

THE OTHER SIDE

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*An Account of My Experiences with
Psychic Phenomena*

by

JAMES A. PIKE

with

DIANE KENNEDY

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To
JIM

FOREWORD TO THE 2008 EDITION

Bishop James A. Pike had a formidable mind, yet he did not approach life *through* his mind. He didn't allow beliefs or prior understanding to blind him to new experiences. Rather, he was propelled by an insatiable curiosity and by his love of all life experiences to investigate whatever new information came to him through his own senses or through his exhaustive research of the subjects that fascinated him. He stayed open to uncover new data about life and he allowed his intuition to guide him when reason and conviction seemed too limiting. This led him to take risks that some ridiculed, many doubted, and only a few championed.

Although *The Other Side* was written in 1968, the subject matter is perhaps even more relevant today. This book gives Bishop Pike's personal account of his experiences following the death by suicide of his twenty-one-year-old son. The trauma of that event, preceded by years of concern about his son's drug use and psychological problems, is one with which many parents today will identify. The book also is an example of Jim Pike's intellectual and spiritual quest, a quest that can educate and inspire others today.

A child's death by suicide is one of the most difficult losses a parent can suffer. Unanswered questions add to the parent's guilt and anguish. What more could I have done? Was this death in some way my fault? How could I have prevented it? In Bishop Pike's case, a series of inexplicable events occurred following his son's death prompt-

ing him to consult a medium. This book chronicles the subsequent sessions in which it appeared his son was able to communicate with him from the other side of death. Bishop Pike was skeptical about the mediumistic process but he was also eager to find answers to his many questions. In this account he shares both the content of those séances and his own struggle to understand the phenomenon of such apparent communication.

Bishop Pike's story has given comfort to many grieving parents and siblings and has given hope to many who have feared death. It has also contributed to the by now very large volume of literature about psychic phenomena. This literature brings into our age of science a persuasive presentation of evidence that life in the physical body is only one stage in an ongoing evolution of consciousness. For all these reasons I am happy that *The Other Side*, in this new edition, will be made available to today's readers.

—Diane Kennedy Pike
Scottsdale, Arizona
December 2007

FOREWORD

The title of this book is a *double-entendre*. The other side of death will immediately come to the mind of any reader who encountered some of the unsought-for but widespread publicity about some of my experiences since the death of my eldest son. That aspect of the two-and-a-half year period since my son died is more fully spelled out here. However, because of the way in which my experiences were all too often reported—and, especially, headlined—I am equally concerned that this book will also present *the other side* of credulity and naïveté.

What measure of understanding I have gained in these matters I owe in large part to others. There are the people who were connected in one way or another with the empirical data themselves, and most of these will be identified in the pages that follow. I am also indebted to a number of scientists whom I have consulted or who have shared materials with me, such as J. B. Rhine, Ph.D., Director of the Institute of the Study of Man; Ian Stevenson, M.D., Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology, University of Virginia Medical School; Karlis Osis, Ph.D., Director of Research, American Society for Psychical Research; Gardner Murphy, Ph.D., Director of Research, Menninger Foundation and President of the American Society for Psychical Research; Mr. Chester Carlson, inventor of Xerox and member of the boards of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions and the American Society for Psychical Research; Mr. Irving Laucks, colleague at the Center and author of a work in

this field; and the many, many persons who have written me, whether to inquire, to criticize, to seek pastoral help or to share experiences.

Of the latter, quite a few have told of experiences which appeared to be connected in some way with the persons and data here treated. With no reflection on the credibility of these reports, by and large I have had to exclude occasions on which I have not been personally present (as well as from when I have); but I am nonetheless grateful to all who have thus shared of themselves—especially my good friends Mr. and Mrs. Phil Dick, Ann Borg and Michael Hackett.

The thinking through and writing of this book in the midst of other responsibilities has been possible only due to the collaboration from start to finish of Miss Diane Kennedy, Director of New Focus Foundation, the board of which has given support and encouragement and whose secretaries, Joyce Duncan and especially Gertrude Platt, have devoted much time to the manuscript. I appreciate, too, the assistance outside of regular hours of my secretary at the Center, Miss Myrtle Goodwin, and the help of Mr. Scott Kennedy, student at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

I hope that with the help of so many who have made varied contributions both to what is written about and to the writing, both imports of *The Other Side* will come through adequately.

✠ JAMES A. PIKE

Jerusalem, Israel
Ascension Day, 1968
(the tenth anniversary of my
consecration as a bishop)

1

Let me show in an allegory how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened. Imagine human beings living in an underground cave, which has a mouth open toward the light and reaching all along the cave. Here they have been from childhood. They have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move and can only see the wall of the cave before them, being prevented by the chains from turning their heads. Above and behind them at a distance the fire of the sun is blazing, and between the sun and the prisoners there is a raised way and a low wall built along the way. And do you see men passing along the way carrying all sorts of vessels and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials which appear as shadows on the wall of the cave facing the prisoners? Some of them are talking, others silent.

"You have shown me a strange image and they are strange prisoners," Glaucon replies.

Like ourselves, and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows which the sun throws on the opposite wall of the cave, of the men and the objects which are being carried. If they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were seeing as realities what was before them? And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side. Would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

To them the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of images.

