to travel to Blacksburg, Virginia, that I had a divine appointment with Peter in Blacksburg to be an instrument in his salvation experience and to witness his entrance into the Kingdom of God, was a supernatural confirmation that God

honored my faith in my request to God, that he allow me to use, from a Christian perspective, an ordinarily ungodly Chinese fortune telling practice to seek the guidance of God, in my inability to discern the will of God for me at the early days of my walk with God.

VII.

Most Christians can give examples of answers to prayer as evidence of God at work in their lives. I have had my share of prayers answered, including eight years of praying for a wife. In 1989, when I was deciding whether to ask the woman who became my wife on our first date, I was walking up Ocean Avenue in Carmel, California, trying to work up the courage to ask. As I approached the entrance to the Dowd Arcade where Susan worked, she walked out of the entrance about ten yards in front of me as if on cue and headed up the street. My decision was made easier for me with the appearance of a divine appointment. A few quick steps and I was walking with her. I found the courage to ask her to a weekday Bible Study at a nearby Calvary Chapel – some first date for a forty-year old man to propose to a woman who was not a believer. Fortunately, the novelty of the request was sufficient to overcome any prejudice she had towards Christians and she accepted my invitation. She was struck deeply by the Pastor's message that evening, a pleasant surprise to me. She became a believer herself shortly thereafter and we have been going to Church together ever since.

When I was living in Los Angeles in the early 1980's, I was without a car and rode

the bus for about 11 months. I was spending much of my time studying the Bible again because I had reached a low point in my life, “backslidden” as Christians refer to the situation. I needed to get right with God. I had forsaken alcohol addiction and was attending AA meetings as I reassembled my life. I was interested in talking with people about God and the Bible at the time. The bus provided many opportunities to share my faith, as I often carried a Bible on the bus. As it says in Ecclesiastes, “To everything, there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven.” This was a season for me for learning about fellowship with other Christians, which I had avoided for years, about sanctification, about holiness, about prayer and significantly, about the presence and power of God.

While living in Los Angeles, I was studying acting at the Loft Studio. Peggy Feury was a famous acting teacher. I found her by asking people I knew in the film industry who the best acting teacher was. I auditioned and was fortunate to be given the opportunity to study with her. She taught method and at the time, the successful actors and actresses sought her help, along with novices like me. While I was at the studio, Johnny Depp, Nicholas Cage, Laura Dern and Meg Ryan were among those taking classes and practicing scenes each day. I was told that Sean Penn had studied with her for four years. When Lily Tomlin was preparing for her one-woman Broadway play, “The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe,” she came to our class in her sweat clothes and practiced scenes for us. We would then leave and she worked privately with

Peggy. One Friday afternoon Peggy came up to me, a glass of wine in her hand, smiled and said, “David, I’m so proud of you. I think you’re ready for any role.” I was very surprised and flattered. I thought she hated my acting. Once, she had me get my haircut twice in the same day. She told me that the male film stars all had short hair, and she gave me a short list of them. I thought she was running out of ideas for me. I was excited to hear that she was giving me her blessing. However, two weeks later she was killed in a fiery car wreck on Sepulveda Boulevard. She had narcolepsy and failed to take her medication. My acting career came to a halt. For a number of reasons, I decided that God did not intend for me to be in that business then, but that I should have a family and away from the temptations of show business. I moved to Carmel, California, became a trial lawyer, got married and started a family.

While studying acting, I shared a house in Hollywood with an actress. She was a daily witness to my spiritual rebirth in sobriety. She was also receptive to the things I would say to her about my study of the Bible and talk about God. Her father was a lawyer in Dallas. Her father’s best friend, also a lawyer, had been cured of cancer at a Kathryn Kuhlman healing service and my roommate’s whole family, including her, had answered an altar call to be saved. She had fallen away from observance of the faith, but was receptive nonetheless. She began to look at the Bible again. I remember telling her about Jesus’s parable of the sower sowing the seed. The sower’s seed is the Word of God. When a person hears the Word, the devil is actively trying to prevent the seed

from taking hold in the persons heart. In some cases, the seed may be sown among thorns. The hearer of the Word is caught up in the world and “the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” My simple take on this was that when we became interested in Jesus, the enemy would provide diversions in the world to distract us and hopefully lead us away. I warned her about this possibility.

