

Celestial Fire [Excerpt Chapter 1]

SoulMan's Criteria for Belief-System Upgrades:

❶ **Is the message or process positive and uplifting?** I do not personally benefit from doomsday predictions, or Armageddon edicts, while attempting personal growth.

❷ **Is the message/process designed to be independently self empowering?** Or do I depend on repeated visits to the guru, sage, preacher, evangelist, or shrink? Am I expected to routinely check in for booster shots of the conditional *ether juice*, to keep negative evil influences at bay?

I look for a tool I can take with me relatively soon—to use independently from that time forward. The feel-good rah-rah sessions, providing a temporary outer-motivational high followed by an inner emotional crash when the *smelling salts* dissipate, are usually entertaining and I enjoy them. I just don't label them “personal development.” **Note:** I now delight in rah-rah sessions because I no longer depend on outer-originated stimulation or fixes. Being empowered from within makes you immune to *withdrawal* crashes.

❸ **Is the message/process love-based, or fear-based?** Am I being told that if I don't *believe*, I'm destined to burn in hell—or shiver in purgatory? Does the proffered material offer an assortment of cosmic beasts or energy traps to guard against with protective crosses, silver bullets, garlic, bay leaves, white light, silver cords, etc? Or is the presentation fully positive and supportive?

❹ **Is the message/process consistent in its theme?** Or does it vacillate between unconditional love and guardian angels on one hand, hellfire and brimstone on the other? Again, this classic *Carrot-and-the-Stick* motivational technique can be a FUN night out—especially if they have good music—but it's definitely in the *entertainment* category for me.

❺ **Does the message/process stand alone?** Or does it depend on the personality, charisma, or personal reputation of the speaker, writer, or facilitator? I expand on this criterion because it represents perhaps the number-one source of outer-oriented, Spiritually delivered influence. Outer forms of inspirational stimulation can lead to emotional crashes and, on rare occasions, even death. *Readers: this one is serious.*

Message vs. the Messenger

Difficulties occur when one transfers his or her original focus on the proclaiming message, to an eventual worshipping of the human messenger. History indicates that Buddha, Jesus, and other masters found adoration a frustrating byproduct of their facilitation. I refer to their human personalities, possibly

vulnerable to frustration prior to full enlightenment. A true master prefers that his or her *teachings* become a source of independent liberation.

Other than a few apostles and perhaps a small handful of followers, I believe it unlikely that any assembly understood the **oneness** and **inclusivity** that Jesus promoted with words like, “The kingdom of God is *within*—the Father and I are ONE,” etc. If we can believe the surely distorted records of second and third-party testimony credited to Peter, John, Mark, Luke, and especially the more learned Paul, few—if any—of Jesus’ closest followers even approached a deep understanding of his synchronistic message until after the emancipating emissary was gone. Much of the cognitive challenge resulted from the prevailing slave mindset of that time period. Believing the external environment responsible for even the tiniest morsel of physical and emotional sustenance, the locals felt that Jesus must touch them or perform a healing on them before they could leave their tormenting living conditions behind. Belief in outer causes continues today, but blessedly in ever-decreasing numbers.

Throughout the ages, intensified awe and reverence for *mystical* masters generally prevented followers from comprehending transformational messages. Like a thirst-quenching spring located just around the next bend, most perished without realizing the mechanism for both their salvation and delivery rested fully within themselves, all along.

Qumran

With the retrieval of the Dead Sea Scrolls from the Essene settlement in Qumran, we access additional pre- and early Christian writings (such as the Aramaic presentation of Job and the Gospel of Thomas), and many Gnostic-based references. The Gnostics believed in the *spirit within* and thought Jesus a messenger for the truth of Gnosis, which directly conflicted with the new Christians that saw Jesus as a separate and distinct incarnation of God.

Humanity continues to debate the significance of the many-times translated and surely distorted words of the Mystics, Essenes, Gnostics, and monumental facilitators like Jesus and Buddha. Consider that the universal, love-based desire of these prophets was for humankind to understand that ***each of us is our own meaning maker, while still being an intimate and irrevocable part of the Collective Mind, or God.***

Toxic Adoration

The main distortion and potential danger, as I see it: Many thousands, probably millions, identify with the personality and charisma of the messenger. Some names like James Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, and Jim Jones come to mind. [Whoops! My

middle name is James—thanks Mom!] This threesome’s followers’ intense faith and feelings of personal connection effectively canonized these *James Boys*. The subsequent behavior of this evangelistic triad devastated their followers when these boys—like the rest of us—proved less than perfect-acting Human Beings. Many felt such despair that they reported to friends and family that **all** was lost. Afterwards, many took a short trip to the toxic *punch bowl*—figuratively and literally.

So, the question is... [To be continued in *Celestial Fire ~ A Naval Aviator’s Spiritual Odyssey*.]

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