At first when any one of the prisoners is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn around and walk and look towards the light he will suffer sharp pain and he will be unable

to see the reality of which in his former state he had seen the shadow. Conceive of someone saying to him that what he saw before was an illusion. Would he not be perplexed? Would he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him? If he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away? He will take refuge in the shadows which he can see and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. Last of all, he will be able to see the sun. He will then proceed to argue that the sun is he who gives the seasons and the years and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold.

When he remembered his old habitation and the wisdom of the cave and his fellow prisoners, do you suppose that he would congratulate himself on the change and pity them? Imagine once more such an individual coming suddenly out of the sun to be replaced in his old situation. Would he not be certain to have his eyes full of darkness?

If there were contests and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the cave, while his sight was still weak, would he not seem ridiculous? Men would say of him, "Up he went and down he came without his eyes," and that it was better not even to think of ascending. If any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender and they would put him to death.

—*Plato*, THE REPUBLIC

As I entered my bedroom in Cambridge, England, on Sunday evening, February 20, 1966, there on the floor lay two postcards, face up—in such a way as to form a 140° angle in front of the nightstand between the twin beds. This would not have been so surprising if the postcards had been mine—but I had never seen them before. Also, I had been away from Cambridge for a long weekend and in my absence the cleaning woman was to have gone over the whole apartment. Up to then she had been most thorough and reliable and it seemed strange that she would have left anything lying on the floor.

“Hey, look at this!” I called out. Two colleagues came into the room and together we began examining and discussing the first of a long and complicated series of events more astonishing than anything I had ever before experienced. Entirely unexpectedly I soon became involved as a reluctant student in what for me was quite a new field of analysis and study.

Just sixteen days before that event, the older of my two sons, Jim, had died at the age of twenty. In the early hours of Friday, February 4, 1966, he took his own life in a New York City hotel room. It goes without saying that in any case his death would have left a very deep impression on my mind and spirit. But fitting the pieces together into a composite picture which would help explain his suicide was made far more complex by the strange phenomena which began to occur that frosty Sunday evening in Cambridge.

Immediately prior to his suicide Jim and I had spent about four and a half months together in Cambridge—the closest

period of our father-son relationship. We were able to get acquainted on a person-to-person basis at levels for which unbroken periods of time had not been available at home. There was much happiness in what we shared; but in the course of those months, I came to see as never before the depth and complexity of the problems which burdened Jim. Consequently, when his death came I had more reason, by virtue of sheer evidence and acquired insight, to understand it and less reason, because of the relationship we had by then established, to expect it.

Ψ

I am sure that much of my son's story is also that of many, many young people today. Some might wonder why a father would reveal the inner life of his son during a crucial period when much of it was characterized by unresolved turmoil. I can only say that I have for the past year carried a feeling of guilt over and above that which virtually any parent would feel who had lost a child by suicide. This particular sense of compunction was awakened by the example of the mother of a boy who had been a close friend of Jim's. Immediately upon learning of the death of her son by suicide while under the effects of LSD, she went on television and radio to indicate the circumstances of his death as a warning to other young people who might be following the same path.

In my own case there were many factors to be weighed in considering whether or not to reveal any of the inner side of what happened. Further, as we shall see, the events both preceding and following Jim's death were so complicated as to require not only time but also a great deal of study and reflection to sort out. But now I am convinced that the full story ought to be told.

From my considerable and varied pastoral experience, I feel sure that some of what is related here will be of help to at least a few young persons, and their parents, who have similar difficulties to surmount. From my study of other works in the whole realm of extrasensory perception and psychic phenomena, I am confident that students and scientists in this field will find this account, and the analyses thereof, of some interest and use. For those who fall into neither of these categories, the story addresses itself to the age-old question of the survival of death, and there is reason to believe that it will offer an added basis of hope in that realm.

What is put forth here, then, is a slice out of the lives of two persons. To understand what happened during this period when our lives were so interwoven requires not only autobiographical material, but also a rather frank portrayal of how things were with my son Jim.

The happier aspects of Jim's life, thoughts and personality were characteristic of many in his generation. He had a great disdain for sham in any form and was quick to puncture clichés and platitudes of any and every variety. He had a refreshing openness to the new, and a corresponding honesty, wanting to know things as they are and to say it as it is. In addition, he could find great joy in life and had an ability to celebrate it.

The less positive aspects, likewise, were characteristic of many in his generation. He had little motivation for "accomplishing" in relation to the future; he was highly critical of adult society and largely rejected it, adopting instead the "drop out" culture as the one he identified with; he was confused about his identity and found life relatively meaningless, in long-range—or even medium-range—terms. These things will be spoken of frankly because silence about them

would make irrelevant some of the most striking phenomena after his death. What is significant in and of itself is not what was characteristic of Jim while he was living, nor the corresponding occurrences afterward, but rather the degree of correlation observable between them. And more than all that, I am convinced that unless those who have been personally close to them begin to speak more openly about some of the disturbing—as well as the heartening—inclinations of youth in our society, the generation gap will only widen and understanding in any depth will be very slow to come indeed.