Sure enough, she got two auditions out of the blue. She was invited to try out for a rock group and she did not play an instrument or sing. They would teach her. And she was invited on a free trip to Europe with a guy she hardly knew. Worse, she told me that he thought that his house was haunted. This all happened in the space of two weeks. It was stunning. She did become less interested in spiritual matters with all this worldly opportunity coming her way. She took the trip to Europe, to Germany, swearing that they were just friends. She did not want me to think she was paying for the trip with her favors.

While she was away, I woke up on a Sunday morning to hear the news that there was a bombing of a disco in West Berlin. This was 1986. I was worried about her. Later that morning I was on my way to my church, “The Hiding Place,” a nondenominational charismatic Christian church started by a young man who felt called by God to start a church in Beverly Hills. I had read in the paper that the music minister was Todd Fisher, son of the crooner and former spouse of Elizabeth Taylor, Eddie Fisher. The

church attracted Hollywood types. Stevie Nicks married a member of that church in the early 80’s. By 1986, The Hiding Place had moved its services from the Beverly Theater in Beverly Hills to a junior high school behind the Mormon Temple on Santa Monica Boulevard in West Los Angeles. The services were crowded; it seemed like over 1,000 attended each Sunday.

I stopped at a payphone on Santa Monica, a block from the junior high, and called my friend, Terry, to arrange brunch. After hanging up the phone, I checked my watch to see if I was on time for church, and headed up the street. I thought of my roommate, and prayed for her protection. I asked God to let me know that she was alright. I thought the immediate peace I felt was the answer to that prayer.

Two days later I received a message to call my roommate at a phone number in Germany. I called her. She said she was worried that something happened. I said, “About what?” She said, “I don’t know exactly, but I can tell you the time. It was around ten minutes to ten in the morning, Sunday, your time, something happened.” I immediately remembered praying for her and having checked my watch. She was prompted that something was up at the exact time I was praying for her on the other side of the world. I told her everything was alright, and that I had been worried about her because of the bombing. Basically, that was a message from God that He was concerned for both of us, and that He worked in mysterious ways.

During this time, I read in the papers about a cult of Buddhism that was making a mark in Hollywood – Nicheren Shoshu Buddhism. Hollywood people were chanting in order to receive material reward: money, a new car, whatever they desired. It was like the prosperity “name it and claim it” gospel that televangelists touted – “Gaaawd-ah whants yew to be rich!” I was concerned that friends of mine might be tempted by the Buddhist chanting. I was told that one of my friends, a successful screenwriter, was investigating Buddhism. So, I said a little off-the-cuff prayer that God would teach me something about this cult so that I would be equipped to talk about it if the subject came up in conversations with others, and be able to witness the truth of the Gospel. The prayer was perfunctory but sincere. I forgot about it.

A week or so later I was waiting at a bus stop in Downtown L.A. The stop was crowded with about 25 people waiting. I was standing behind the crowd. As I stood there, I noticed a red compact car come up to the curb to my right and park about twenty yards past the stop. An small Asian woman in business clothes got out of the car, walked through the crowd and right up to me. She looked up into my eyes, said, “I have something for you.” She reached into the pocket of her jacket and handed me a brochure for Nicheren Soshu Buddhism. I thanked her and she turned and walked back to her car and drove away. I got goose bumps and chills. I still do. I closed my eyes and thanked God for answering my prayer in such a spectacular way. Why would God use such a supernatural means to provide me with a brochure, other than to give my

faith strength? When something like that happens, it diminishes any natural tendency for me to doubt that God is real and alive.

This marvelous event was surpassed, though, by another event that happened around the same time. I took the Wilshire bus to downtown Los Angeles one morning. The seats were all taken so I stood at the back of the bus holding onto the bar. I noticed a woman in her early 30’s wearing an unusual blouse that she had embroidered with the words, “And God created the duckies and the piggies and chickies and the horsies. Read the Oldist Testament.” She had glazed eyes and was saying out loud the things written on her blouse. People on the bus were purposely avoiding looking at her because she was obviously mental. The African-American man standing across the aisle from me looked at me and rolled his eyes knowingly – another crazy woman. I said a prayer for her. That was a good habit that I had developed of using prayer to deal with situations where someone, including me, needed help. She needed help.