Some will be critical of such candor by a father about his son. There is a popular assumption in our society that to speak of a person's unresolved problems is to condemn that person as "bad," or to indicate that he is not loved. Though I have no way to guarantee that some readers will not make such an assumption, I trust that many will not. I say this not in naïve optimism or sentimentality, but rather because I myself—whatever other faults I might have—have been able to be fairly consistent in viewing persons realistically without judging them, and I find that more and more people are like this in our time. This is an important example of what, happily, is an increasing psychological sophistication and moral sensitivity in our society.



It was really not until the summer before I left for a six-month sabbatical in Cambridge that my concern for Jim's well-being grew beyond the bounds of that which is characteristic of most parents of contemporary college-age young people. Though Jim was not a top student, he had attended good schools—St. Hilda's, then Trinity, in New York City; Town, a day school in San Francisco; Webb, a boarding school

in southern California; and then, as a senior, Lowell, a limited-enrollment college-preparatory public high school in San Francisco—and had completed his work with acceptable marks. He was potentially capable of much better work scholastically, but he had developed a cool disinterest in his studies, except for a course now and again which happened to interest him—in which case he would do quite well in it. So, in spite of his spotty record—by and large he just scraped by—he had more than enough A's and B's to enroll in San Francisco State College.

It had not been with great enthusiasm for the educational opportunities open to him, however, that Jim had started San Francisco State. It probably never occurred to him that it was possible *not* to go on to higher education, since both of his parents had pursued advanced degrees and the vast majority of his friends talked of college—and more—as being taken for granted in much the same way high school is. In any case, he never raised the question as to *whether* to go; but the reason *why* was far from evident to him.

For Jim the first year of college seemed to offer, as its principal advantage, an opportunity to get out “on his own.” He was eager for this independence, as most young people are, and we cooperated in his having it—with, I must admit, modified rapture. He and a fellow student rented a modest apartment quite near a locale which has since become very widely known: the Haight-Ashbury district. The location was chosen—at least ostensibly—because it was nearer the college than the Bishop's House and thus was more convenient for the pursuit of his studies. Unfortunately, however—as would be easier now to anticipate than it was then—the atmosphere was far from conducive to academic pursuits. The end result was most distressing.

Sometime that fall Jim began having sessions with a psychiatrist in San Francisco who specialized in the problems of young people. His problems seemed to lie primarily in two realms. One was his lack of motivation with regard to his studies: by this time he had fallen into a state of virtual disinterest in learning of any kind. The other principal area of concern was that of personal relationships: he felt unable fully to enter into such meaningfully and in depth. There were, fortunately, some exceptions to this, but he had a growing concern about his ability to love.

It was somewhat uncharacteristic of Jim to seek help of this kind, and his indication that he wanted to see a psychiatrist in itself revealed the apparent seriousness of his difficulties. Yet his mother and I were not clear about the nature of his problems. Moreover, once he had begun therapy, even less could be discerned as to what was going on, for he grew more and more withdrawn and uncommunicative. This was accepted as a necessary part of the therapeutic process, since he now had a confidant in his psychiatrist and thus would have less need of sharing with his parents. But it did increase the feeling of being out of touch with his thoughts and concerns.

Nor did the psychiatrist reveal the content of his sessions with Jim: obviously an important element in therapy is the confidential nature of the relationship. It did become necessary, however, for the doctor to consult with us about an important decision which needed to be made about the course that Jim and his doctor would pursue.

It seemed that both of them felt that there were two bottlenecks in communication which were blocking progress toward the analysis and resolution of the problems being dealt with: from the unconscious level of Jim's mind to the conscious, and from Jim's conscious mind to the therapist.

It was Jim himself who suggested the use of LSD under the supervision of his therapist as a possible means of breakthrough. But such would have been impossible without parental approval.

This was during the period when LSD was still being used both therapeutically and experimentally by professionals. Since then, of course, it has been outlawed in most states—though such laws have not dramatically curtailed the use of LSD except by those who are best qualified to control and regulate it. In any case, Jim's psychiatrist had a lengthy personal consultation with us as parents. We in turn each consulted psychiatrist friends and after lengthy deliberation—and with less than a sense of certainty—gave our consent.

The day came. I remember quite vividly that evening when Jim "reported in." It seemed that he had had what is called a "good trip" and it had apparently been useful, but more than that he seemed reluctant to tell us. He continued, instead, to be both subdued and withdrawn. I remember wondering whether the trip had served the purpose intended; but I was not gravely concerned about any *ill* effects because I knew the trip had been carefully supervised and I understood that psychedelic drugs were not addictive. Moreover, there was less data available about hallucinogenics at that time, and thus I was not fully aware of the dangers.

Ψ

This venture into the realm where chemistry and depth psychology merge did not occur in a vacuum. Any college young person today, especially in California, and more especially in Haight-Ashbury, is very close to—if not a part of—the psychedelic subculture. There is a lot of talk about trips,

and a variety of hallucinogenics are readily available to those who wish to experiment on their own.

Because the influence of such a subculture is powerful, it would appear that any introduction to the use of psychedelic drugs was probably not a good idea—even if properly supervised. Yet for the same reason, one can almost assume that if Jim had not had this particular initiation into the use of consciousness-expanding drugs, it is likely that he would have been otherwise introduced to them before very long.