Later that day, I was back in Hollywood walking down La Brea after acting class to catch a west bound Wilshire bus. As I approached Wilshire, I watched four buses go by heading west. I did not usually miss four buses like that, and my immediate reaction was that God was punishing me for something, a silly reaction, but I really did not like to wait for a bus. I quickly examined my conscience which was clean to the best of my knowledge. I wondered if God wanted me to meet someone at the bus stop and

the missed buses were to call me to attention. I approached the bus stop curious, but no one was at the stop.

I walked under the eaves of the bus stop shelter, and looking up, I noticed handbills were plastered to the ceiling of the little shelter. I was surprised to see multiple copies of one hand-written handbill that said, “And God created the duckies and the piggies and chickies and the horsies. Read the Oldist Testament.” It identified the author as “Becky” and gave an address for correspondence. Obviously, the author of these handbills had to be the same young woman I saw on the downtown bus that same morning. Putting aside my surprise, I wrote down the address.

Later, at home, I wrote Becky a letter urging her to read Ezekiel in the “Oldist Testament.” I quoted Ezekiel 36:26:

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

I told her that Christians believe that Ezekiel is prophesying the new birth. In John’s gospel, Jesus tells Nicodemus that “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” I included a “Four Spiritual Laws” tract which gave instructions for salvation. I sealed the letter and prayed that God would show me what He was doing with Becky. The spirituality of her mental disorder was curious.

A month or so later, I was at The Hiding Place in West Los Angeles for Sunday service. I was sitting near the back row in the crowded auditorium waiting for the service to start as people were seating themselves around me. A young woman sat directly in front of me just as the service was about to begin. I was amazed to see writing on the back of her blouse, of course, “And God created the duckies and the piggies and chickies and the horsies.” It was Becky. I tapped her on the shoulder and said, “Becky?”

She turned around with her deranged smile, “Yes.”

I said, “I wrote you a letter. I told you to read Ezekiel. I gave you one of these. Did you get my letter.” I pointed to a Four Spiritual Laws tract that I took from my pocket.

She replied, “Oh yes. Thank you. Did you get my letter?”

I had not given her my address. “I’m sorry, I didn’t get your letter yet. Why are you here today?” I asked.

She looked at me with her eyes wide and said, “I was roller skating at Venice Beach this morning and a guy got out of a red Porsche and came up to me and told me to go to this church this morning.”

“Un huh.” I whispered and pointed towards the front where the Pastor was about to begin. I wondered who the man in the red Porsche was, marveling at chain of events that led her to sit down right in front of me. Los Angeles is a big town!

Becky stayed until the Pastor started talking about Jesus, when she abruptly stood and walked out, looking around like she was lost as she left. She was obviously a work-in-progress. But what a blessing to have God provide me with that experience. Can I doubt that God is alive and working in the world?

Before I left Los Angeles and moved to Carmel, California, I was in Carmel for a few days looking for a job. I was staying at a motel there. The first evening I was in town, I was walking from my motel room to get some ice. I heard someone yelling at me from up above. I looked up and there were three young women on the third floor balcony of the apartment building next to the motel. They were having a little party, drinks in hand.

“Hey, Hi. What are you doing?” one of the women yelled.

“Going to get some ice,” I responded.

“No, what are you doing here in Carmel?”

“I’m looking for work. I want to move here.”

“What do you do?”

“I’m a lawyer.”

“Oh, you should meet my boss. She knows all the lawyers in town. She has an agency that places legal secretaries.”

“Great!” I yelled, “do you have a business card?”

She went inside for a moment and returned with a card which she threw down to me. The card traveled in the breeze from the third floor balcony, flipping over and over until it landed on the parking lot asphalt and I ran to get it.

I thanked her and excused myself with a polite and sincere “Thanks,” and a pass on having a drink with them because I needed to get a good night’s sleep.