In fact, he was already living in two worlds, with two sets of acquaintances. There were those from San Francisco and its environs whom he had known at Town and Webb and who had dispersed to various colleges, but whom he saw during holidays and in the summer. Then there were those he had met at Lowell and at San Francisco State, and some others (whom he had met through mutual acquaintances) who lived in Haight-Ashbury or Berkeley. I learned later that those in the first category were by no means entirely free of awareness of—or even involvement with—drugs. But it was in the second group that the smoking of marijuana and the taking of psychedelic drugs were quite to the fore; and Jim was already spending a great deal of time in their company.

So, though the session with his therapist was innocuous, I'm sure, Jim was involved in the life and activities of the group we have come to describe as the drop-out subculture, and he began to experiment with drugs on other occasions as well.

Ψ

A parent can't be a policeman for a young man that age—particularly one living away from home—and for the major part of the school year I had relatively few opportunities

even to observe his behavior, let alone influence it. But during the summer following Jim's first year in college circumstances fell out in such a way that I was in a better position than usual to know what was going on. In order to pay his rent, and thus to perpetuate his new pattern of independence, Jim had taken a half-time job with a bank in downtown San Francisco. To save the cost of parking, he left his car each day in the parking lot on the Cathedral close.

Things were not going at all well for Jim personally. He was moving deeper into a pattern of drug use and the effects were beginning to show. He took to dropping in at my office in Diocesan House, sometimes en route to work and sometimes on the way home. From time to time he stopped because I left a note under the windshield wiper of his car, suggesting he drop in. Our visits became longer and longer and more and more frequent as the summer went on, and the better acquainted we became, the more my concern increased.

I was grateful for the opportunity to get to know Jim on an adult basis, and from that standpoint I relished our time together. Yet the better acquainted we became, the more candid his conversation grew.

"Tonight I'm trying a trip on Romilar," I remember his saying one Friday.

"What is Romilar?" I asked in genuine innocence.

"Here—look," he responded, pulling a rather large bottle of cough syrup out of his pocket.

"That looks like cough medicine," was my all too obvious observation. "Can you get high on that?"

"You sure can—and it's cheap, too. You just drink three or four tablespoons and you're off—on a long trip, just like LSD, only different," Jim explained.

"What do you mean?" I queried, sincerely puzzled.

"Well, I mean you're high—but it feels different. You are less aware of your surroundings than on LSD and more aware of what's happening to you. I mean the physical sensations are intense and you see vivid scenes. You don't gain much insight like you do on LSD, but it's great while it lasts. Each bottle is good for three or four trips. Wild."

I listened carefully, not knowing exactly how to approach the whole matter so as to indicate my concern without foreclosing further revelations of this kind. The fact that Jim was not only stepping up the frequency of the trips he took but also experimenting with growing numbers of hallucinogenics ("pot," or marijuana; "acid," or LSD; peyote and its synthetic form, mescaline; and now Romilar) indicated a great need for caution, I felt.

"I think I'd cool it some, Jim," I said, looking at him steadily. "I'm interested in your experiences; but they worry me."

"Oh, come off it, Dad. What's the harm? Life is to be lived—experienced—enjoyed. Why cool it?" he said, dismissing my concern.

"Nevertheless," I cautioned, "I don't like it."

Ψ

Although not many scientific facts were then available as to the danger of such drugs, I was readily drawing my own conclusions.

Jim looked less and less well physically as the summer wore on. Over him fell a pall of vagueness which is not easy to describe but not hard to identify when one is observing it. There were also signs of the kind of dissipation which accompanies a pattern of too little sleep and too much alcohol.

Yet while he may have been getting too little sleep, he was not drinking, I knew. As a matter of fact very few persons on acid and pot use hard liquor, and many don't even drink wine or beer.

The overriding question was, of course, what could I do? I knew it was important not to disturb the openness which had begun to characterize our conversations—especially in the light of the mounting problem—and I had gone as far as I felt I dared, without engendering antagonism, in articulating my growing concern and in flashing an amber light. But I felt some positive step needed to be taken. At some point it occurred to me that perhaps the solution lay in capitalizing on the relationship we had begun to build while also getting Jim out of Haight-Ashbury and into new—and, hopefully, more wholesome—surroundings.

I was due to leave for England the last week in September for a six-month sabbatical leave, having served seven years as the fifth Bishop of California. A diocesan strategy committee and the Standing Committee had made it possible for me to have this period of spiritual and intellectual refreshment and renewal at Cambridge University.

It occurred to me that I could take Jim along. He could continue his schooling in a completely new and different atmosphere, and by breaking out of the scene in which he seemed to be at least temporarily absorbed, he might well catch a vision of some alternatives for his life.

Of course I took up the idea with his mother first. While we both recognized there were some elements of gamble in my proposal, the alternative seemed to offer little hope of any change: Jim was steadily moving into even deeper involvement in the psychedelic scene. Moreover, Jim's level of academic motivation seemed to be at an all-time low. We hoped that by a radical change, a new college, new surroundings,

etc., new interest might be sparked, a pattern broken and new possibilities opened up.

So, with Esther's concurrence, I put it to Jim. Of course I let him know how much I would enjoy having him along just as a companion for me in study and travel—and everyday living. I also stressed how interesting it could be for him to have a period of academic experience abroad. But I was frank about what was the principal motive: to provide at least a long recess in—if not a graduation from—his pattern of drug-taking. I came out with the latter because I was sure that he would suspect that it was a hidden agendum, knowing of my worry in that regard. It was reassuring—and somewhat surprising—that, while also warming to the other considerations, he promptly latched onto this special reason as of great importance to him, too. "I'd really like to get out of all this," I remember his saying, giving me a sense of relief.

Ψ

The time was very short for making arrangements for Jim to go. Fortunately, a Cambridge professor happened through at just the crucial moment, and he was able to give the information I needed: there was an institution right in the city of Cambridge which would serve very well for Jim's level of education. An exchange of cables and a trans-Atlantic call firmed up Jim's admission to Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology, which offered, among its curricula, a British equivalent to our lower-division level of college study, in which Jim had a year yet to go. A necessary corollary was permission from Jim's draft board to leave the country, and that also was procured without difficulty since there was to be no break in the continuity of his academic work.

So, with all arrangements made, we prepared to leave. Jim

was frank to indicate that he had begun to feel anxious about going. Even though he could see—and indeed felt—the value of getting “out of all this,” nevertheless he had a growing fear that he might have a tremendous urge to take a trip or feel high and that there would be no drugs available over there. (I *hoped* not.) Just before we were to leave he asked me what I would think of his tucking into a suitcase a hunk of raw peyote. Since enough for a trip would be a sizable piece of a plant I explained that carrying it out of one country and into another would not be permitted even if it did not have psychedelic properties—and the fact that it did would certainly not help the chances of getting it through.

He did give up on the peyote, but as it turned out he went armed for the contingency in two other ways. Two rather innocent-looking packs of cigarettes in his jacket pocket were in fact the carriers of rolled marijuana, and in the back of his pocket diary he had written the names of some contacts in both New York and London. Unfortunately, it turned out that neither precaution was necessary on his part.

We were all going on the rather naïve assumption that acid and pot would not be available in Cambridge. In fact, we doubted that such would have been so much as heard of there. It was only after Jim's death that we learned that much of the impetus for the psychedelic movement had come from England anyway. Had we known, we would have been less cheerful about the prospects of escaping the hallucinogenic influence of Haight-Ashbury and Berkeley.

2

Unless all existence is a medium of revelation, no particular revelation is possible.

—*Archbishop William Temple*

Man cannot afford to be a naturalist, to look at Nature directly, but only with the side of his eye. He must look through and beyond her.

—*Henry David Thoreau*

The declared aim of modern science is to establish a strictly detached, objective knowledge. Any falling short of this ideal is accepted only as a temporary imperfection, which we must aim at eliminating. But suppose that tacit thought forms an indispensable part of all knowledge, then the idea of eliminating all personal elements of knowledge would, in effect, aim at the destruction of all knowledge. The ideal of exact science would turn out to be fundamentally misleading and possibly a source of devastating fallacies.

—*Michael Polanyi*

Things got off to a good start.

When we arrived in London we put into the Great Eastern, a comfortable, old-fashioned hotel which was part of the Liverpool Street Station, out of which the train proceeds northeast an hour and a half to Cambridge. Jim spent his time poking around and buying postcards—practically the first thing he did on arrival at any new place. He always had good intentions of mailing them off to family and friends, but usually they just accumulated. I, meanwhile, was busy with such things as finding out about various methods of acquiring the use of a car for the six months in Cambridge.

Our arrival in Cambridge itself was at the beginning of the Michaelmas Term and there was little promising housing left. But just as things were most discouraging, an unexpected cancellation of plans by an American university professor opened up for us an almost brand-new, modern, two-bedroom flat. It was located on Carlton Way in a pleasant residential area and was about ten minutes both from the University and from Cambridgeshire College. By midmorning the next day we were moved in, bag and baggage. No. 9 Carlton Court had all the features we Americans now tend to take for granted but which in England are far from common outside of major cities: central heating, wall-to-wall carpeting, drapes and Venetian blinds, ultramodern furniture in light woods, picture windows and private garage. All of this was well worth the third-floor walk-up and what for that part of England was somewhat higher than average rent.

But much to the surprise of both of us, complete as every-

thing seemed, moving ourselves in was just the beginning of it. We found that there was a host of things to do (and to find out *how* to do). Together, we went about doing these things with real zeal. We rapidly equipped ourselves with a car (on a guaranteed repurchase plan), applied for insurance, procured license plates, signed up in person with each of the government-owned utilities (gas, electricity and telephone), formally notified "The Constabulary of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely" of the fact of our residence, purchased linens and other household necessities, arranged for "British Relay" (linkage of a rented TV set with a single area-wide antenna), shopped for a bargain-priced stereo record-player (records meant a great deal to Jim), provided for milk delivery and laundry pick-up service and laid in a supply of staples, as well as enough perishables for the next few meals.

Though we both had traveled in foreign countries before, this business of setting ourselves up for living in an apartment, rather than in a hotel or motel, was an entirely new experience for each of us. It immediately gave us a feeling of "belonging," as though we were becoming citizens of England. In fact, before long we found ourselves, often as not, referring to "our problem in Rhodesia" and "their problem in Vietnam." And far more importantly, sharing the experience brought us, in very short order, closer to one another as two adults.