The next day I called her boss, Pat, first thing in the morning. She asked me if I had a resume and if I could come to her office around eleven. I said, of course, and was sitting at her desk across from her at eleven on the dot. Pat looked at my resume and picked up the phone. She dialed, and asked for Larry.

“Larry, I have a guy here from LA who says he’s a lawyer looking for work here.” She looked at me. “Yeah, he looks ok.” Pause. “Can you see Larry at one o’clock.”

“Sure,” I said, without asking who Larry was.

“He’ll be there at one. Good, Larry, bye now.” She hung up the phone.

“His name is Larry. He’s an attorney. Here’s his address. He says he might need help.”

“Is there anything you need me to sign?” I asked.

“No. This is just PR for me. Let me know if it doesn’t work out and I’ll see if I can help you find something else.”

At one o'clock I walked upstairs to an office in an interesting looking wooden building with an outside stairway and outdoor balcony upstairs. The receptionist led me into an lawyer's office and there behind huge stacks of files on his desk was Larry. He put each hand on a stack of files. "I'm swamped!", he laughed.

To compound the serendipity of my job search in Carmel, California, Larry was also a graduate of my law school at the University of Kansas. After discussions and several weeks of negotiation, I went to work for Larry. I drove a rented truck from Los Angeles up Highway One with my mother visiting from Arizona accompanying me for the trip. God knows what we need before we ask.

VIII.

For nearly twelve years after becoming a Christian in 1971, I struggled with alcoholism. I seemed to have missed the parts of the Bible about holiness. Some who knew me must have questioned the sincerity of my faith when I was shamefully intoxicated, I am sure. Jim, one of my roommates in Hawaii, was a sculptor. He was working with surfboard resins at the time. One of his works looked to me like Dumbo had flown over and dropped his technicolor droppings in our front yard. One evening Jim and his girlfriend Nana asked me sincerely how I could claim to be a Christian and drink so much beer. I told them that I was not a Christian because of my actions, but by the grace of God, that I prayed every night that God would deliver me from alcohol, and that I was not proud of my excess.

Most important, I said, was that I was a sinner and that Jesus died for sinners like me. If I had not been sorry for my gluttony, my faith would be questionable, because as a Christian, I knew that my conduct was sinful. Just because one is given a new life in Christ does not mean that the old sinful nature is not still present, doing battle with the new. Paul described this struggle with continuing sin after conversion in his letter to the Romans:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

With a new spirit, Christians have to overcome that sinful nature with the help of God. Christians are supposed to be salt and light in the world, and though I was salt in the world, I was not providing enough light with my unholy public conduct. I was sorry for my conduct, but not sorry enough at that point to quit.

It wasn't until I was sitting in the backseat of a police car in El Segundo, California in 1983 on my way home from playing guitar and singing in a South LA beach town bar, and drinking shots until the bar closed. I was under arrest for drunk

driving that I was able to decide that enough was enough. I had reached my “bottom,” a low point in life where I had a “moment of clarity,” as they say in Alcoholics Anonymous. I realized I was powerless over alcohol and drugs. God honored my decision and took away my desire to drink shortly thereafter. More importantly, God left it to the Court to order me to six AA meetings. God knows I would not have listened to anyone recommending AA. I went to my six meetings, and like them so well I went to meetings 6 days a week until I left LA in late 1987. I have been clean and sober for 36 years now (May 2019) and with God as my AA Sponsor-in Chief, I have not been tempted to drink or get high since. The principles of the AA twelve steps are embedding my my psyche. I always looked at AA and its principles through the lens of Christ, and I thank God for the life of sobriety He gave me, the most supernatural experience of my life. I should have been dead from alcohol and drugs, but by the grace of God he kept me alive until I was 35 and was ordered by the Court to AA. I also started going to church and reading and studying the Bible regularly with daily prayer at the same time I started going to AA. I have been attending church almost every Sunday since, not because I feel an obligation, but because I like being in church and hearing the Word of God and worshiping Him. It was a momentous moment in my life in the back of that police car in El Segundo. Sobriety was the most miraculous event in my life, second only to the miracle of my conversion reading the Bible in my cottage in Woodmont, Connecticut in 1971.