All these external activities automatically provided a rather full and variegated subject matter for mutual involvement of father and son—with less self-consciousness on the part of either of us than would have been so in the case of just talking. But talk we did.

I remember especially the first evening Jim really opened up to me on the subject of his problems. I had never raised with Jim the matter of his sessions with his psychiatrist, beyond asking him from time to time how, generally, it was going. But to this question, which could have been an opener for his sharing had he wanted to, there had never been a response which provided any illumination. However, that evening after dinner, when we actually sat down in our new living room for the first time, he introduced the subject in a very easy way.

He told me of what I would call his "identity crisis." He explained that he wanted very much to be a loving, caring person—to relate to persons in ways which were reciprocally both meaningful and helpful. "But," he remarked with deep feeling, "you can't love that way. You can't be a softie or you'll get smashed by society. Nobody gives a damn who you are or what you're like. People walk all over you, use you, give you a number and forget you. They couldn't care less about you, so why care about them? Why put out?"

I sensed the despair behind his seemingly callous words. "Not everyone's that way, Jim." Then I added, with a little less conviction, "*Most* people aren't."

"Oh, sure, Dad. You can say that, but you know it's not true. Church people are worse than anybody in their not caring. Don't tell me it's not true."

I searched my memory for examples of people who cared. I mentioned several, but it was obvious that no specifics could counteract his generalizations. His over-all impression was that society is heartless and impersonal, and exceptions to the rule were not going to change his mind about it all.

"I've been around, Dad. I've seen," he insisted. "You're not going to tell me anyone cares about the people who live in Hunters Point [a reference to one of San Francisco's more

depressed areas, mostly populated by black people]. And what about our colleges—does anyone care who I am? You know they don't. People couldn't care less."

He gave example after example to illustrate his point, and I found it hard to refute his argument. So I changed the grounds of discussion. "But just because that's the way things are doesn't mean you have to be that way. In fact, to be that way yourself is only to perpetuate the problem. You have the choice of being different."

"Sure I do—like in the Haight. But you yourself have pointed out that that's a kind of escape—a running away. Why do you think they call them drop-outs?" he queried. I knew he was again touching the truth.

"They know how to love and care," he went on, "and I like to live like that. Hippies will share anything they've got with you. They'll spend hours talking over your problems. They'll take you into their pad. They'll accept you for what you are. They're human. They know how to love." His words were full of feeling and I was able to sense what his involvement in the psychedelic crowd meant to him. "But how many hippies are there?" His question revealed his distress.

We talked for several hours and Jim shared his experiences with me in greater depth than ever before. He talked about his acquaintances. He reflected on his feelings of inadequacy—and his fears—that kept him from entering into deeply meaningful relationships with people.

"All you do is set yourself up for the big fall," he asserted. "It just doesn't pay—it isn't worth it."

The conflict between his desires and his fears was obvious. He wanted to love—but he feared the consequences. Instead of expecting love in return, he expected a cold and uncaring response. What, by and large, he saw around him only confirmed his suspicion that "that's the way people are." As

much as I might wish he could see things more positively, I knew he could not erase his reactions—sound or unsound—to his experiences. The most I could hope for was that something new could enter the scene now.

That conversation proved to be a major break-through. It paved the way for other times of candor in the months ahead, and being clued in so early in our time together as to the nature of his crisis gave considerable guidance to me in my responses to his words and actions and in my initiation of certain conversations and plans. What Jim outlined that night proved to be entirely consistent both with what I observed during the months that were ahead and with his psychiatrist's assessment after his death. It was also consistent with some happenings later—but to go into that now would be premature.



Within a very short time we were both very much immersed in our studies. The concentration of planning, the perseverance and the direction of energy which had characterized those days of settling in, happily continued right into the school term. Jim began his work at Cambridgeshire College with an interest far beyond any he had shown for the past several years. Many factors no doubt contributed to this encouraging new attitude. Certainly the new scene itself inspired enthusiasm. Moreover, the liberal arts program at Cambridgeshire was planned in such a way as to provide for more individualized instruction than is to be found in most of our American colleges—even private ones. Classes were small and there was a weekly private tutorial session. There was a higher concentration on fewer subjects during a given term. In addition, his lack of involvement with psychedelic

drugs and with his companions from the drop-out subculture meant that his attention could be focused more sharply on his academic endeavors.

Finally, an all-pervasive, important new element began to emerge which heightened the interest and joy of learning for both of us. We for the first time found ourselves students together. Not only were we both undertaking courses at institutions of higher learning—though at different levels and in different subject areas—but also we soon found we had in common an insatiable desire to know the truth, to find out facts and derive meaning from them.

Often, in the course of sharing something that had been said or a new insight which had dawned during the day, we would launch into a seminar of our own in the late afternoon or evening. These sessions were so fruitful in terms of my own intellectual growth, as well as beneficial for the deepening of our friendship, that I began to anticipate eagerly the sound of his approaching footsteps as he returned to the flat—almost always later than I, since he attended more classes—and the renewed conversation his arrival would bring.

We were both raising the same basic questions as we pursued our separate quests for meaning, but we approached them from quite different directions and thus found we had a great deal to learn from one another. I was busy re-examining (by a theological process for which I have since accepted the label of “reductionism”) a quite elaborate system of belief to which as a Churchman I was presumably committed but in fewer and fewer items of which I was placing credence.* My approach now was to cast aside any theological concepts which seemed irrelevant to life, or which did not have a plausible basis in our human experience.†

* See my *A Time for Christian Candor* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

† For some of the results see *What Is This Treasure* and *If This Be Heresy* (Harper & Row, 1965 and 1967).

Jim, however, was starting from the other end. Having by the junior year of high school rejected conventional religion, even in the liberal form of which I was a spokesman, he was now—from the bottom up, as it were—searching for something in which he could believe. He saw no structure of meaning—or at least none that made sense to him—and he was seeking to build one. His mood was that of openness and expectancy, hoping that somewhere, somehow, meaning and relevance could be discovered.

We used one another as sounding boards, and neither would let the other get away with broad generalizations, platitudes, clichés or quick conclusions. We pressed for the truth, but we both felt the process to be of equal importance with the conclusion: we wanted the factual foundations to be convincing enough that the leap of faith would take along the whole man.

We began to discover the significance of an illuminating phrase we owe to one who was perhaps the greatest American preacher, Bishop Phillips Brooks: "truth mediated through personality." Each of us was discovering, by the process of sharing, discussing and reflecting together, something of what was *true* in the deep sense of that word—what could provide the ground of integration for the reality of our individual experiences.

Ψ

The kind of conversations we were having, touching as they did on the meaning of life, inevitably gave an opening for the opposite side of the coin—something that apparently had been in Jim's mind from time to time for years.

Death—but not only death. Suicide.

"It's no use." His expression was one of pain again. "I'm no

good. I'll *never* be any good. Sometimes I hate myself so much I wish I were dead."

"I suppose we all feel that way from time to time, Jim. I know I have. Yet that's no solution either. That's the ultimate cop-out; the ultimate in escapism."

"Yeah, I know." He responded at the level I had hoped he would. "Sometimes when I feel really out of it—when I'm sure I'm no damn good and never will be—I seriously think about copping out. You know, why not just end it all now and get it over with. It would sure be simpler."

"But would it really?" I queried. "Suicide to me seems like *the* defeat. Our freedom lies in being able to change: to change our habits, our thoughts, our circumstances—indeed, to change our very selves, or to be changed. If we give up *that* freedom—if we admit we can't change—then that's really defeat . . ."

"Yeah, I guess so," Jim said with some lack of conviction.

"There can be a future for you, Jim, if you want there to be." My seriousness—and caring—must have been obvious, for he was listening intently. "I know you can grow in the areas which most concern you. We can find answers to the questions and doubts you have about yourself. You can begin to make changes. In fact, I think you already have since coming here. Don't you?" I looked directly at him.

"Yeah, I'm different in a lot of ways. It has been different. It's been great, Dad. It really has. I love you, Dad, and I like being here with you. But still . . ." He seemed to choke up.

I was choked up, too. It was not usual for Jim to express his affection. "I love you, too, Jim, and these weeks we have shared have meant more to me than I can say. Our relationship is important to me—very important," I said.

"In a way I suppose now I really would be stupid to cop

out. I suppose you're right about that, Dad. Maybe there is some hope."

"There is, Jim—I'm sure there is," I said with deep feeling.

Ψ

Within a couple of weeks after we arrived in England, Jim had used up the few marijuana cigarettes he had smuggled into the country with him. So for several weeks he had been completely off psychedelic drugs and, for the major part of that same period, also off pot. But as he became better acquainted with other students at Cambridgeshire College, he discovered that hashish, a more refined version of marijuana, was readily available.

Thus it was that before many weeks went by Jim frequently began getting high on hashish. And since the crowd that he began to run around with included "acid-heads," he was—before I was aware what had happened—also equipped with LSD.

I had taken great heart at his tremendous physical improvement during the first few weeks in England. He looked like a different person: alive, healthy, face full of color. The lethargic look had faded and the light had come back into his eyes. He was capable again of manifesting genuine interest, enthusiasm and excitement.

Then one evening I arrived home at 9:30 from a lecture on something like "New Frontiers of the Mind" to find Jim started on a trip. "Dad," he said, "I've just dropped acid. Will you sit with me and guide me through the trip?"

"Yes, of course I will," I said, quickly accepting his invitation. A deep concern—indeed dread—filled me at the realization that he was on drugs again. But of course I wanted to be with him, though I didn't know whether I could do much to

help him. Right then wasn't the time to file a protest: we would have to see this through. Any usefulness on my part would have to rest on an affirmative feeling toward me on Jim's part, I knew; and his asking me to be his guide was an expression of confidence and trust, I was sure.

As I sat down in the living room Jim went over and arranged a stack of "way out" records on the stereo and started the player. Then he sat down and there was small talk during which I tried not to reveal my apprehensions as to what would be coming over him shortly. I sneaked glances at my watch. (A clock on one of the bookshelves was stopped at 12:15. It had been that way since we arrived. I made a mental note to wind and set it sometime—but not now.) 9:48 . . . it should start at about 10:15, I figured from what I'd heard. 9:57 . . . he still seemed unaffected. 10:06 . . . the same. Then, a minute or so later he seemed to be going into a trance. He was just sitting there, eyes open, looking toward the drapes. A glance showed that his pupils were dilated. I had never before been with anyone under LSD, but I had heard that that was normal—or, more correctly perhaps, an expected part of this abnormal state.