A few years later I got a letter from Nana telling me what happened to my friends in Hawaii to whom I had ashamedly explained how as a Christian, I drank so much beer. Jim and Nana moved to Brooklyn so that Jim could try to work into the New York art scene. They were walking down the street in Brooklyn one evening when they passed an African-American Baptist church with a spirited gospel-music service in progress. They went in out of curiosity. The minister got to them with a message of salvation. They both responded to an altar call and were saved that night. They got married shortly thereafter and moved to San Antonio. Jim got a job in advertising, and they co-founded a Christian church there. Despite my errant ways, God was able to use me to plant a seed in their hearts.

God protects my family supernaturally. For example, when my son was two and a half years old, I usually left for our law office early. My wife would take our son to his baby sitter and join me at the office a couple of hours later. (She has been the office manager/paralegal for our ma and pa law office since we married in 1989). One morning our son insisted that I take him to the baby sitter. My wife tried to talk him out of it, but because his preference was unusual and seemed so determined for a two year old, she acquiesced and I took him to the sitter’s house. After we left, my wife decided she now had some time to pray and got on her knees next to our bed. However, instead of praying, she kept getting a repeating impression in her consciousness, “Call the mechanic, Call the mechanic.” She had an old BMW. She had noticed some play in the steering

wheel. She decided she should stop trying to pray and call the mechanic. She called our mechanic, a BMW specialist who was also a Christian, and told him she had noticed some play in her steering wheel. He told her not to drive the car and have it towed into the shop. She did. They examined the car and found that the steering box, which had three bolts had one bolt sheered off. The second bolt was loose and the box was hanging on with only one bolt, ready to break off. The route to work was seven lanes – four southbound and 3 northbound down a steep hill. The speed limit was 45 mph. In those days, the baby's car seat was in front. I my wife had lost steering at high speed going downhill, the damage could have been devastating to my family and possibly to others. God used our little boy to avoid likely danger. This providential event is composed of seemingly natural events, but the timing of the components reveals to us God at work. Our pastor asked us to tell the story to the church that Sunday evening.

It is not normal to hear voices in the head. Of course, mental disease is a valid explanation for most accounts. However, I am sure there are exceptions, hearing voices in the mind that are not the result of a mental disorder.

On Sunday, August 11, 2002, I awoke late, around 9:00 a.m., fully rested after a good eight hour sleep. I was lying on my back in bed. I clearly heard the voice of my mother calling, "Dave . . . Dave." It was alarming. My mother, in her seventies, lived in a nursing home about ten miles from my home. She had Alzheimer's. Because of the sad mixture

of feelings I experienced seeing her like that, I had avoided seeing her for a few months since a family get together for her May birthday. Although her sight was nearly gone, along with her memory, she always recognized my voice.

That morning, when I heard her voice, I responded to her with my own voice in my head, guiltily, saying "I'm coming to see you today, Mom." Shortly after getting out of bed, I called my sister to see if my mother had some recent health setback. She told me that she had gone to see her last week and that she was as fine as she could be in her condition.

I went to see my mother that morning with my wife and son. She was cheerful. She seemed happy to see us. We had a conversation that was mostly spoken pleasantries that she heard, acknowledged, but clearly did not understand. Her last words when we were leaving were, "There's that blue kitty again." She had frequent benign hallucinations. Unexpectedly, she died of a heart attack four days later. Obviously, I'm very glad I heard her voice in my head that Sunday morning. I consider it the grace of God, mercifully sparing me the guilt of the neglect I would have endlessly felt had I not seen her shortly before she passed away. I have not heard any voices since then.

Around 1988, I told some of these stories to a Roman Catholic nun who was waiting outside the law office where I worked in Monterey, California at the time. I asked her what she thought. She smiled. "The language of Heaven," she summed up. Catholic or Protestant, evangelical or

mainline, regardless of the denomination or non-denomination, Christian true believers know the language of Heaven. Their God is a living God who is at work in their lives. I am grateful that God cares enough to provide me with supernatural confirmation of His presence in the natural world.

May 24, 2005
David C. Larkin