Ψ

I didn't know if I was to initiate conversation or just wait. But before I could decide that, Jim spoke. His enunciation was clear—quite unlike someone with too much to drink.

"It's a dark road, getting darker as I am along it. Shapes here and there [he gestured with both arms, fingers pointing] which I can't make out. They're *big*—I feel so small—can't cope. The sound is unearthly and from all directions. I—"

"A record's on, Jim," I interrupted, trying to introduce a

verifiable datum. "And the two instruments are being harshly played—they're discordant."

"Two instruments! There are *a dozen* different sounds," he said, looking distressed. Then I remembered that I had heard that acid—and pot for that matter—could break up a musical tone into its harmonics.

"Shall I turn it off, Jim?" I asked.

"No! It's part of the scene—the real scene." This comment raised epistemological questions, as well as psychological ones; but this was no time for a seminar. I just sat quietly.

"This leads," he resumed, "*nowhere* [still on the gloomy road, I gathered]—to nothing—*no* thing." He sort of laughed, but it was more macabre than cheering. "Nowhere, nothing, no thing." Then, with a very serious expression: "I'd better not go on—not even stay here!"

"Can you turn around and go back, Jim?" It had begun to seem real to me. Anyway it seemed best now to shift the dialogue to his frame of reference.

His? Just then he got up and walked to the kitchen and came back with a glass of water. That short journey was not on a dark path. Yet on sitting down again he went on talking about where he was in the dark and menacing scene. I guess it never left his mind though he went out of the room for a moment. *Which* was *Jim's* scene? Both, I guess. Then I remembered that the psychedelic experience was regarded as temporary schizophrenia. I shuddered.

Now answering my question ("Can you turn around and go back?"), he said, "I'm afraid that's no good, Dad. I'm too far along. I guess I go on."

A pause. Then, "But it's getting gruesome and blacker. There are big, gnarled trees. They're moving, *weaving*, REACHING OUT!"

I moved over and took hold of his hand. I tried to look him

in the eye. But his steadfast gaze was aimed just past the right side of my head.

"Let's try going back," I said—really feeling *we* would be trying it, if he were willing.

"All right, Dad."

I was relieved. But, more than that, I was strangely moved.

"Is it—lighter now?" I tentatively explored a terrain I wasn't seeing.

"No. I'm—we're [was I now in his scene with him—or was he being polite?]*—moving fast—back, I mean. But I said it's too far. It's getting no lighter—the trees, moving, reaching down!*—other things still—can't make them out."

Getting nowhere. Then an idea. I tried it out:

"Are there any crossroads, Jim? Have you seen any? Maybe we could cut across to another kind of road."

"No crossroads," he answered solemnly.

A pause. Then he went on.

"But I'm looking around. And it looks like there's another road—over there. Let's stop, Dad, and look."

"OK, let's do," I said. Now I was beginning to picture the situation.

"I think I see a little light—over there." He pointed toward the back wall.

"Can we cut across—the field?" I chanced (my picturing wasn't really *that* specific).

"I guess so," he said with doubt, "but [growing apprehension on his face] it's just as dark as we start across and I don't know what's underfoot—and, oh, those shapes!"

"But we don't have much choice," I suggested. "Anyway, it's *toward* the light. This road's toward the dark—either direction it seems. Let's take our chances, heading toward the light." I thought of the prayer Homer has Ajax utter in the midst of darkness: "ἐν δὲ φάει καὶ ὄλεσσον" (*Iliad* 17:647),

which can be paraphrased "Let us have light whatever the cost."

That text had taken on a great deal of meaning for me during my attempt since 1960 to be intellectually honest, though a bishop. I told Jim about my recollection.

"That's beautiful," Jim said. Then: "Let's go."

Ψ

Silence . . . more silence . . . it seemed endless.

"Our footing's been safe and it's getting clearer—lighter! . . . It's all light—and there's the road . . . We've made it. Let's go this way [gesturing toward the hall]. No, let's stop and look. Oh, it's beautiful—the colors, the sounds [a more positive kind of selection happened to be playing on the stereo—I hadn't noticed that till just then]. The trees. These are alive, too; they're breathing. I see through their leaves. I see cells and veins."

He held up his hands and looked at them—"I see myself that way. I feel connected to the ground, yet I can move. I don't feel small now. And I feel one with everything around. I'm separate, yet I'm one. I'm One, The One. I'm God."

I knew this wasn't megalomania, or even arrogance. This was a reported experience of what millions of perfectly sane, modest Buddhists see as the shape of reality. Not pantheism (with which label we Western religionists have so often mistakenly dubbed—and dismissed—it), not believing that everything's all one blur or blob. But *panentheism*: every-one and everything is separate, yet continuous with the grounding of the All—which is the One, is God. Already I had raised seriously in my mind, and also in a long footnote* in a book which was even then being set in type, whether

* *What Is This Treasure*, note on pp. 45-47.